



**9 PM**

**Compilation**

**June, 2023**

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of June 2023

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# General Studies Paper – 1

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General Studies - 1

1. [A Short Guide To Marriage](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “A Short Guide To Marriage” published in **The Times of India** on **10<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 1 – Indian Society

**Relevance:** About the evolving meaning of marriage

**News:** The term marriage has evolved with the time. The present meaning of marriage differs from the past meanings.

**How does the current meaning of marriage differ from the past?**

The phrase marriage is now used to describe relationships between two individuals. However, historically, **marriages were meant to unite families**.

Further, the concept of marriage, which is understood today, can be confusing at both interpersonal and legal levels because expectations of couples in a marital union have evolved.

Moreover, marriages in the past have always been alliances negotiated by families rather than two individuals.

Even though marriage practices differed from societies to societies, one thing that remained common was that families were given privilege, not individuals.

Therefore, when two people got married, they connected with the entire family together.

However, **this notion has changed today. The modern romantic unions may not truly be considered traditional marriages. It may be called a new social practice which is yet to be fully understood.**

**What were the objectives of traditional marriage?**

Traditionally, **the primary objective of marriage was to bring families together in order to expand their influence, wealth, and security in the present and future.**

This meant that heterosexual couples were expected to fulfill their duty of producing children, as it was not considered optional.

Further, since marriages were aimed at increasing the families' reach in society, it was forbidden to marry certain categories of kin. **These types of marriages were considered as incest.**

Moreover, the kinsfolk with whom marriages are disallowed differ from society to society. **For example**, in some states in northern India, marriage between those who have a common great grandfather is not permitted.

**Among the seven vows in Hindu marriage**, there are at least three where the couple promise to look after their elders and a fifth one to produce and take care of their own progeny.

**In Islam**, from the early ritual of Imam Zamin among Shias right up to nikaah, the families of the bride and groom are closely involved.

Similarly, **in Europe**, until the late 18th century, parents would arrange betrothals for their children from infancy.



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**In traditional societies, the question of marriage was never solely driven by pure romance.** Hence, when dating emerged as a practice, many moralists in 19th-century America, including some feminists, believed that it posed a threat to morality.

They feared that this would undermine families and lead to an increase in abortions, if people were given the freedom to pursue romantic relationships.

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

The increasing prevalence of romantic unions between two individuals represents a significant shift in modern history.

**Labelling these unions as “marriages” can challenge the traditional perception** on family-centric considerations such as restrictions on who one can marry, inheritance rights, and the notion of legitimate offspring.

### 2. [Our population question](#)

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

**Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper 1 – Population and associated issues

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

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

### **Why environmental footprints are smaller in India?**

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

### **What are challenges in front of India?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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### What is the status of refugees across the world?

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

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

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

### What are the issues faced by Refugees and asylum seekers?

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

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

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

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

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

### What are some facts about the Global Compact on Refugees?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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### 4. [The Lotus Position – on Yoga](#)

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

**Syllabus:** GS1- Indian culture

**Relevance-** Ancient Indian system of medicine

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

#### **How can the universal reach of Yoga can be ensured?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Syllabus:** GS1- Social empowerment. GS2- Indian polity

**Relevance-** Issues related to secularism and gender justice

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 6. 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.

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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.

### 7. 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.

### **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.

8. [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. [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.

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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

1. [Citizen activism that is missing from the wrestling ring](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Citizen activism that is missing from the wrestling ring**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **5th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Development Processes and the Development Industry

**Relevance**– Issues related to civil society

**News**- A few nationally acclaimed wrestlers have been protesting against their federation chief, allegedly for sexual harassment.

There is a lack of citizen activism seen during Nirbhaya protests and the Anna Andolan.

**What have been the characteristics of civil society activism in India?**

Middle-class activism was at its peak in the colonial period. This was not completely free of **social conservatism and caste-based fractures**. But it had a **pluralistic and egalitarian dimension**.

It revolved around **socio-economic initiatives** undertaken by **urban elites** of the upper castes, lower-middle and middle classes. It was directed towards **individuals of lower social status**.

The middle classes were not active in civil society participation from the Nehruvian era onwards. They were part of **power structures** within the **state-centred political economy**.

As per some scholars, there has been dominance of **caste/community-based organisations**. The country lacked a **modern civil society**. Others have appreciated the role of these organisations in **aiding democratisation**.

Some scholars say that in India, religion, caste, ethnicity and language have been effectively mobilised in articulating and representing **group identities and interests**.

During the United Progressive Alliance, there was a resurgence of **urban, middle-class activism** around issues of **political corruption**.

There was rising discontent among middle classes. It was due to **corrupting influences of mass-based politics and vote banks** and suspicions” towards unions, subordinate castes and Muslims.

This middle-class equated **technocratic governance and entrepreneurialism** with progress. For them, politics represented **social division and ‘barriers to development’**.

**How has the nature of civil society activism changed after 2014?**

Post-2014, the ideology of the ruling Party has influenced this middle-class. It reflects the **changing Indian sensibility**, especially among India’s professional and middle classes.

Thus, the middle classes now represent a kind of a civil society base of the ruling party. It can explain a weakening attachment towards **independent social actors**, as the wrestlers.

The weakness of **personality-driven Anna Andolan** is evident. The **Narmada Bachao Andolan** ultimately ended in failure.

NBA was disinterested in mobilising peasants and workers in rural Gujarat. **Ecological concerns** privileged urban middle class perspectives.

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However, there still exists space for **popular mobilisation**. In Tamil Nadu, labour rights organisations compelled the M.K. Stalin government to stall the **implementation of a new labour law**.

The farmers' agitation demonstrates the **continuing influence** of these organisations in parts of northern India. Some of these groups have now given their support in favour of the protesting wrestlers.

### 2. [The Delhi ordinance is an unabashed power-grab](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“The Delhi ordinance is an unabashed power-grab”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **5th June 2023**.

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

**Relevance-** Constitutional issues related to National Capital Territory of Delhi

**News**– On May 19 this year, the Union government [promulgated an ordinance](#) to amend the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCTD) Act, 1991. It nullified the Supreme Court judgement of May 11 on the powers over bureaucratic appointments in Delhi.

#### **The SC viewpoint on the position of Delhi in India's federal constitutional scheme?**

As per Supreme Court, [Article 239AA](#) in the Constitution has accorded the National Capital Territory of Delhi a **“sui generis” status**.

The Court held that there is no **“homogeneous class”** of Union Territories and States. The Indian Constitution has several examples of **special governance arrangements**. These treat federal units differently from each other.

**India's federal system** has been described as asymmetric due to the **special status** accorded to **Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 and special protections under Article 371, and 5th and 6th Schedule Areas**.

SC used the **asymmetric federalism framework** to clarify the position of the NCTD in India's federal scheme.

It remarked that though NCTD is not a **full-fledged State**. **Article 239AA** created an **asymmetric federal model** for the NCTD. The **unique constitutional status** conferred upon it makes it a **federal entity**.

For countries with deep **ethnic, linguistic, and cultural differences**, an **asymmetric model of federalism** is desirable. It accommodates the **interests of various social groups** through territorial units.

The Court noted that the **principles of federalism and democracy** are interlinked. Use of legislative power by the state fulfils **people's aspirations**.

Federalism creates **“dual manifestation of the public will”**. Here, the priorities of the two sets of governments are different.

#### **Why is the presidential ordinance problematic?**

It does not augur well for **judicial independence**. The legislature can alter the **legal basis** of a judgment. But it cannot **directly overrule** it.

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The power of ordinance is only to meet an **extraordinary situation**. It cannot be used to serve **political ends**. The ordinance by the Union government is an act of **constitutional subterfuge**.

The ordinance creates a civil services authority where bureaucrats can overrule an elected Chief Minister. It destroys long-established norms on **bureaucratic accountability**.

For all these reasons, the ordinance is a direct **assault on federalism and democracy**.

**For further reading-** <https://blog.forumias.com/supreme-court-empowered-delhi-govt-centre-gets-ordinance-to-put-bureaucrats-over-cm/>

### 3. [Spare the rod and change the law](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “ **Spare the rod and change the law**” published in **The Hindu** on **5th june 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- issues related to development and management of health

**Relevance:** Issues related to generic medicine

**News-** **The Director General of Health Services (DGHS)** issued directions that doctors in Central government hospitals to prescribe only generic medicines instead of branded drugs.

#### **Why do Indian doctors lack trust in the quality of generic medicines?**

**Firstly**, India has **lagged behind countries like the U.S.** in creating the appropriate legal and scientific standards ensuring **bio-equivalence testing**. It provide guarantees to doctors on the interchangeability of generic medicines with each other and the innovator drug.

India mandated **bio-equivalence testing only in 2017**. **Drugs Technical Advisory Board (DTAB)** recommended that existing generic drugs, approved prior to 2017 be tested for bioequivalence. But, it was ignored by the government.

Many doctors have developed faith in particular brands. The **patient feedback** has taught them that other brands do not work as effectively.

**Second**, it should be ensured that the drug remains stable through a **stressed supply chain** in differing conditions of heat and humidity.

The law prescribing **mandatory stability testing** prior to providing marketing approval became **mandatory in India only in 2018**. But it did not apply retrospectively to generic drugs approved prior to 2018.

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

Hence it is not appropriate for the DGHS to force doctors to prescribe drugs by **generic names**. The DGHS must work towards resolving the **genuine concerns** of doctors.

There is a need for regulations which require pharma companies to **identify on their packaging** whether a drug has been tested for **bioequivalence and stability** as required by the law.

Building the confidence of doctors in generic medicine serves **public interest** better than threatening them with **punitive action**.

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### 4. [A word of advice to the Delhi police](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**A word of advice to the Delhi police**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **6th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions for the Protection and Betterment of Vulnerable Sections.

**Relevance-** Issues related to sexual harassment

**News-** The protest by India’s medal winning wrestlers has been in the news for long. Two cases of sexual harassment are registered by the Delhi police against the president of the Wrestling Federation of India.

The cases were under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the relevant sections of the Indian Penal Code.

#### **Is delay in registering have impact on prosecution process and legal proceeding in sexual harassment case?**

At the stage of the registration of the FIR, the mandate of the Supreme Court in ***Lalita Kumari vs Govt. of Uttar Pradesh and others (2014)*** should be considered.

Once a **cognizable offence** is made out under **Section 154 of CRPC**, the police have to mandatorily register the FIR.

The **veracity of allegations** cannot be inquired into before **registering an FIR**. In case the delay in reporting the matter is over three months, the **reasons for the delay** are to be explained satisfactorily.

A mere delay in an FIR is no ground to discard the **victim’s allegations**, if the **truthfulness of the explanation** for the delay is established in the court. Otherwise, it may need corroboration with **additional and credible evidence**.

#### **What is the legality of narco-analysis tests?**

Such tests are conducted either on a suspect or on a witness but not on a victim under conditions laid down in ***Selvi vs State of Karnataka (2010)***.

The **truthfulness of the allegations** cannot be established with the aid of such tests. The **credibility of the statement** of the victim is tested through a thorough **cross-examination**.

However, such tests administered on the accused may help in a **further investigation** if some information or material is discovered after such tests.

#### **What are legal aspects related to the arrest of the accused in this case?**

Allegations related to sexual assault at the workplace attract **Section 8 or Section 10 or Section 12 of the POCSO Act** in the case of a minor victim. It will attract *Section 354 of the IPC* in case of other victims.

In none of these sections, the punishment is more than **seven years of imprisonment**. Therefore, according to CrPC, arrest is not mandatory unless there is **material evidence** to show the possibility of **tampering of evidence** or making any threat.

Since the accused is an influential person, these apprehensions mentioned above may not be ruled out. However, there need to be **reasons and material** to justify the arrest.

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### **What is the way forward for Delhi police and prosecutors in this case?**

The best option available with the Delhi police is to **complete the investigation** quickly and have the final report in court.

For offences punishable with imprisonment of less than 10 years, investigation needs to be **completed in 60 days** after arrest . Since no arrest has taken place, this provision is not applicable in the given cases

For the minor victim, there is also a **presumption in favour of prosecution under the POCSO Act**. It will be for the accused to prove that he did not commit the offence.

When the victims are insistent in their allegations and are protesting for justice, the allegations cannot be said to be false. However, the court may still **frame charges and proceed with the trial**.

The ultimate decision to proceed with the trial or not to, and **frame charges** would be taken by the judicial magistrate after deliberations. Any delay in investigation will have **adverse consequences** and shake **public confidence** in the Delhi police.

### 5. [In the short term, stabilise the Line of Actual Control](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“In the short term, stabilise the Line of Actual Control”** published in **The Hindu** on **6th June 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** Indo-China relations

**News- From** the last few years, the situation on the Line of Actual Control (LAC) has continued to remain extremely tense.

### **Why is there a need for stability in the region?**

There was the biggest mobilisation of Chinese forces into Tibet after Galwan.

**As per India's** External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, the situation along the LAC in Eastern Ladakh remains very **fragile and quite dangerous** in terms of **military assessment**.

**Thirdly**, Chinese territorial claims include the entire Arunachal Pradesh and the occupied Aksai Chin. It claims Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh as two of the **five fingers that are attached to the Tibetan Palm**.

The current mindset among the Indian security establishment is that the **“salami slicing tactics”** of the Chinese must be halted.

Further, advanced **surveillance technology** provides visibility of movement of opposing forces. Better roads and improved logistics enhance the reaction capability. It is increasing the chances of **face-offs and clashes**.

### **What are the existing agreements on LAC and its flaws?**

Since 1988, four agreements have been signed between the two countries (in 1993, 1996, 2005 and 2013) to maintain peace along the LAC.

**Article I of the 1993 Agreement** stipulates the creation of joint mechanisms to verify and settle LAC-related disputes.

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**The Working Mechanism for Consultation and Coordination on India-China Border Affairs (WMCC)** was created in 2012. It meets twice in a year but has little to show in terms of results on the ground.

The 3,488-kilometre-long LAC has **only four Border Personnel Meeting (BPM)** points. The **Lipulekh BPM Point** which was proposed in the **Article V of the 2005 Protocol** has not been established till now.

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

Convert the **LAC into a Line of Control (LC)** by delineating it on the map and on the ground without prejudice to border claims.

The disputed areas on the LAC can be treated as **no entry zones**. Alternatively, both sides should be allowed to patrol these areas as per a mutually agreed frequency.

**Joint patrolling** of the disputed areas must also be explored as this can result in the maintenance of status quo and an increase in confidence.

### 6. UGC's clamp down on distance education goes against the spirit of NEP2020

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“UGC's clamp down on distance education goes against the spirit of NEP2020”** published in **The Indian Express** on **6th June 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** Issues related to distance education

**News**- An affidavit was filed recently in the court by the UGC after an inspection claim that **Narsee Monjee Institute of Management Studies (NMIMS)** started its sub-campuses in five different locations without requisite permissions.

### **What are the issues regarding such regulations?**

Higher educational institutions (HEI) are required to adhere to the **UGC's policy of territorial jurisdiction even for ODL**. It is contrary to the idea of open learning as the technology which has no geographic or political boundaries.

In the past too, this regulation caused several regular universities to **lose their learning centres** outside their state. For example, **Bharathiar University in Coimbatore** was forced to discontinue around 450 franchises.

In a country, the number of seats in educational institutions is below demand. Cutting off on an efficient alternative like ODL will be a major mistake. It can hurt **the nation in the long-term**.

**Funding of higher education by the state has gone down** and the traditional brick-and-mortar campuses are too expensive.

Under the **graded autonomy scheme of UGC**, only institutions with a **NAAC score of more than 3.26** on a scale of 4 (A+ grade) are permitted to start ODL courses. In fact, **Kerala does not have a single such varsity** and consequently cannot run any ODL programmes.

Further, ODL courses are a **major source of revenue** for universities.

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### What is the way forward?

Any **regulatory system** that thrives on **inspections as a means** to deliver on its objectives will suffer from subjectivity, arbitrariness and corruption.

UGC must **adopt technology rather than rely on inspections** as a primary method of compliance.

Perhaps it's time to revise the notion that "**education is not for profit**". The money has to come from somewhere.

### 7. [Centre's 'lateral entry' plan gains traction](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Centre's 'lateral entry' plan gains traction**" published in **Business Standard** on **6<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Governance – Role of Civil Services in a Democracy

**Relevance:** Concerns associated with lateral entry

**News:** Recently, the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC) issued a list of 20 lateral recruitments to middle and senior levels of central government service.

### What is lateral entry?

[Click Here to Read](#)

### How has been the response of the people for the lateral entry?

When the government initiated lateral recruitment for middle and senior positions in 2019, it saw opposition from group of people.

However, despite the opposition, the government has still continued to recruit personnel through lateral entry.

Further, **the lack of opposition to the recent advertisement indicates that lateral recruitments have become a regular and accepted practice within the government system.**

However, specialist roles in areas like audit, Railways, and tax (direct and indirect) have not yet been opened to lateral recruitments, despite reports of the government facing a shortage of specialists.

### What are the concerns with lateral entry?

As per former chairman of the UPSC, Deepak Gupta, such recruitments **could potentially devolve into an uncontrolled spoils system that favors politicians.**

Further as per a former CAG, while selective use of lateral entry may have limited benefits, its widespread implementation could ultimately undermine the entire system.

Moreover, the new entrants through lateral recruitments are not designated as members of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) or an equivalent service.

However, acknowledging the need of lateral entry, the Department of Personnel and Training (**DoPT**) has taken steps to establish designated officers and sections to manage the process more systematically instead of relying on ad hoc arrangements.

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Despite this, **there are still challenges associated. For instance**, despite being granted an extension beyond the initial three-year term, a lateral entrant chose to resign in just eight months into his new term without giving any reason.

**This highlights that challenges and factors influencing individuals' decisions to leave still exist within the government.**

**Must Read:** [Issue of lateral entry into the Bureaucracy](#)

**What can be the way ahead?**

**First**, it is necessary to evaluate whether a specific gap within the government can be effectively filled by a lateral entrant, rather than solely focusing on vacancies.

**Second**, it is also required to invest in HR capabilities by bringing in experienced professionals through lateral entry at senior positions.

**Third**, the government has set up the **Capacity Building Commission and Mission Karmayogi** to train government employees about their roles. However, both the institutions have not stepped in to deal with lateral entrants.

**Fourth**, the government has implemented a streamlined process for lateral entry appointments to bring in the most talented individuals with expertise to fulfill specific tasks.

The aim is to ensure that the best-of-the-best talent is inducted through lateral entry and effectively utilized within the government.

## TANGENTIAL FACTS

- Lateral entrants supplement the current direct recruitments for IAS where annual intake has gone up to 180
- IAS vacancies are 20% plus. Both direct and lateral intake will reduce vacancies to single digits by about 2025
- Lateral entrants need to be inducted in HR functions
- 60 posts to be filled through lateral entrants – all in ministries at the Centre
- States have yet to start similar schemes

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**Source:** Business Standard

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### 8. [Why the fourth India-Africa forum summit should happen during Delhi's G20 presidency](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Why the fourth India-Africa forum summit should happen during Delhi's G20 presidency**” published in **The Indian Express** on **6<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – International Relations – Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings

**Relevance:** About the fourth IAFS

**News:** The fourth India Africa Forum Summit (IAFS) was disrupted by the pandemic, causing a delay after the previous three summits held in 2008, 2011, and 2015.

This disruption has caused a setback to the [African Union's \(AU\)](#) envisioned summit timeline. Now, since the AU is holding summits with its partners, India should also hold the fourth IAFS before the G20 summit this year.

#### **How can the fourth IAFS be held before the G20 summit?**

**First**, currently, it is Africa's turn to host the fourth IAFS. The previous summits took place in India, with the second one held in Addis Ababa, the headquarters of the African Union Commission.

Initially, Mauritania was recommended as the host for the fourth IAFS. However, it was found that Mauritania lacks the necessary facilities to accommodate a large summit.

Therefore, discussions have shifted now to find a viable host location. In such a scenario, **Addis Ababa is the best suited** as it has the facilities for holding such large summits.

**Second**, the size of the fourth IAFS may be an issue. **The first two summits followed the Banjul formula**, involving 15 African countries and the AU Commission. However, the third summit expanded to include all 54 African countries, making it a massive event.

The options are whether to invite all African countries or return to the Banjul formula. However, hosting a large summit is time-consuming.

On the other hand, when the summit is held in Africa, **following the Banjul formula with 15 countries is more manageable**.

**Third**, there are concerns over members who will attend the summit. **The Banjul format includes both permanent and rotational members of IAFS**. The five permanent members are **South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal, Algeria, and Egypt**, who are the founders of the **New Economic Partnership for African Development**.

However, **these countries do not provide sufficient regional representation from all parts of Africa**. Hence, the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) play a crucial role in ensuring regional balance.

When the AU was established in 2002, it recognized eight RECs. The countries that chair these eight RECs should be invited to participate in the summit, allowing for broader representation across the continent.

#### **What is the importance of the Banjul format for India?**

The inclusion of the Banjul format in the summit allows for increased interaction with countries that may not engage in bilateral discussions with India.

**For instance**, Comoros is strategically important, but engagements with it are infrequent.

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### Which countries are expected to participate if fourth IAFS is held this year following the Banjul format?

The five permanent invitees, including South Africa, Nigeria, Senegal, Algeria, and Egypt along with the AU Chair Comoros and Senegal as the past chair are expected to be the part of the fourth IAFS.

Apart from the five permanent invitees and the AU representatives, there would be eight other representatives invited to the fourth IAFS.

### 9. [Law panel's recommendations on sedition law: Stepping backwards](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Express View on Law panel's recommendations on sedition law: Stepping backwards**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **6th June 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About retaining sedition law.

**News:** The 22nd Law Commission has said that the sedition needs to be retained, but certain amendments could be made for greater clarity regarding its usage.

#### What is Sedition?

**Must read:** [Section 124 A or Sedition law](#)

#### What are the Law Commission's recommendations for retaining sedition law?

**Must read:** [Sedition law can be retained but with safeguards: Law Commission](#)

#### What are the reasons given by the committee for retaining sedition law?

**Read more:** [The reasons Law Commission gave while recommending a stronger sedition law](#)

#### What should be done?

After initially defending the law, the Centre told the Court last year that it would review it. Prime Minister is on the view of shedding colonial baggage as the country marks 75 years of Independence. Accordingly, the Union Home Ministry in an affidavit asked the SC to defer the hearing till it is reviewed by a “competent forum.”

Now the Parliament must step in and must finish what it started (revoke sedition). This is essential in polarised times when the spaces for freedom of expression and the right to dissent seem endangered.

### 10. [A global order as technology's much needed pole star](#)

**Source–** The post is based on the article “**A global order as technology's much needed pole star**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **7th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Polity

**Relevance–** Issues related to impact of technology on global polity

**News-** Since the 2000s, the rapid scale and pace of development of technology have radically transformed our societies and daily lives.

#### How is the notion of nation-state changing?

As per political theorists, a nation-state is a **territorially-bounded sovereign polity**.

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There are now several threats occurring across the borders of nation-states, like cyber-attacks. It has a ripple effect on the **physical boundaries**. It can challenge their **socio-economic and political existence**.

**Web3, peer-to-peer networks and blockchains** has allowed **state and non-state actors** to influence areas such as trade, commerce, health and education.

**Geography-based rules** are no longer **easily enforceable** because of the declining significance of geographical borders in the era of high technology. Any form of **virtual activity** is not confined to the borders of a country. Data travels across the world at high speed.

Such activities are beyond the laws of a nation-state. It is extremely difficult in the absence of a **globally accepted norm**, to enforce the law in that geography. It is difficult to collect evidence without cooperation from other geographies.

It is also difficult to establish applicability of any **country-specific legislation** due to the **universal nature of technology**.

The emergence of newer technologies has exposed the **incapacity and inability** of the government of the nation-state to **administer and regulate** these technologies.

Multinational corporations, NGOs and supranational organisations are not limited to nation-states. These entities have **transcended physical boundaries** to collaborate with the rest of the world.

**How has the borderless nature of technology challenged the traditionally accepted concepts of sovereignty, jurisdiction?**

On the economic side, five largest American tech companies have a **valuation of more than \$4,100 billion**. These have surpassed Germany's GDP in terms of valuation. One of the most important levers of these companies is data and their use.

Data has become the most important raw material of our times. Only a handful of companies now hold **economic power and influence** over it. Their huge size allows them to increase the amount of **information analysed** by them to influence our activities.

**What is the way forward to deal with the challenges presented by modern technology?**

There is a need for a **principle-based global order for technology**. It would help in dealing with **enforceability challenges** in the adoption and diffusion of technology.

It can provide guidance to emerging economies to deal with the **evolving definitions of their sovereignty**.

There is a need for a **data-sharing ecosystem** based on **privacy, free flow of data**. A **global regulatory system** trusted by all countries; particularly developing countries is required.

India needs a **data transfer and data privacy law**. But these laws have limitations in the absence of a **global principle-based regulation architecture** trusted by all countries.

The finance minister has emphasized the need to have a **globally coordinated approach** to the **regulation of digital assets** such as crypto-currencies.

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For India, G-20 is the perfect opportunity to take leadership as it has done earlier in **green initiatives** such as the International Solar Alliance or the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure.

### 11. Modi and Biden's New Asia

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Modi and Biden's New Asia**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **7th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS2- International relations

**Relevance-** Issues related to changing global dynamics between major powers

**News**– 20th edition of annual Shangri-La Dialogue was concluded in Singapore over the weekend, to capture the shifting strategic trends in Asia.

#### **What are the key highlights of this year's Shangri-La dialogue?**

This year's SLD highlighted the **deepening tensions** between the US and China.

The US wants to resume high-level talks with China. It wants to focus on **confidence-building measures** to prevent the tensions from escalating into a hot war.

China is unwilling to accept the US **terms of engagement**. China sees the Biden administration's persistent call for **high-level dialogue** as a trap.

The two ministers outlined their **competing visions of regional security**. Austin insisted that the US does not seek **conflict or confrontation** but will not tolerate **bullying or coercion**.

Chinese defence minister Li insisted that he was not against dialogue, but the US must create the **right conditions**. Li also accused the US of “**double talk**”.

Li is blaming America for the **growing regional tensions**. He warned against the **resurgent “cold war mentality”**. He demanded that **mutual respect** should prevail over **bullying and hegemony**.

Many Asian heads have criticised US actions but are **silent on China's deeds**. There is a reluctance in the Asian countries to jeopardise the **deep economic relationship** with Beijing. There is a deliberate effort to avoid **politically offending China**.

Australian prime minister Anthony Albanese outlined Canberra's **strategy of engagement** with China while standing up to Beijing's **military bullying**.

Canada too is ready to join the **geopolitical game in the Indo-Pacific**. The Canadian defence minister has promised to ramp up Canada's **military presence in the Indo-Pacific**.

#### **What is progress made by the US Indo-Pacific strategy?**

Many Asian nations have stepped up **political and military engagement** with the US. Chinese warnings against such cooperation with the US are having very little **deterrent effect**.

Top officials of the Biden administration have made frequent trips to the region to **rebuild old alliances, develop new coalitions, and demonstrate the political will** to confront China.

The US is taking measures to **control technology exports** to China. It has **growing military support** for Taiwan.

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Washington is finding it difficult to convince Europe, which is **deeply tied** to the China market. But, NATO is now **raising its game** in Asia. Japan has taken the lead in drawing Europe into **Asian security** and South Korea is ready to join hands.

In the two and a half years, Washington has elevated the **Quad to the summit level**. It has unveiled the **AUKUS alliance**, launched **trilateral coordination** with Seoul and Tokyo,

It has unveiled a **local quad – “along with Australia, Japan, and the Philippines”** to counter the Chinese military pressures against Manila.

The US has been encouraging Japan to **raise its military capabilities, modernising the military alliance** with South Korea, **revitalising the military partnership** with Manila and enhancing security cooperation with Indonesia.

### **Which areas show the convergence of interests between India and the US?**

Building a **stronger strategic partnership** with India has been a high priority for the Biden administration.

Austin travelled to Delhi. His talks with the Indian establishment have produced a **“road map”** for a significant **elevation of bilateral defence cooperation**. It includes **technology transfers and joint defence industrial production**.

For nearly two decades, India and the US have talked of **transforming defence cooperation**. The **change in the Indo-Pacific** and the **shared interests** in stabilising the **Asian balance of power** demand a solid **India-US defence partnership**.

### 12. Get, Jet, Go – on India-US agreement to co-produce fighter jets

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“Bonn meeting: Taking stock of climate action”** published in the **“The Indian Express”** on **7th June 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS 2- Bilateral and multilateral agreements involving India

**News**: India and the US have made significant progress in their strategic relations by agreeing to co-produce fighter jet engines.

India and the US are set to sign a formal agreement for the co-production of GE-F414 engines. The agreement may be signed in the next visit of Indian PM to the US. This agreement involves a 100% transfer of technology.

### **What is the significance of the agreement?**

Only a few countries currently manufacture their own jet engines.

India’s previous attempt to develop an indigenous engine, the Kaveri project, failed to meet technical requirements. The new deal with the US is a crucial step towards building India’s own military-industrial complex in line with the goal of Atmanirbhar defence.

Given the changing geopolitical environment, including the China-Pakistan axis and the new China-Russia compact, strengthening the India-US military relationship is crucial for India.

Importing defence equipment from Russia become harder due to US-led sanctions against Moscow.

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### 13. Law Commission's sedition recommendations: Silencing what's left of dissent

**Source:** The post is based on the following articles

**“Law Commission’s sedition recommendations: Silencing what’s left of dissent”**

published in the **Indian Express** on **7th June 2023**.

**“Doubling down on sedition”** published in the **Business Standard** on **7th June 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About retaining sedition law.

**News:** The 22nd Law Commission has said that the sedition needs to be retained, but certain amendments could be made for greater clarity regarding its usage.

What is Sedition?

**Must read:** [Section 124 A or Sedition law](#)

What are the Law Commission’s recommendations for retaining sedition law?

**Must read:** [Sedition law can be retained but with safeguards: Law Commission](#)

What are the reasons given by the committee for retaining sedition law?

**Read more:** [The reasons Law Commission gave while recommending a stronger sedition law](#)

What are the key judgements under the Sedition Law after Independence?

**Read here:** [Sedition Law in India \(Section 124A IPC\) – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the concerns associated with Law Commission’s recommendations for retaining sedition law?

According to Kapil Sibal, a Member of Rajya Sabha, criticised the commission recommendations on the following issues,

**Make sedition more discretionary:** the imposition of harsher punishments and make the law even more vague and discretionary. For example, both “tendency” and “inclination” are nouns used interchangeably in the English dictionary; they are by their nature open to interpretation.

**Law Commission has a conceptual confusion:** The difference between criticism of the government and acts against the State, which is punishable under different legislative enactments, might be misunderstood by the Law Commission.

**Silence the critics:** In the recent past, the sedition law has been used to silence journalists, academics, political opponents, and students, including minorities. The Law Commission’s recommendations are intended to silence even the limited opposition and protests.

**Make sedition more draconian:** The recommendations seek to make sedition law even more draconian. Even a tendency or a mere inclination to incite violence or cause public disorder can come within the ambit of sedition.

**Out of sync with democracy:** The Indian Penal Code already has provisions, such as Section 153A, under which scores of protestors can be arrested without a warrant. So, the enhancement of the sedition law is out of sync with democracy as plural and argumentative as India’s.

Overall, the government should not accept the recommendations of the Law commission for retaining sedition.

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### 14. [India-Nepal relations soar high](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**India-Nepal relations soar high**” published in the **Business Standard** on **7th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – India and Neighbourhood relations.

**Relevance:** About India-Nepal relations.

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

#### **What are the key decisions made during the recent visit?**

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

#### **What are the recent developments in India-Nepal relations?**

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

#### **Why does Nepal need India’s assistance?**

**Poor state of Nepal’s economy:** Nepal’s economy is in bad shape. It is facing food and fuel inflation, shortage of essential commodities, and depleting foreign exchange reserves. Nepal is also experiencing a recession with an increasing trade deficit, inflation, unemployment and declining foreign direct investments.

Currently, Nepal is seeking assistance from an extended credit facility offered by the International Monetary Fund. Thereby, its immediate focus is on containing inflation, and maintaining foreign exchange. In that, India can help Nepal significantly.

**Political Instability in Nepal:** Domestically, Nepal continues to be politically unstable. The lack of a clear majority in Parliament and the recent unveiling of the Bhutanese refugee scam has made the present government venerable.

**Issues with Chinese project deliverance:** China’s infrastructure and assistance has fallen short of Nepal’s expectations. Border infrastructure remains underdeveloped, and the trade deficit with China has grown disproportionately. None of the nine Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) projects have been implemented to date. China is even propagating Pokhara International Airport as part of its BRI, though Nepal has denied the claim.

China has also begun to intervene in Nepal’s internal politics to further its interests. China’s limitations have compelled Nepal to focus on beneficial Indian projects and partnerships.

#### **How India can improve India-Nepal Relations?**

-Sustained engagement can address their mutual suspicions and build trust between India and Nepal.

-Recognise the strategic importance of each other in the evolving global order and maintain a positive momentum between India-Nepal relations.

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### 15. [Nine years of Modi govt: In education, big plans, some key gains](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Nine years of Modi govt: In education, big plans, some key gains**” published in **The Indian Express** on **8<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Education

**Relevance:** About the achievements and concerns with the education system in India

**News:** The current government in its second term has made significant development in the field of education in India.

#### **What are the developments made?**

**NEP 2020:** There has been notable progress over the past year. For instance, common entrance tests for central universities, granting universities more autonomy to collaborate with foreign institutions among others have been implemented. The **NIPUN Bharat** scheme has also been implemented.

However, some of the announcements on NEP are believed to be superficial. **For instance**, the renaming of the mid-day meal scheme as **PM POSHAN** without any additional funding allocation.

Further, despite the NEP’s recommendation to include breakfast as part of the mid-day meal, **the Finance Ministry refused to implement this for pre-primary and elementary classes.**

Similarly, the relaunch of the **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyan Scheme** has received lower funding than proposed by the Education Ministry.

**National Curriculum Framework:** The NCF, a policy document for revising textbooks and classroom pedagogy, is nearly complete.

**School Textbooks:** The NCERT has undertaken three rounds of revisions in school textbooks. The third round aimed at reducing the curriculum burden on students.

**Foreign Universities:** The current government has made significant progress in liberalising higher education to accommodate foreign universities.

Currently, the UGC is preparing a regulation that would allow foreign universities to establish campuses in India, have their own admission process and fee structures and recruit faculty and staff from here and abroad.

**New Institutions, Enhanced Capacity:** Over the past nine years, the government has established several new centrally run educational institutions.

Additionally, existing institutions have undergone significant capacity enhancement through the implementation of the EWS quota. This has increased the intake capacity.

**Female representation:** Various initiatives have been taken to increase female representation in male-dominated educational institutions.

**For instance**, the supernumerary seats were introduced for women at IITs and NITs in 2018. This resulted in a rise in female representation from 9% in 2017 to 20% in 2022 at IITs.

Moreover, **according to AISHE data**, there has been a reduction in gender disparity in higher education enrolment since 2014.

**Other initiatives:** The **no-detention policy under the RTE Act 2009**, which guaranteed promotion through Class 1 to 8, was scrapped in 2019.



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The [National Testing Agency](#) was set up in 2017, the Medical Commission of India was dissolved in September 2020 and replaced with a new body – **National Medical Commission**. [Higher Education Financing Agency \(HEFA\)](#) was set up in 2017.

### What issues with education remain?

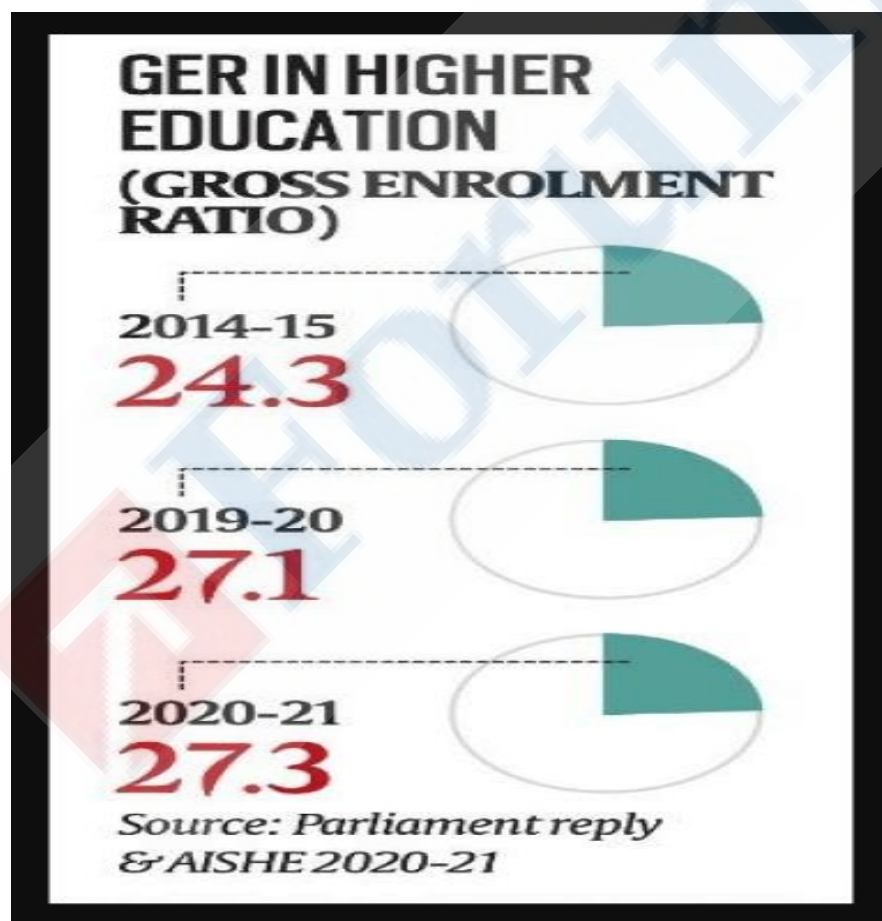
**Autonomy:** In contrast to the first term of the government, **the momentum seen in granting autonomy to institutions diminished in the second term**. While the IIMs received increased autonomy, other centrally run institutions like central universities and IITs have not been granted similar freedoms.

Additionally, as per a recent investigation, the promised autonomy under the Institutions of Eminence (IOE) scheme mostly exists in theory.

**Vacant Faculty and Leadership Positions:** In the past nine years, central educational institutions (CEIs) have faced a shortage of teachers and vacant leadership positions. Even the appointment of heads of CEIs has been slow.

**Other Issues:** Despite the promise made to raise public spending on education to 6% of the GDP, **the overall allocation towards education has been stagnant at 2.8% to 2.9% of the GDP**.

The establishment of **National Research Foundation (NRF)**, **the Higher Education Commission of India and Digital University** has not yet been done.



**Source:** The Indian Express

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### 16. [Express View on OPEC's new move: Crude cuts](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “Express View on OPEC’s new move: Crude cuts” published in **Indian Express** on **8<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS Paper 2 – Effects of policies of developed and developing countries on India’s interest**

**News:** OPEC+ countries have decided to further cut crude oil production for 2024. This decision has significant implications for global oil prices and India’s economic recovery.

The group has agreed to reduce overall production targets from January 2024 by a further 1.4 million barrels per day (bpd) to a combined output of 40.46 million bpd. Saudi Arabia, the biggest OPEC producer, would lead these cuts.

#### **What are the reasons for these production cuts?**

Demand for oil has fallen behind supply due to weakness in global growth. It is weakening crude oil prices. This trend is likely to continue for some time.

#### **What are its implications for India?**

India imports crude oil to satisfy more than 80% of its needs. Therefore, production cuts, which could increase prices, will hurt India.

However, 2 factors will be important to consider impacts on India. First, India is importing crude oil from Russia at lower than market prices. Second, oil prices in India have not reduced much despite fall in global crude prices.

### 17. [This Pride Month, let’s count the wins for queer and trans rights](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “This Pride Month, let’s count the wins for queer and trans rights” published in “The Indian Express” on 8th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population

**Relevance-** Issues related to LGBT

**News-** Pride Month is here again. The country is waiting for the Supreme Court’s verdict on the marriage equality case.

#### **What are steps taken by state organs for the upliftment of transgender community?**

SC expanded the definition of women in the **Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act** to include transgender persons. They are now **legally entitled** to avail of abortion services.

The apex court also took several measures to make the **judicial system queer-inclusive**. It expanded its **Gender Sensitisation and Internal Complaints Committee** to include queer non-binary lawyers.

It came out with a module for **sensitisation of the judiciary** on the LGBTQIA+ community. It has taken other small steps, like creating **universal restrooms** in the court complex.

The Government of India expanded the ambit of **Ayushman Bharat**. It included transgender persons through the **TG Plus card** which entitles them to health. There has also been progress in making **medical curricula queer-inclusive**.

There was good news related to **political representation** of transgender persons. Bobi Kinnar became Delhi’s first transgender municipal councillor.

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Sonu Kinnar, another transgender person, also made history by becoming president of Nagar Palika Panchayat of Chandauli, Uttar Pradesh.

### What are the issues still faced by transgender community?

The **NALSA judgement** paved the way for the **legal recognition** of transgender persons. The **Transgender Persons Act** insisted on **medical interventions** to change gender. But in India, laws are often not **implemented on the ground**.

Transgender people often face difficulty in **accessing public spaces**. The Karnataka government's recent decision to allow transgender people free bus travel was much needed. The Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment started the **SMILE scheme** for transgender people and set up a few **shelter homes called Garima Grehs**. It is facing flak for **restricting funding** to the existing shelters.

The **Transgender Persons Act** has many provisions that are yet to be realised though the rules. Examples are making **transgender welfare boards, transgender protection cells**, etc.

### What is the way forward for upliftment of transgender community in India?

There is a need to be cognisant of the pending demands of the community. There is still no central law banning **unscientific, inhuman, and traumatising conversion therapy** in India. There is no regulation of **sex-normalising surgeries** for intersex children.

The long pending demand of the transgender community for **horizontal reservations** needs **sincere deliberations and actions**.

### 18. [Tackling the human-dog conflict](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article "Tackling the human-dog conflict" published in "The Hindu" on 8th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- Government policies and interventions. GS3- Environment

**Relevance-** Issues related to street dogs

**News-** Over the past few decades, the growing population of street dogs has posed increasing challenges for municipalities and cities across the country.

The Prevention of Cruelty (Animal Birth Control) Rules 2023 rules that have been designed to address emerging challenges.

### What are the alternatives to ABC?

First, there is **culling**. But, it is a **cruel solution**. Past such practices show that the dog population has bounced back time and again.

Second is **Confinement in pounds or shelters**. But they are **economically unviable and unsustainable**.

The room freed up on our streets because of **round-ups and culling** will be filled by dogs. It is because of abandonment, free-roaming and breeding pets and street dogs. This is no kind of solution.

### How 2023 rules on ABC address the resolve that shortcoming in earlier rules?

ABC programmes are now being **streamlined**. The **burden of its implementation** will fall on the **ABC monitoring committees** at the State, district and municipality levels.

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The rules require **updated infrastructure investments** for the **capture, housing, surgery and release** of dogs. It requires **specific processes** to be recorded such as **keeping and reporting**.

It focuses on procedures for responding to **conflict situations**. It requires the **engagement of organisations** to ensure that the standards of ABC are high.

It calls for **differentiation** of street dogs from pet dogs to improve **data collection and analysis**.

### **What is the way forward to tackle the menace of street dogs?**

A **scientific approach** is required to tackle the street dog conflict and population issue.

**Social marketing and human behaviour change** demands our attention too. Instead of attacking each other, there is a need for **shared expertise and commitment** to resolve complex societal problems.

If there is no research on the benefits of ABC on dogs, we must put our money into it. If there are **poor ABC programmes**, organisations must **take ownership and improve their standards** through training.

## 19. One World One Health

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**One World One Health**” published in **The Times of India** on 9th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Issues associated with health

**News:** This article discusses the current state of digital health and the potential it holds for transforming healthcare.

Digital health is on the brink of disruptive technologies but lacks a standardized framework and global vision.

### **What is the status of digital health in India?**

India has seen transformative digital tools in public health, such as CoWIN and eSanjeevani, during pandemic.

**CoWIN** tracked vaccine logistics, registered people for vaccination, and generated digital certificates, democratizing the vaccination drive.

**eSanjeevani**, a telemedicine platform, allowed online consultations with doctors from home, handling over 10 crore consultations.

Other digital tools like **Aarogya Setu and RT-PCR app** informed policy and strengthened India’s Covid response.

India is building a national digital health ecosystem – **Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission (ABDM)** – to exploit the potential of digital tools in public health. ABDM empowers patients to store and access medical records, share these with healthcare providers, and ensure treatment.

### **What are the challenges to digital health?**

most transformative digital solutions are not easily accessible due to copyright regimes and proprietary systems.

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Digital public goods or open-source solutions exist. But there is no global governance framework for digital health that can ensure interoperability across systems and address concerns around data security and privacy.

### What should be done?

- 1) Converge scattered efforts into a global initiative on digital health and institutionalize a governance framework.
- 2) Collaborate on a protocol for digital health, similar to what was done for the internet.
- 3) Identify and scale up promising digital solutions as digital public goods.
- 4) Involve all stakeholders and build trust for global exchange of health data.
- 5) Find ways to fund such initiatives.

### [20. Wrong On Rights – Gujarat HC misses the point on abortion](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Wrong On Rights – Gujarat HC misses the point on abortion**” published in **The Times of India** on **10<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** concerns with abortion rights of women

**News:** The parents of a 17-year-old pregnant teen sought permission from the Gujarat High Court to terminate her pregnancy. However, the pregnancy has crossed the 24-week threshold due to the delay in revealing her situation.

### What has been the observation of the court in the case?

Surprisingly, **the judge cited Manusmriti to argue that** it was acceptable for 17-year-olds to bear children.

Instead, the focus should be on the well-being of the girl, **as the existing laws criminalize consensual sexual activity among teenagers and young adults.**

The law may soon also prohibit women from marrying before the age of 21, which does not align with reality.

Hence, **according to the current laws**, the girl is, considered as a “statutory rape survivor,” and the 23-year-old is labeled as a “rapist.”

Further, instead of acknowledging the sensitivity and complexity of the case, the judge postponed the next hearing until June 15 after a medical evaluation, causing further distress.

### What can be the way ahead?

**The right to privacy grants women the autonomy to decide whether or not to continue a pregnancy.**

**The Supreme Court**, last September, specified that all women, whether married or unmarried, have the right to a safe abortion.

In December 2022, **the Delhi High Court** allowed the abortion of a 33-week-old fetus, saying “mother’s choice is ultimate”

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Therefore, **if the court believes that the girl can be a mother, it should equally recognize her right to a safe abortion.**

### 21. A pragmatic approach, for better India-Nepal ties

**Source-** The post is based on the article “A pragmatic approach, for better India-Nepal ties” published in “The Hindu” on 10th June 2023.

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

**Relevance-** India and Nepal bilateral relationship

**News-** The Prime Minister of Nepal, Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda’s first bilateral visit to India since assuming office

#### **What was the attitude of leadership during the summit?**

He has not paid attention to irritants in relationship such as the **1950 Treaty, border differences**, and India’s reluctance to receive the report of the **Eminent Persons Group** set up by the two governments.

The Indian Prime Minister has **shown sensitivity**. He reassured Prachanda that differences on the border issue would be resolved to **mutual satisfaction**. Neither side tried to justify their official version of the border as the correct one.

#### **What were important developments during the summit?**

The visit has helped in underlining the **real priorities**, such as **hydropower projects, energy supply to India, infrastructure, access to Indian river transport, innovative tourism circuits, and better connectivity**.

The finalised **Detailed Project Report of Mahakali Treaty** will be submitted to both governments expeditiously. The modalities of implementation will be concluded within one year after their approval of the DPR.

There is a new dimension of cooperation in the power sector with the **transmission passage** from Nepal to Bangladesh through India.

There was finalisation of an agreement for **long-term power trade**. It was agreed to increase the quantum of **export of power** from Nepal to India to **10,000 MW within a timeframe of 10 years**.

Enhancing **digital financial connectivity** is another crucial development. The MoU between the National Payments Corporation of India and the Nepal Clearing House Ltd. for facilitating **cross-border digital payments**.

India offered to create a **ground station and supply 300 user terminals** to offer the services of the **South Asia Satellite** to Nepal. They would promote regional cooperation in the space sector, and space technology applications.

#### **What is the way forward for improvement in the bilateral relationship between India and Nepal?**

The real challenge for Nepal is to **depoliticise cooperation** with India, especially in water resources cooperation. It needs to improve the **quality of democracy and governance** and check unbridled corruption.

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For India, it may be necessary to address the **perception in Nepal** that it is no longer a foreign policy priority.

It is necessary to give a **sense of ownership, equality and credit** for progress in sectors such as hydropower to parties across the political spectrum.

### 22. [How to renovate India's soft power](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “How to renovate India’s soft power” published in “The Indian Express” on 10th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS2- International relations

**Relevance-** Issues related to India foreign policy

**News-** The article explains the areas where India can work to increase its soft power.

#### **Which are the areas that are important for increasing India’s soft power?**

**Universities:** The intellectual decline of universities like Shantiniketan, [Delhi](#), Allahabad, Presidency, JNU, represents failed **governance and strategy**. **Harvard’s \$51 billion endowment** is due to partnership with alums and philanthropists.

Our university renewal has begun. IIT-[Mumbai](#) has a business school, IIM-[Bangalore](#) is starting undergraduate degrees, and IISc is starting a medical school.

Non-profit universities like Ashoka are now **strong alternatives** to studying abroad.

**Think tanks:** India has a weak layer between academia and journalism that focus upon **research, evidence, and second-best choices**. Good government requires a steady stream of good ideas.

Their challenges in India include the lack of **lateral entry into government, domestic philanthropic preferences, suspicion of foreign funding, and weak legitimate corporate advocacy**.

These challenges are reducing. **Policy legitimacy** for think tanks will grow our marketplace for **policy ideas** and generate **global soft power**.

**Government schools:** It’s embarrassing that **only 50% of India’s kids** attend government schools. If anything should be **free with quality** in a society, it is primary education.

Unlike China, India’s economic transition is happening to service jobs. Service sector requires **foundational skills of literacy and numeracy**.

NIPUN Bharat mission aims for the universal acquisition of critical foundational skills by 2026.

**Publishers:** The dominance of the West in publishing books and academic journals is built on **history, skills and resources**.

There is a lack of **highly-ranked Indian academic journals**. The **peer review system** is based on **soft relationships and technology** that are not easily accessible. Almost 50% of peer-reviewed hypotheses are **unreplicable or get retracted**.

**Translation: ‘State of Indian Translations Report’** suggests only 5,600 Indian language books exist in English.

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Translation scale is a **uniquely Indian problem**. It is further complicated by the **complexity of translating** books among Indian languages.

The **Bhashini Project** of the Ministry of IT, the AI4Bharat Centre at IIT-Madras, and the Bharatiya Bhasha Samiti of the Ministry of Education will unlock our languages for ourselves and for the world.

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

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

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

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

#### **What is the importance of proper nutrition among adolescent girls?**

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

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

#### **What are issues related to nutrition among adolescent girls?**

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

#### **What are the impacts of poor nutrition among adolescent girls?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

**Relevance-** Issues related to Governor power

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

#### **What is the constitutional position of the Governor?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 25. JNU VC on NCERT deletions: There is no conspiracy

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

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

**Relevance**- Issues related to curriculum

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

#### **What is the rationale for recent changes in NCERT textbooks?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 26. [Lessons from Kathal: Tracking India’s missing girls](#)

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

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

**Relevance:** About India’s missing girls.

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

#### About data on India’s missing girls

##### Child victims of kidnapping and abduction (2021)

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

Data is from the National Crime Records Bureau(NCRB)

**Source:** Indian Express

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

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### What are the reasons behind India's missing girls?

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

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

Data is from the National Crime Records Bureau(NCRB)

**Source:** Indian Express

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### What more should be done?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Relevance:** About making urban centres disable friendly.

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

### Why does India need to make urban centres disable friendly?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

## 28. Narendra Modi's Deng Xiaoping moment

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

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

**Relevance-** Issues related to bilateral groupings and agreements

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

### **What is the new economic policy of the US?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Relevance**– Issues related to social movements

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

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

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

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

**What is the support base of current wrestler protest?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Relevance-** Issues related to LGBT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – India and Neighbourhood relations.

**Relevance:** About India-Nepal relations.

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

#### **What are the key decisions made during the recent visit?**

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

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

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

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

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

All this shows a positive development in bilateral ties.

#### **What are the recent developments in India-Nepal relations?**

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

#### **Why does Nepal need India's assistance?**

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

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

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

**Syllabus:** GS2- Bilateral groupings

**Relevance-** India and Canada bilateral relationship

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 33. Tax law in the shadow of the higher judiciary

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

**Syllabus**: GS2- Polity – Functioning of judiciary

**Relevance**– Issues related to taxation laws

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

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

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

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

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

**ITO vs Vikram Sujitkumar Bhatia case**–

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

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

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

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

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

### **Union of India vs Ashish Agarwal case–**

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

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

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

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

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

### 34. Where anyone can be accused of sedition

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

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Governance – Criminal Justice System

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

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

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

### **What are the significant recommendations of the Commission?**

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

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

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

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### What is criticism against the recommendations by the Commission?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Relevance**- Issues related to curriculum

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Relevance**- Issues related to medicine field

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

### What shows the prevalence of male model of medicine?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **What should be the priority of India in this matter?**

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

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

### 37. Why Delhi and Tamil Nadu colleges lead the way

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

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

**Relevance**- Issues related to ranking of educational institutions

**News**– The 2023 NIRF rankings have recently been announced.

### **What are the criteria used by NIRF rankings?**

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

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

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### What are some key takeaways from the survey?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### How can inclusion be interpreted with rising urbanisation?

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

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

### [38. Strengthening the ICDS Scheme](#)

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

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

**Relevance:** About the performance of ICDS.

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

### What is Integrated Child Development Services?

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

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

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

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



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

### Why ICDS needs a relook?

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

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

### Why India should empower Anganwadi workers to strengthen ICDS?

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

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

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

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

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

**Relevance:** **concerns with NIRF rankings**

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

### About the NIRF rankings

[Click Here to Read](#)

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

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### What are bibliometrics?

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

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

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

### What is the issue with overly relying on bibliometrics?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### Is the NIRF transparent?

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

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

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

### What can be the way ahead?

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

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

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

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

**Relevance-** Issues related to India and US bilateral relationship

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

#### **What are key takeaways from the visit?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Syllabus:** GS2- Issues related to poverty and hunger

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Relevance:** About Uniform Civil Code.

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

#### **About the Law Commission's view on UCC**

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

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

#### **What is the Uniform Civil Code (UCC)?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Relevance:** About the US rejoining UNESCO.

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

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

#### **About US withdrawal and reason for rejoining UNESCO**

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

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

#### **Why US is worried about Chinese advancement in AI?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Relevance:** About Russia – Belarus nuclear deal.

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

### **About Russia – Belarus nuclear deal**

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

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

### **About US nuclear warheads in Europe**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Relevance:** concerns with freebies

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

### **What old approach is being adopted by the government?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Why are the governments moving towards offering freebies?**

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

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

**What are the concerns with freebies?**

[Click Here to Read](#)

**What can be the way ahead?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Relevance:** About Regulation of Surrogacy.

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



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### About the Petitions on Surrogacy (Regulation) Act

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

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

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

### What should be done?

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

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

**Source:** The post is based on the following article

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

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

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

**Relevance:** About India – China border dispute.

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

### About the disengagement between India and China

The disengagement by troops is at five “friction” points. These are Galwan in 2020, on the north and south banks of Pangong Lake in 2021, at Patrolling Point 17 in the Gogra-Hot Spring in August 2021, and PP15 in September 2022. Almost 18 rounds of talks between the area military commanders of both sides have happened so far. But, de-escalation has not taken place.

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

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

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

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

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### What are the implications of the expulsion of journalists?

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

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

### What should be done?

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

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

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

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

**Syllabus:** GS 2- International Relations

**Relevance:** Indo-USA relations

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

### What is the news related to?

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

### What lies ahead with regard to Economic engagements?

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

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

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

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

### What are the Strategic underpinnings associated with the visit?

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

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

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

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

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

### **What are the challenges in India-USA relationship?**

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

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

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

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

### 49. Indian Dollar Transfers That Beat Some GOI Welfare Spends

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

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Indian Diaspora

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

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

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

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

**Low-cost leads to higher spending power.**

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

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

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

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

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

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### What determines the cost of the remittances?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### How is India overcoming these challenges?

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

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

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

### What can be the way ahead?

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Relevance:** About Local body elections in West Bengal.

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

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### About the High Court order

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### What should be done?

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

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

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

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

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Education.

**Relevance:** About coaching factories.

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

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

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

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

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

### What led to mushrooming of coaching factories?

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

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

### What are the issues posed by mushrooming of coaching factories?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Relevance** – Issues related to India and US bilateral relationship

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

### What is the status of India and US bilateral relationship?

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

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

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

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

### Why is the US accepting this asymmetrical relationship with India?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **What is the enduring puzzle of international relations?**

If China is really interested in challenging the US, it would have made **peace with India**. China's **less assertive behaviour** on a border dispute with India is beneficial for it. It would have made **America's global standing** even more vulnerable.

### 53. World Yoga Day: Yoga's challenge on the global stage

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

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

**Relevance-** Issues related to alternate system of medicine

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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### **What is the contribution of the Indian government for yoga?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **What are other examples of success related to yoga?**

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

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

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

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

### 54. A tech-tonic shift – on India-USA relations

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

**Syllabus**: GS2- International Relations

**Relevance**: Indo-USA relations

**News**- The article emphasis the India-USA relationship

### **What is the news all about?**

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

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



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### What are India's technological engagements with other countries?

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

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

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

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

### What is the position of India USA trade mix?

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

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

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

### How can ICET help to overcome this?

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

### What are the Issues in ICET?

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

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

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

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

### [55. Marx, Mao And The Bhadrak - On West Bengal election violence](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Marx, Mao And The Bhadrak**" published in **The Times of India** on **21<sup>st</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Governance – Electoral Reforms

**Relevance:** concerns over violence in West Bengal during elections

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

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### **What are the concerns over elections in West Bengal?**

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

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

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

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

### **What are the probable reasons for violence in West Bengal?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 56. More HIT than miss in India-Nepal ties

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

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

**Relevance**– India and Nepal bilateral relations

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

### **What is the situation of the hydropower sector in Nepal?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **What are irritants in the India Nepal bilateral relationship?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Relevance-** Mental health related issues

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

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

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

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

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

**What are issues faced by caregivers?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Health

**Relevance:** concerns with the consumption of pan masala.

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

#### **When was the chewing tobacco ban?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **What are the concerns with the consumption of pan masala?**

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

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

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

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

### **Why is it difficult to ban pan masala?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Education.

**Relevance:** About fund crunch in Higher Educational Institutes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### 60. Friends And Benefits: Overlapping interests between India and US show that a formal alliance is not necessary for a solid relationship

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

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

**Relevance:** About India-US relationship .

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

### **Why the time for formal alliances have waned?**

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

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

### **How have India-US relations evolved so far?**

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

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

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

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

### What should be done?

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

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

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Law Commission's report on Uniform Civil Code — undesirable and unnecessary**" published in **The Indian Express** on **23<sup>rd</sup> June 2023**.

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

**Relevance:** About the recommendations of 21<sup>st</sup> Law Commission

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

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

### What were the recommendations made by the 21<sup>st</sup> Law Commission in its report?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **What lies ahead?**

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

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

### 62. A doorway to an entrepreneurial university

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

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

**Relevance-** Higher education

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

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

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

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

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

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### **What are some facts about the concept of entrepreneurial university?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **What is the importance of innovation?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Relevance-** Issues related to rural health

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

#### **How can rural postings of doctors be encouraged?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Relevance**– India and US bilateral relations

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

### **Is India-US relationship a strategic partnership?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **What are the major potential areas of collaboration?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Relevance** – Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence

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

### **What is Technology Facilitated Gender Based Violence (TFGBV)?**

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

### **What is the need for the Digital India bill?**

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

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

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

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

### **What are the concerns regarding underage users?**

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

The Digital India bill must also incorporate similar approaches to safeguard the safety and privacy.

Technology space is continuously evolving. A coherent and concerted action with clear responsibility of each stakeholder can help in creating a victim-centered mechanism.

### 66. Artemis Accords: In a new space

**Source:** The post is based on an article "**Artemis Accords: In a new space**" published in the **Indian Express** on **24th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – International Relations.

**Relevance:** About the significance of Artemis Mission and associated challenges.

**News:** Recently, India signed the Artemis Accord. It demonstrates India's commitment to following best practices in space exploration.

About Artemis Mission

**Read Here:** [Explained: The significance of NASA's Artemis mission, the beginning of a new age of human exploration of the Moon](#)

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### **What are the implications of the Artemis Accord for US-India relations?**

By signing the accord, India has aligned itself with the US-led space exploration program, which currently excludes two major space explorers – Russia and China.

Further, the agreement is important considering the US-India relationship in the 1980s and 1990s, when the US hindered India's access to crucial space technology.

It also pressured Russia to retract its commitment to supply cryogenic technology, setting back India's space program for nearly three decades.

Now, in the joint statements, the US has promised to address export controls and facilitate technology transfer. **This indicates a shift in the US stance towards India and a willingness to collaborate on space technology.**

### **What is the significance of the Accord for India?**

India's space plans like human missions, moon landings, planetary explorations, setting up a space station, has already been done by countries like the US, Russia or China.

While achieving these missions independently provide expertise, **there are also concerns of staying behind the other countries in such missions.**

Moreover, India's delay in sending manned missions or landing a satellite on the moon is not due to a lack of capacity or expertise but rather the technology denial regime of earlier years.

Therefore, **joining the US-led alliance is an attempt by India to collaborate on the next generation of space technologies while simultaneously pursuing its own space plans.**

### **What are the challenges with India signing the Artemis Accord?**

Russia has been India's most trusted partner both in the space and defence sectors. Recently, Russia also offered its facilities to train Indian astronauts for the Gaganyaan mission.

Therefore, **India joining a US-led alliance that promotes the interest of the US is not likely to be seen very favourably by Russia.**

Hence, India will have to strike a careful and delicate balance that it has been doing in the energy sector ever since the war in Ukraine.

### 67. Bridging the gap – Efforts to reduce gender disparities must continue in earnest

**Source:** The post is based on an article **“Bridging the gap – Efforts to reduce gender disparities must continue in earnest”** published in **The Hindu** on **24th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Issues Related with Women

**Relevance:** About the Gender Gap Report, 2023 and reducing gender disparities.

**News:** India has seen a rise in its ranking in the annual Gender Gap Report, 2023.

### **What are the key findings of the Gender Gap Report, 2023?**

**Read Here:** [India climbs eight places to 127 in global gender index: WEF report](#)

### **What concerns lie with India in reducing gender disparities?**

Despite the improvement in ranking, there is still more that can be done by India.

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**For instance,** India still has room for progress in the four key areas of the report: economic participation and opportunity, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.

Further, despite India's improvement in female political empowerment with the representation of women of over 40% in local governance, **women still represent only 15.1% of parliamentarians.**

Therefore, Parliament should take efforts in reducing the parity by acting on the long-pending **Women's Reservation Bill**, introduced in 1996. The bill proposes to reserve 33% of seats in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies for women.

Moreover, even though improvement in sex ratio at birth has closed the gender parity, **concerns still lie in India's performance in health and survival.**

### **What measures can be taken by India for reducing gender disparities?**

India must ensure equal access to education for girls, from school to college along with providing opportunities for paid work.

Moreover, offering girls education that guarantees job opportunities can enhance overall development indicators, including nutrition. It can also break the cycle of early marriage and its negative impact on maternal and child health.

### 68. Squaring the circle at the India-Egypt summit

**Source-** The post is based on the article **"A doorway to an entrepreneurial university"** published in **"The Hindu"** on **24th June 2023.**

**Syllabus:** GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

**Relevance-** India and Egypt bilateral relationship

**News-** Prime Minister Narendra Modi is visiting Egypt (June 24-25, 2023).

### **What is the status of the bilateral relationship between India and Egypt?**

**Historical and civilisational connect-** Historically, India-Egypt ties are perhaps the **oldest civilisational link.** In 2750 BCE, the **Pharaoh Sahure** sent ships to peninsular India.

By the middle of the second millennium BCE, **Egyptian mummies** were wrapped in muslin dyed with indigo, both from India.

Past centuries of contacts produced plenty of goodwill and verbal shibboleths. Both countries advocated for decolonisation and favoured non-alignment.

**Trade and investment-** India's trade with Egypt stood at **\$6,061 million in 2022-23.** It has declined by 17% over the previous year. Nearly a third of it was petroleum related.

India was Egypt's **sixth largest trading partner**, while Egypt was **India's 38th.** **Indian investments** in Egypt were spread over 50 projects **totalling \$3.15 billion.** Egypt has invested only **\$37 million in India.**

**Bilateral institutional mechanisms-** India has a **Joint Commission, Foreign Office Consultations and at least nine joint working groups.**

Its **Defence and External Affairs Ministers** visited Egypt during the past year. It had a **bilateral summit** less than five months ago when the Egyptian President, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, visited India.



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### What are the opportunities that can be leveraged for improving bilateral relationships?

Egypt is a large country having a **population of 105 million and an economy (\$378 billion)**. It is **politically stable, and its socio-economic conditions** are quite like India.

Egypt's **largest imports** are refined petroleum, wheat, cars, corn and pharmaceuticals. India has the potential to supply all these.

The Egyptian government has an **ambitious infrastructure development agenda**, with 49 mega projects including the construction of a New Cairo (\$58 billion), and a \$23 billion high-speed rail network.

During 2015-19, Egypt was the world's **third-largest arms importer**.

### What are the challenges in the India and Egypt bilateral relationship?

The Egyptian economy is in a crisis. The huge **financial commitments** have coincided with a **static economy, pandemic, global slowdown and the Ukraine conflict**. **Tourism** has dropped and imports such as cereals have become costly.

**Annual inflation** is above 30% and the currency has lost more than half its value since February 2022. **Foreign exchange scarcity** has forced the deferral of payments for such essentials as wheat.

The Gulf Arab states initially supported the Egyptian economy with nearly \$30 billion. But, they have been lately reluctant due to various **governance issues in Egypt**.

**Egypt's foreign debt** is over **\$163 billion (43% of the GDP)** and its **net foreign assets** are minus \$24.1 billion.

### 69. [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 \(EUA\)](#).

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### **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.**

### 70. [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**.

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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.

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.

### [71. 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.

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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**.

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**.

### 72. [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**.

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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**.

### 73. [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)**.

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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.

**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.

### 74. 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**.

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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.

### **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**.

### 75. 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**.

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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.

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**.



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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**.

### 76. 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**.

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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**.

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.

### [77. 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.

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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.

### [78. 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.

#### **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.

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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.

### 79. **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.

### 80. **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.

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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.

**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**.

### 81. [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.

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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.

**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**.

### 82. 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**.

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**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.*

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.

### 83. 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.

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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**.

### 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.

### 84. [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.



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**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 .

**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.

### 85. 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.

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### What is Way forward?

Most of these problems haven't been sorted out and GST has now emerged as a large and buoyant source of revenue for both the Centre and states.

**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**.

### 86. [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?

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Both nations have announced the US-India [Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies \(iCET\)](#)

**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.

### [87. 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.

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**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.

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### 88. [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.

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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.**

### 89. 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.

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**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**.

### 90. [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.



91. [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

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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**.



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# General Studies Paper –3

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### General Studies - 3

#### 1. [The net zero challenge](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**The net zero challenge**” published in **livemintThe Indian Express** on **5th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Environment. GS3-Economy

**News-** The RBI has released “Currency and Finance Report for 2022-23 — “Towards a greener cleaner India” report.

#### **What are the findings of the report?**

An annual **GDP growth rate of 9.6%** would raise net GHG emissions by **10.5 times** of levels in 2021-22.

The **nationally determined contribution** will set back economic output by as much as **9% by 2049**.

Only a more ambitious action of achieving **net zero by 2050** would limit the losses from extreme weather events and decarbonisation to **3% by 2049**.

The report talks about the **inflationary impact of the status quo** against the alternative of achieving net zero by 2050.

#### **What are the financial risks involved in transition towards net zero?**

The productive life of **existing fossil fuel-based assets will be shortened**. It will expose the banking sector through loans to these assets. Such risks are more pronounced for public-sector banks.

However, the financial risks are not just limited to conventional energy, **non-conventional energy registered an increase in share of industry bad loans**.

There are **risks to assets**, and therefore to the banking system, from the growing incidence of extreme weather events.

#### **What are the policy alternatives mentioned in the report to address these risks?**

The report lays significant emphasis on the **role of fiscal policy**. It makes a case for fiscal intervention in the form of a **carbon tax or an emission trading system**.

It finds that a carbon tax of **\$25 per tonne and \$50 per tonne of Co2** under different scenarios can be effective, alongside other policy interventions.

It mentions the **role of shifts in production to less energy intensive sectors** like fisheries, textiles, land transport and services. But there is no roadmap for these sectors that have long confronted legacy issues.

#### 2. [Banks up to tricks with bad loans again?](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Banks up to tricks with bad loans again?**” published in **Business Standard** on **5th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy – Money & Banking

**Relevance:** About Evergreening of Loans

**News:** The RBI governor in a conference of the directors of public-sector banks (**PSBs**) has made comments regarding tricks adopted by banks to conceal the real status of stressed loans.

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**What are some of the tricks adopted by PSBs?**

[Click Here to Read](#)

**What is the effect of evergreening loans on private and public sector banks?**

**In private banks**, shareholders bear the brunt, promoters may be removed and even face legal consequences.

**In contrast, when PSBs mismanage their finances**, no significant action is taken against bank chairman, board of directors, or officials.

Hence, there is lack of accountability in PSBs due to the absence of core reforms, which has significant implications for the overall banking system.

**Must Read: [RBI governor cautions against evergreening of loans: Are banks, corporates still window-dressing loans?](#)**

**Why do PSBs suffer more loss than the Private sector banks?**

PSBs hold a significant portion of people's savings and play a crucial role in providing loans to small businesses, farming, and acting as the primary channel for government schemes, subsidies, and pensions.

However, despite having the potential to make profits, PSBs have often incurred losses or minimal profits.

**The main reason for the losses is the prevalence of corruption** in lending to unreliable projects that ultimately fail. A large number of small and big businesses have also burdened PSBs with staggering bad loans.

**What is the current situation of bad loans in the PSBs?**

**As per the Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman**, scheduled commercial banks had written off bad loans of ~10 trillion in five years and only 13 percent of the write-off had been recovered.

Further, the cumulative recovery of bad loans through the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) until September has been just 30.8 percent.

Moreover, **more than 90 percent of the bad loans originate in PSBs and many loans are designed to go bad**. When a case is referred to the IBC, there are almost no assets left to recover.

**What can be the way ahead?**

Factors such as bank recapitalization, gradual resolution of bad loans, and overall economic growth have led to a significant increase in the shares of PSBs since 2020.

However, **given the current scenario of evergreening loans, this can again make banks suffer losses**. Hence, the measures by the RBI to check such activities are appreciated.

3. [Corridors, not translocation, key to decongesting India's tiger reserves](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Corridors, not translocation, key to decongesting India's tiger reserves**” published in **The Times of India** on **5<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment – Tiger Conservation**

**News:** The successful implementation of Project Tiger has led to an increase in the tiger population. Due to which, tiger density in some the reserves have increased.

**What are the concerns present with increasing tiger density?**

A high density of tiger population has resulted in increased conflicts between humans and animals.

**This has caused translocating tigers from** the reserves which have a higher density to the reserves which are less congested/empty.

**Why is translocation needed?**

[Click Here to Read](#)

**What are the concerns with the translocation of tigers?**

**Read Here:** [Tiger translocation project: Need and significance – Explained](#)

**What are the different views regarding the translocation of tigers?**

**Some argue that the issue of high tiger density is only a problem in certain over-managed and renowned reserves** as vast areas of tiger habitat do not face issues with high density.

**While others are of the view that congestion does not necessarily require translocation.**

There is a need to prevent degradation of forests in buffer areas and the translocation should only be considered as a last resort.

It is also argued that reintroducing prey and stopping hunting is crucial for the survival of translocated tigers.

**What can be the course of action?**

**First**, in order to reduce the tiger density, **the urgent need is to stop the unscientific practice of habitat manipulation that results in high density of prey.**

This includes clearing extra-wide view lines, the famed ‘exotic weed removal’ schemes, the creation of meadows, creating excessive water holes natural as well as artificial, and replenishment in the dry season.

It is believed that **natural decline in prey density** will eventually lead to a decrease in tiger density.

**Second**, translocating tigers, along with habitat manipulation, is seen as aggravating the problem rather than solving it. Translocation exercises are costly, particularly when conservation funds are limited.

**Instead, corridors between distant reserves can be established to address the issue.**

**Third**, the only solution to tigers spreading into the buffer areas that causes man-animal conflict is the stringent regulation of human activities in those areas and keeping infrastructure development out of the buffer.

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### 4. [Resolute measures can save the planet from the harm of plastics](#)

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “**Resolute measures can save the planet from the harm of plastics**”, published in **Live Mint** on 5<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

**Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper 3, Environmental pollution

**News:** On World Environment Day, 2018, India’s Prime Minister made a historic announcement to make India single-use plastic-free by 2022. Despite the ban on 21 items of single-use plastic last year, the implementation has been ineffective in most parts of the country.

#### **What are some of the facts related to plastic pollution?**

The world produces 400 million tonnes of plastic every year.

About 75% of all plastic ever produced has become waste.

Around the world, one million plastic bottles are purchased every minute, and up to five trillion plastic bags are used worldwide every year. Half of all plastic produced is designed for single-use purposes.

Studies suggest that there will be more plastics than fish in the ocean by 2050.

Most plastic items never fully disappear; they just break down into smaller and smaller pieces. These microplastics can enter the human body and accumulate in organs.

#### **What are the concerns associated with plastic pollution?**

The presence of microplastics has been detected in human organs, and in the placentas of newborn babies. Plastic-associated chemicals, such as methyl mercury, plasticisers, and flame retardants, can enter the body and are linked to health concerns.

The greenhouse gas emission from production, use and disposal of conventional fossil fuel-based plastics is estimated to grow to 19% of the global carbon budget by 2040.

Plastic pollution also results into clogging of drains contributing to urban floods, aesthetic deterioration, landfill leachates, and damage to coral reefs.

#### **What should be done?**

Refusing all single-use plastics and ensuring the extended producer’s responsibility. Full ban on single use plastic should be implemented.

Encouraging local clean-up drives.

Norms and standards must be put in place by governments, cities, towns, businesses, and the finance sector to eliminate unnecessary plastics.

Transitioning from a linear plastics economy to a circular one.

Adopting a low resource-intensive lifestyle and prioritizing the concepts of refuse and reduce over reuse, recycle, and repair is crucial.

Over 100 countries have adopted legislation on plastic bags, and many have introduced rules on single-use plastics more generally. However, these legislations cannot be successful without participation of citizens.

## 5. Dealing with deepfakes

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Dealing with deepfakes**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **6th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Scientific Developments and their Applications and Effects in Everyday Life.

**Relevance**– Issues related to civil society

**News-** On May 28, the wrestlers protesting peacefully in New Delhi were arrested, and boarded in a van. Shortly after, a photo appeared to show four of the wrestlers posing with wide smiles for a selfie in the van.

### **What is deepfake?**

A deepfake is something that a machine has produced using **deep learning** and which contains **false information**.

Deep faking is a significant ‘upgrade’ from photoshopping images. Here, machines process large amounts of data to **falsify images and videos** with fewer imperfections.

### **What are issues with deepfake?**

People worldwide have already used the technology to create a video of Barack Obama verbally abusing Donald Trump, manufacturing **revenge porn**.

Chatbots can **mimic intelligence**. But, it is difficult to tell the difference when they make a mistake. People believe certain information to be ‘true’ because a machine gave it to them.

### **What are potential benefits of deep learning?**

Using deep learning, the ALS Association in the U.S. founded a “**voice cloning initiative**”. It restores the voices of those who had lost it to amyotrophic lateral sclerosis.

**Deep learning** has also been adapted in comedy, cinema, music, and gaming. Experts have recreated the voices and/or visuals of visual artist Andy Warhol.

It has enhanced our ability to understand, and even **reinterpret, history**.

### **What is the way forward to stop the misuse of deep learning?**

Despite its misuse, deep learning can be saved from **bad aspects**, just like the kitchen knife or the nuclear reactor. The focus must be on how it can be used properly.

The experience with **solar geoengineering** offers a useful insight. it **modifies the climate** by blocking sunlight, But. it has planet-wide consequences. Many scientists have called for a **moratorium on the use** of this technology and for **international cooperation**.

There is a need for laws that **regulate its use and punish bad actors**. **Wider consultation** with people for their inputs can guide the future of such a powerful technology.

A good starting point could be manipulation of **hyper-realistic digital representations** of our image and voice. This should be considered a **fundamental moral right** in the age of deepfakes. It can be a stepping stone for individuals to become more scientifically, and digitally literate.

**China** has responded strongly to misuse of deep learning. It has **banned deepfaked visuals** whose creators don’t have permission to modify the original material and which aren’t watermarked.



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### 6. [Built To Not Last – on Bihar bridge collapse](#)

**Source:** This summary is based on the article “ **Built To Not Last** “, published in The Times of India on 6th June 2023.

**Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper 3 – Disaster Management, Infrastructure

**News:** Recently, a 200m stretch of a 3km-long bridge over the Ganga in Bihar collapsed, leading to many deaths.

This is the 2<sup>nd</sup> such incident after the Morbi bridge collapse in Gujarat.

Furthermore, there have been infrastructure related incidents like roads caving in, bridges collapsing, and expressway stretches being washed away across India.

#### **What were the reasons behind Bihar bridge collapse?**

The prevalent state-private contractor-builder nexus is identified as a leading cause.

High-value infrastructure projects often being rushed through without proper structural inspections, quality audits, or safety monitoring. It is to achieve the political success. It results into flawed design and poor construction quality.

No one takes accountability for these repeated failures.

In case of Bihar bridge collapse, 2 issues were highlighted:

1. First, parts of the bridge had already collapsed last year due to wind and rain. IIT-Roorkee experts had noted serious structural defects. However, construction was continued.
2. Second, an attempt was made to downplay the incident by claiming that authorities had demolished the bridge.

#### **What are the effects?**

**First**, human fatalities and injuries.

**Second**, severe environmental pollution. Debris from substandard construction materials, dust, and ash contaminate rivers and country sides, causing damage to aquatic and other ecosystems.

### 7. [Lapses in Road Safety: A casual attitude to safety](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**A casual attitude to safety**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **6th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

**Relevance:** About the Lapses in Road Safety.

**News:** India has just witnessed its most horrific train accident in over two decades in Odisha. A bus carrying some of the injured persons from the train accident site in Balasore to a hospital had a head-on collision with a van in Bengal’s Medinipur district. This questions the issue of road safety and railway safety.

About the recent train accident and the issue of railway safety in India

**Must read:** [The Issue of Indian railway safety – Explained, pointwise](#)

#### **What are the reasons for lapses in road safety?**

There are five primary reasons for accidents — and deaths and injuries due to accidents. They are

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**Faulty design:** Every highway, modern or old, has several well-identified “death traps”. The majority of bad accidents take place primarily because of bad design.

**Poor maintenance and wear and tear:** The Morbi Bridge tragedy in Gujarat is an example of poor maintenance.

**Improper safety protocols and regulations:** These include selling of cars that would not meet crash test regulations, poor implementation of seat belts in automobiles, etc.

**Human error:** This is sometimes compounded by fatigue and boredom.

**Wilful flouting of safety regulations and norms:** This is due to both societal attitudes as well as lack of law enforcement.

**Read more:** [SC directs committee to build a framework to ensure road safety](#)

Consumer and citizen safety has to be the priority for successive governments. Indian citizens should hold the authorities responsible for poor safety and quality enforcement.

**Must read:** [Road Safety in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

### 8. [Seeing India’s energy transition through its States](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “**Seeing India’s energy transition through its States**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **7th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Energy

**Relevance-** Issues related to energy transition

**News-** In the upcoming G20 forum, India is planning to propose a multiple energy pathways approach to accommodate the diverse contexts and development trajectories of countries.

#### **Why are States critical actors in India’s energy transition?**

There is a **multi-tier governance** of energy production and usage. An **effective transition** will require narrowing the **implementation gaps** between the Centre and the States.

India’s achievements on its **2022 target for 175 GW renewable energy** offer some insights. Only Gujarat, Karnataka, and Rajasthan met their individual targets.

States are important for **implementation**. Centre may set goals. But the realisation of these goals often depends on how they are aligned with **State priorities and capabilities**.

There are **legacy issues** in the electricity sector, such as high losses, unreliable supply and service quality. It could be exacerbated by the transition. These must be addressed at the State level.

States are laboratories of **policy innovations**. For example, early initiatives by Gujarat and Rajasthan on solar have contributed significantly to renewable energy uptake at the national level.

Similarly, PM KUSUM is an adoption of successful State experiments on the **solarisation of agriculture** at a national scale.

States could also be **roadblocks to national goals**. It happens when the goals are perceived to be misaligned with State priorities.

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**What is the way forward to ensure that the state plays an important role in energy transition?**

There is a need to engage with diverse **State contexts, capabilities, and priorities**. These are shaped by various factors like **techno-economic options, fiscal space, and social and political imperatives**.

An effective transition requires **multi-scalar planning and execution strategy, consideration of inter-linkages and cross learning**.

Central agencies have also developed **multiple indexes** that rank States on **different aspects of energy transition**. There is a need to complement this with analysis of **State-level preparedness** for energy transition.

**How a state-level framework to understand plans, actions, and governance processes towards an energy transition will expedite transition?**

First, it helps to broaden the transition discourse from a **narrow set of outcomes**. It includes the **processes that shape the outcomes**.

Understanding the effects of transitions on **transparency and accountability** in processes, and **affordability and reliability** of services is crucial.

It leads to **greater transparency** which could enable **participation of stakeholders** in the processes. It will ensure **public legitimacy**.

It would create a greater sensitivity to State-level diversities on **priorities, capacities, and opportunities** in the **national policy discourse**. It enables more **evidence-based policy choices** towards a **pragmatic energy transition**.

### 9. [Bonn meeting: Taking stock of climate action](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“Bonn meeting: Taking stock of climate action”** published in the **“The Indian Express”** on **7th June 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS 3 – Environment – Climate Change

**News**– Negotiators from around the world are currently meeting in the German city of Bonn to discuss ways to strengthen their collective response to climate change.

One of the most important tasks to be accomplished at this year’s Bonn meeting is known as Global Stocktake.

**What are some facts related to Global Stocktake (GST)?**

It is mandated by the **2015 Paris Agreement**. It is aimed at **assessing the progress** being made in the fight against climate change. It decides the ways and means to enhance the global effort to **bridge the adequacy gap**.

This exercise is expected to result in a significant increase in the **global response to climate change**.

The current stocktake has been going on for more than a year now. It is supposed to conclude this year. It is the first such exercise.

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### **Why is the current set of actions inadequate to limit the global temperature rise within 1.5 degree Celsius from pre-industrial times?**

The **sixth assessment report of the IPCC** gives clear indication of it. The world needs to cut its emissions by almost **half by 2030 from the 2019 levels** if it has to retain any realistic chances of achieving the 1.5 degree target.

At current levels of climate action, the world is headed to a nearly **3 degree Celsius warmer world by 2100**.

### **Why is course correction on climate change difficult?**

Under the Paris Agreement, countries are allowed to decide the level of their contribution to the **global effort to contain climate change**.

But, the collective effort of every country is now **proving inadequate**. So, some amount of imposition is necessary. No country is comfortable with that.

### **Why do GST discussions have fault lines similar to climate negotiations?**

Rich and developed countries want **major emitters** like China and India to do more. Developing countries have been reminding the developed countries of their **unfulfilled commitments**.

The **fault lines** were evident during the opening meeting of the third and final round of technical discussions on Tuesday.

The United States said bridging the gap was not the **sole responsibility of the developed countries**. It would not accept such suggestions in the GST decisions.

Developing countries argue that the developed countries were unable to **deliver on their commitments**. It was the main reason for the **climate crisis** in recent years.

The United States also said that the next round of climate action plans finalised by countries must have **emission reduction contributions** from all sectors of the economy.

This again was directed at countries like India. India has not committed to restricting **methane emissions** from agriculture.

### **What is the reaction of India to US suggestions on GST?**

India reacted strongly to the US suggestion. As per India, it would not accept US messages on GST related to **content of a country's Nationally Determined Contributions**.

India said it retained its **"sovereign right"** to determine its climate targets in pursuit of its **national goals**. It aligned itself with other developing countries in reiterating the demand for the closing of **pre-2020 gaps**.

## [10. An Expenditure Council could help promote fiscal prudence](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"An Expenditure Council could help promote fiscal prudence"** published in **Live Mint** on **7<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 3 – Indian Economy – Issues Related to Mobilization of Resources**

**Relevance:** **About the need of Expenditure Council**

**News:** The government's efforts to offer freebies may have economic implications. This highlights the need for a supervisory body, an Expenditure Council (EC), just like the GST Council.

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### **What can be the responsibilities of Expenditure Council?**

**It would be responsible for developing guidelines and promoting consensus** among state governments regarding resource allocation.

**It can implement schemes that encourage inclusive growth**, promote sustainable development, and maintain fiscal health. It could also play a crucial role in providing guidance to state governments in ensuring optimal utilization of funds.

### **What efforts have been taken in the past to examine India's expenditure patterns?**

The Expenditure Reforms Commission (**ERC**) set up by the Atal Bihari Vajpayee government in 2000 has examined India's expenditure patterns.

Similarly, the current government formed an Expenditure Management Commission in 2014 to recommend spending reforms.

However, **no such body facilitated a consensus-building platform between states and the Centre.**

### **Can existing organizations take up the task of examining financial expenditure?**

**National Development Council (NDC):** The NDC, which was associated with the now-dissolved Planning Commission, used to serve this purpose. However, with the dissolution of the Planning Commission, the relevance of the NDC has faded.

**Niti Aayog:** The Niti Aayog is already burdened with multiple responsibilities, which can make it difficult for it to solely focus on this task in the absence of the Planning Commission. Even states may not be keen to collaborate with it on fiscal matters.

**Finance Commission:** It lacks a platform for effective collaboration and strategizing between the central and state governments regarding the efficient utilization of resources.

Thus, **there is a need for an Expenditure Council (EC) to prioritise the areas, especially on the concurrent list where states can spend efficiently.**

### **What can be the structure, objective and functionality of the EC?**

**Structure:** The EC should have a composition **similar to the GST Council**, with the Union finance minister serving as the chairperson. Additional members should include the minister of state in the ministry of finance and finance ministers from all states and Union territories with legislative assemblies.

**Objective:** The primary goal of the EC should be **to foster financial responsibility by establishing guidelines that discourage unnecessary expenditures.** It can shift the focus towards prudent, strategic, and sustainable resource allocation. It can recommend states to refrain from such expenditures which lack long-term benefits.

**Functionality:** EC could analyse state-level schemes and budgets, identify unnecessary expenses, and recommend strategies for their reduction or alteration. **It could also regularly publish reports and guidelines**, providing a roadmap for state governments to follow.

Moreover, instead of imposing decisions, **the EC should encourage dialogue and cooperation among states**, facilitating the development of shared understandings.

**Voting:** In voting, **EC should have the same mechanism as the GST Council.** The Union finance minister would hold a third of the voting power, while the combined states possess the

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remaining two-thirds. Any decision would necessitate at least three-fourths of the total votes to pass.

**There is also a need to establish robust dispute resolution mechanism** to efficiently handle disagreements or disputes that might arise from its decisions.

Hence, this holistic approach would ensure that the EC is well-equipped to handle the complex nature of national financial planning, promoting sustainable growth and economic stability.

### 11. [The Great India Stack Story](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**The Great India Stack Story**” published in **The Times of India** on 7<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy – Inclusive Growth

**Relevance:** About digital financial inclusion

**News:** The article explains India’s achievement in digital financial inclusion.

#### **How has financial inclusion evolved?**

The term financial inclusion was first introduced by former RBI governor YV Reddy, emphasizing the importance of enhancing access to banking services for marginalized sections of society.

However, the term today has evolved to digital financial inclusion.

#### **What is digital financial inclusion?**

Digital financial inclusion includes universal access to and use of formal financial services relating to saving, borrowing, investing, insurance and pension by digital means. Thus, going beyond microfinance and microcredit.

India, in this area, has emerged as a global and undisputed leader during the past nine years.

#### **What is India’s digital financial infrastructure?**

India Stack is India’s digital financial infrastructure. It addresses nearly all aspects of financial inclusion using digital technology.

The infrastructure is secure, reliable, and interoperable among different companies. In terms of efficiency, access, cost effectiveness and scale, it has no competitors around the world.

India Stack effectively ‘stacks’ three different layers of digital infrastructure.

#### **What are the three different layers of digital infrastructure in India Stack?**

**Layer 1:** Layer 1 is the [Aadhaar](#) identity system, which enables electronic verification of an individual’s identity. Within this layer, electronic authentication of identity (e-KYC) and electronic signing of documents (e-Sign) are facilitated.

**Layer 2:** Layer 2 of India Stack is the payment layer formed by platform Unified Payments Interface (UPI), which intermediates secure fund transfers between Aadhaar-linked bank accounts in real time and at no or minuscule cost. The system facilitates peer-to-peer (P2P) as well as peer-to-merchant (P2M) transactions.

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**Layer 3:** Layer 3 of India Stack is the data layer. Once fully implemented, financial information providers (FIPs) such as banks, credit rating agencies, insurance providers, etc. would store the transactions data of their customers under their Aadhaar numbers on the platform.

Financial information users (FIUs) such as lenders, wealth managers, brokers and wallet firms will have access to these data but not directly.

However, only the RBI-regulated account aggregator fiduciaries will have direct access to the platform and would, with the consent of the customer, provide their data to the FIUs in return for a fee.

This data sharing will speed up transactions such as loan and insurance sales and facilitate targeted marketing.

### What can be the way ahead?

With the help of Layers 1 and 2, digital financial transactions have grown from just 4.4% of GDP in 2015-16 to 76.1% in 2022-23.

Further, India's digital platforms are also **integrating financial inclusion with economic inclusion**. The government now makes cash transfers directly to the bank accounts of farm families.

Even other countries are looking forward to adopting India's DPI model. These all show India's achievements in financial as well as economic inclusion.

### [12. How can we transition to a low-carbon city?](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article **"How can we transition to a low-carbon city?"** published in **The Hindu** on **8<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Environment

**Relevance:** Measures needed for transitioning cities worldwide.

**News:** There has been a significant increase in the emission of carbon dioxide in 2020 by the cities worldwide.

Transitioning to low-carbon economy requires to integrate mitigation and adaptation options in multiple sectors. **This is called the 'sector-coupling approach'** and it is necessary to decarbonise urban systems.

### Why are energy-system transitions important?

**An energy-system transition could reduce urban carbon dioxide emissions by around 74%.** Therefore, the transition must focus on both the demand and supply sides.

**On the supply side,** actions include phasing out fossil fuels, increasing the use of renewable energy sources, and employing carbon capture and storage technologies.

**On the demand side,** the "avoid, shift, improve" framework should be adopted. This involves reducing energy and material demand, shifting to renewable alternatives, and improving energy efficiency.

Additionally, in order to address residual emissions in the energy sector, we must implement carbon-dioxide removal (**CDR**) technologies.

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### **What can be the different strategies adopted to mitigate and adapt to low-carbon cities?**

The strategies to mitigate and adapt to low-carbon varies based on a city's characteristics.

**Established Cities:** Established cities can focus on modifying existing infrastructure to improve energy efficiency. Promoting public and active transportation like walking and cycling would also help.

Measures such as electrifying public transport and implementing renewable-based district cooling and heating can also be adopted.

**Rapidly Growing City:** Rapidly growing cities can aim to bring workplaces closer to residential areas and reducing transport energy demand. These cities can also adopt low-carbon technologies, including renewables and carbon capture and storage (CCS).

**New and Emerging Cities:** These have great potential for emissions reduction by implementing energy-efficient services, adopting people-centric urban designs, and enforcing building codes that require net-zero energy use.

### **How can an energy transition be just?**

Energy systems are directly and indirectly linked to livelihoods, local economic development, and the socio-economic well-being of people.

Hence, **a one-size-fits-all approach is insufficient to ensure a socially and environmentally just transition in energy systems.**

This is because **transitioning to renewable-energy sources could affect groups of people or communities in developing economies and sectors that depend on fossil fuels.**

Therefore, balancing energy supply with rapidly growing energy demand, ensuring energy security, and considering export needs are important.

Additionally, **addressing issues related to land dispossession** in large-scale renewable energy projects, spatial concentration of poverty, marginalization of communities, gendered impacts, etc. are important.

Moreover, **developing economies such as Nigeria, Angola, and Venezuela, which rely heavily on fossil fuel exports**, may face significant economic challenges when transitioning away from these industries.

Therefore, **a socially and environmentally just energy transition requires specific approaches that address the diverse situations and challenges**, ensuring that no one is left behind.

### **What lies ahead?**

**Transitioning cities to low-carbon energy systems requires efforts that consider factors such as urbanization, national contexts, and institutional capacities.**

Hence, it is important to **engage multiple stakeholders in energy governance and decision-making processes.**



### 13. India could learn from Thailand how to boost tourism

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**India could learn from Thailand how to boost tourism**” published in **Live Mint** on **8<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 3 – Industries and Industrial Policies**

**Context:** The article discusses the success of Thailand’s tourism industry and suggests ways India could learn from it to boost its own tourism sector.

Between 2015 and 2019, tourist arrivals to Thailand jumped from 30 million to 40 million. Despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the country is still expected to attract about 25 million tourists this year.

#### **Significance of the tourism industry**

The World Travel and Tourism Council estimates the industry amounted to 7.6% of global gross domestic product (GDP) last year, despite pandemic effects.

Southeast Asia’s success now extends beyond Thailand to Vietnam and even tiny Cambodia (which received 6.6 million tourists in 2019).

#### **What are the factors behind success of Thailand Tourism?**

Thailand’s tourism policies, such as visa-free travel for many countries, have also contributed to its success.

Thailand has been successful in attracting tourists due to its innovative approach to tourism. An example is the Eathai food court in Bangkok, which offers a hygienic and accessible street food experience for both locals and foreigners.

The Thai government removed the requirement for the Thailand Pass, which had been a deterrent for tourists due to the need to obtain Thai health insurance. This led to a surge in arrivals in the second half of the year.

After slowdown from China, Thai government conducted roadshows across India to drum up business.

#### **What are the challenges India’s Tourism industry is facing?**

India attracted 11 million tourists in 2019. The number will reduce further if visitors of Indian origin returning to visit family are deducted.

Initiatives like ‘Dekho Apna Desh’ campaign are not attractive to foreign tourists.

Initiatives like lowering GST for hotels are insufficient to attract foreign travelers.

India needs the initiatives like first Incredible India! advertising campaigns, which made India from being a backpackers’ destination to being a country loved by the luxury traveller. This year also has been declared “Incredible India! Visit India Year” by the government. But the slogan has become old and repetitive. Innovation is the need of the hour.

#### **What can the course of action?**

Instead of merely expanding the number of countries eligible for an e-visa, India could introduce visa-free travel for the G20 and wealthier Southeast Asian neighbors.

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### 14. Augmenting capacity – on setting up decentralised grain storage facility

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Augmenting capacity**” published in **Business Standard** on **8<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 3 – storage, transport and marketing of agricultural produce**

**News:** Rs 1-trillion programme approved by the Union Cabinet in India to create the world’s largest decentralised grain storage capacity in the cooperative sector.

The godowns will be built at the block level and run by cooperatives.

Cooperative societies would provide various utilitarian services to farmers. Which will include grain procurement, fair price shops, custom hiring centers for farm machinery, and common facilities for grading, sorting, assaying, and preliminary processing of the farm produce.

#### **How will the grain storage facility benefit farmers?**

Saving on transportation costs, as they would not have to take the produce to distant mandis (markets).

Realization of better prices by keeping their produce in safe custody and selling them in the lean season at higher prices.

The post-harvest losses for perishable commodities like fruit and vegetables are as high as 25 to 30 per cent.

The receipts issued by the warehouses for the stored stuff would serve as legally valid collateral for institutional loans.

On a broad level, it will tackle the paucity of grain storage space by increasing capacity by 70 million tonnes.

Lastly, the scheme will not create an extra burden on the exchequer. It would be implemented by the Ministry of Cooperation by leveraging the funds available under various existing schemes of different ministries

### 15. The trade landscape is changing structurally to India’s advantage

**Source-** The post is based on the article “The trade landscape is changing structurally to India’s advantage” published in the “mint” on 8th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Indian economy

**Relevance-** Issues related to trade

**News-** The article explains the phenomena of increasing exports of India.

#### **How rising exports in India reflects structural changes in the trade basket?**

India added 628 new products to its **export basket** by 2022. The new products are highly concentrated in **high-tech manufactured goods, chemicals, and electronics**.

Between 1994 and 2022, India has carved out **new markets** for over 600 products. It has become the market leader in some of these **new product categories**. For instance, India is a large net exporter of certain turbojets and defence technology.

The growth of the **new product basket** outpaces the growth of **legacy products**. Productions such as helicopters, arms and ammunition, and electrical machinery registered some of the highest growth rates.

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Exports of India's **top-three products**, which include petroleum, diamonds, and medicaments, continue to grow. But the share of these products is declining.

### **How does a change in product basket impact sensitivity to exchange rate fluctuations?**

Research shows that as the **export baskets** shift towards **high-value goods**, there is decline in the **sensitivity of exports to real effective exchange rates**.

While the **exchange rate sensitivity** was as high as 2.5 for 1994-2007, it shows a significant drop to 0.6 for 2008-2022.

There is rising **integration with the global value chains (GVCs)**. It is also responsible for decline in sensitivity to exchange rate.

### **How beneficial is the PLI scheme beneficial for the Indian economy?**

Most of India's GVC participation has generally remained **upstream**. Upstream trade involves **less value-addition** and can be more prone to **demand shocks**.

In this context, policies such as the **production-linked incentive scheme (PLI)** can prove useful for developing downstream linkages. The PLI scheme can further integrate India into **downstream GVCs** by **incentivising global manufacturers** to set up shop in India.

PLI scheme is criticised for manufacturers **using incentives** to set up assembly units which are **low in value** instead of manufacturing plants.

The experience of countries like China and Vietnam shows that assembly in **low value added**, led to **employment generation** for a large number of low-skilled workers.

The assembly units also helped build **backward linkages** to domestic sectors in these countries, creating further value-addition.

As firms build their footprint, they will develop into producing more sophisticated components. It will lead to higher value creation.

### **How is India's performance in the services exports?**

Early 2000s was a period of BPOs mushrooming to provide **cost-cutting back-end information technology (IT) services**. India now looks beyond just cost-cutting.

Data from the Asian Development Bank shows that India went from providing **back-end services in law, IT and management** in 2010 to **upstream, high-value-added services** in these areas by 2020.

Our services exports have also shown a **low degree of vulnerability** to **global income fluctuations**. For instance, services exports to the US and Canada have shown a low degree of correlation with the GDP growth in these countries.

### **How India's integration into manufacturing GVCs can also increase through exports of services?**

Intangible services include **pre- and post-production activities** such as **supply chain management know-how, brand management and design**.

Firms specialising in **pre- and post-production activities** within a GVC make the largest value additions.

### 16. A Ghostly Tale For World Oceans Day

**Source**– The post is based on the article “ **A Ghostly Tale For World Oceans Day** ” published in “**The Times of India**” on **8th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Environment Pollution

**Relevance:** Issues related to Marine life

**News-** The article highlights the importance of ocean health and conservation of marine life on World Ocean Day.

#### **What are the issues related to oceans?**

**The FAO report** indicates **30% of the world’s ocean stocks are over-exploited**, depleted or recovering from depletion caused by various factors. These factors are overfishing, by-catch of species caught in fishing gears, climate change, marine debris etc.

Every year **an estimated 8 million tonnes of plastic waste** end up in the oceans.

Abandoned, lost or discarded fishing gear commonly is referred to as ‘**ghost gear**’. It accounts for **roughly 10%** of all marine debris accumulating in our marine environment

#### **What are the problems created by ghost gear?**

Ghost gear is a **threat to biodiversity and marine habitats**, especially corals and endangered species like sharks, turtles and dugongs.

Ghost gear also causes **increased operational costs** for boat owners. Lost gear is a hazard to boat navigation and safety at sea.

Significant costs are incurred to remove entangled gear from propellers or engines. Entangled gear causes **breakdowns leading to costs of repair and rescue**, and loss of fuel.

#### **What are the solutions in this regard?**

**Ocean clean-ups** can remove ghost gear. It is all-important to have strategies at landing centres and fishing harbours to prevent ghost-gear pollution.

Governments, companies and gear manufacturers should **incentivise – by money or discounts** and access facilities – fishers to return used and damaged fishing gear.

Fishing gears collected should be part of a ‘**circular economy**’ for recycling or upcycling, transformed into art, ornaments or sports nets among other useful things.

Eliminating ghost gear from the ocean requires **commitment, cooperation and innovation** at every level throughout the fishing-gear supply chain

There is a need to spread awareness among fishers by **training local communities** in upcycling ghost nets.

An untapped potential of ghost gear creates **new business opportunities and additional sources** of income for marginalized fishing communities.

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### 17. [Deadly billboards – Despite frequent accidents, there is no political will to regulate billboards](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Deadly billboards – Despite frequent accidents, there is no political will to regulate billboards**” published in **The Hindu** on **8th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Road Safety.

**Relevance:** About billboard accidents in India.

**News:** Giant outdoor billboards are crashing and becoming death traps for many in recent times. The recent deaths of three workers, in Coimbatore last week, after they were crushed by the falling steel frames of a hoarding is one such example.

Why there are increased incidents of billboard accidents?

**a)** Many municipal corporations fail to curb unlicensed hoardings, **b)** Occasional corrective actions against billboards are often due to the intervention of the judiciary or triggered by fatal accidents. For example, the Tamil Nadu government removed thousands of unauthorised hoardings in Chennai on the directions of the Supreme Court in 2008, **c)** Many leaders, especially political leaders, encourage their larger-than-life projections on flex banners and illuminated cut-outs and **d)** There is a lack of manpower in municipalities to enumerate unlicensed hoardings, periodically inspect authorised billboards, and act against unstable or illegal ones.

All these made enforcing legal and all-weather structural stability requirements of billboards being ignored.

**Read more:** [Lapses in Road Safety: A casual attitude to safety](#)

What should be done to prevent further billboard accidents?

The outdoor advertising market globally is poised to grow to \$67.8 billion in 2023. So to prevent further billboard accidents the government should do the following.

**a)** Violators deserve stringent punishment, **b)** International studies have pointed to billboards being dangerous distractions on roads as they affect a driver’s response time, vehicle lateral control and situational awareness. So, accidents caused by such distractions must be documented in the annual Road Accidents in India report.

**Must read:** [Road Safety in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

### 18. [Cities Never Sleep States are allowing more shops to run 24×7. They need to back it with better policing, public transport](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Cities Never Sleep – States are allowing more shops to run 24×7. They need to back it with better policing, public transport**” published in **The Times of India** on **8th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

**Relevance:** About shops and establishments running round the clock.

**News:** The Delhi government has recommended that 155 shops and establishments be granted permission to run round the clock. If this proposal is cleared it will take the list of such shops running round the clock to 523. It acknowledges the changing pattern of work in urban India.

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About legislation on shops and establishments

Legislation and operating conditions for shops and establishments come under the ambit of state assemblies. Most states have been relaxing restrictions and giving shops more leeway in the way they operate.

What are the challenges in Delhi's decision to permit shops and establishments to run round the clock?

Shops and establishments in Delhi face bureaucratic interferences when they are working 24×7. For example, the Tamil Nadu government allow blanket permission to all shops and establishments to work round the clock. The only condition is that each employee must be given at least a day off in a week and written consent is needed from women who work through the night.

What should be done to ensure the smooth operation of shops and establishments?

**a)** India needs far better policing and a public transport ecosystem that also adapts to these changes, **b)** Permitting shops can play a critical role in encouraging more women to join the workforce or enhance their prospects by opening opportunities beyond their neighbourhood.

So before permitting shops and establishments to run round the clock, states first need to strengthen their most basic function.

### [19. Bridging the growing trust deficit in Manipur](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Bridging the growing trust deficit in Manipur**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **9th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Security

**Relevance-** Security Issues related to north-east

**News- Ethnic** violence between the Meiteis and the Kukis in Manipur is taking place for some days, especially after the Manipur High Court's march order. The order asked the State to recommend Scheduled Tribe (ST) status to Meiteis.

#### **What are the concerns of Kukis that are responsible for conflict?**

Manipur High Court asked the State to recommend **ST status to Meiteis**.

The Manipur government had begun a drive to evict tribal villages from reserved forests. It was perceived to be an **anti-tribal move**. It led to **discontent and suspicion** among the Kukis and other tribals.

Hundreds of Kuki tribals have been dislodged from their **traditional settlement areas** without **rehabilitation**.

#### **What are the concerns of Meiteis that are responsible for conflict?**

Meiteis form **52% of the State's population** but are restricted to **10% of the geographical area**. They cannot **shift and relocate** themselves because of their **non-inclusion in the ST category** to the hill area.

Meiteis are concerned that non-inclusion in STs list has deprived them of the **right to occupy** 90% of the territory of the State.

The **land issue** is more crucial for them. Meiteis have had a history of violence and struggles before integration with India and acquiring the Hindu tag.

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They formed **several insurgent groups** such as the People's Liberation Army, with bases in Bangladesh and Myanmar. They also protested the **presence of Mayangs** which included **Manipur Muslims called Pangals**.

### What is the way forward to calm the situation?

The solution lies in **military operations**, till the **intensity and the spread** of the violence is controlled. The Indian Army, the Central Reserve Police Force, the Border Security Force and even the Indian Air Force have been deployed.

The Centre's stand and the presence of the Army and central forces are restoring the **confidence of the Kukis**.

The **administrative and judicial interventions** of the immediate past have proved to be very costly. It is necessary to take care of the **sensitivities of the tribals, their susceptibilities**. There is a need to **undo the damaging steps** that have created the **trust deficit**, which is the root cause for the turmoil now.

### [20. Before talking cooperation, China needs to stop aggression against India](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“Before talking about cooperation, China needs to stop aggression against India”** published in the **“The Indian Express”** on **9th June 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Bilateral groupings and agreements

**News**– Recently, China's top diplomat to India, Ma Jia, wrote that China and India can work together towards the recovery and growth of the world economy (**[‘A Focus on Common Interests’, IE June 2](#)**).

### What are the steps needed to be taken by China for improving relations with India?

There is a huge difference between China's claim to have a **peaceful relationship** with India and its actions. Beijing should undergo a **psychological assessment**. It should maintain **pragmatism into its South Asia policy**.

There is a need to **mend ties**. Acknowledging India as an **indispensable Asian and global power** is a starting point for any future cooperation.

Certain **good faith measures** are needed. It should **maintain calm** at the borders. It should not undermine India's **relationship with its neighbors** in South Asia. Maintaining **peace at the borders** is the first step towards cooperation.

Moreover, there is no **strategic logic** for the **uninhabitable high grounds** that China is trying to capture.

China has built a **foreign policy narrative** based on a lack of respect from the West. It should **treat everyone with respect**, especially a **rising power** like India.

### Why does the onus of improving relationships lie more on China?

Indians feel that China's India policy is driven by **dogmas such as the Middle Kingdom and unipolar Asia**.

Since the 1962 Sino-Indian war, Sinophiles within the Indian establishment have held the view that **China's frontier aggression** is driven by Beijing's desire to contain India in Asia and the developing world.

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China's dream of a **unipolar Asia** will never materialise. If Japan was a **counterweight** in the past, India is the counterweight of the future. Recent **macroeconomic forecasts** suggest that India's position is strong in a long run.

### **What are the impacts of Chinese aggressive moves on its relationship with India?**

China's aggression is pushing India towards military alignment with **West**. It exacerbates **China's security dilemma** with a **deepening Indo-US alliance**.

India has had more hesitation with the West than it has with China today. However, **China's belligerence** is creating a new set of **hesitations for China**.

When India joined the **RCEP negotiations** in 2012 and became the **second-biggest stakeholder in the AIIB** in 2014, it was seen as the start of Asian multilateralism.

New **Delhi's** refusals for the RCEP show increasing disenchantment with ideas built on **promises of cooperation**. The clashes in Galwan changed things forever.

### 21. What Manoj Mishra got right about Yamuna restoration

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**What Manoj Mishra got right about Yamuna restoration**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **9th June 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Environment

**Relevance**- Issues related to river pollution

**News**– On Sunday, hundreds of volunteers from all walks of life formed a human chain along the banks of the Yamuna to raise awareness about the pollution in the river.

### **What are the issues with the approach to rejuvenating rivers in India?**

There is **no paradigm shift** in the **approach to rejuvenating rivers** in more than 40 years. Ganga Action Plan had an **STP (Sewage treatment Plant)-centred approach**.

The **Namami Gange plan** also assigns a **dominant role to STPs**. The Namami Gange seems to be a replica of the GAP.

There is a lack of **creative thinking**. There are shortcomings in **cleaning the river approach**. River needs to have enough water and its floodplains shouldn't be obstructed from **recharging groundwater**.

The **current paradigm of pollution control** aims to control the **quality of the effluent** at the source of the pollution. It does not bother about the **river's assimilative capacity**.

### **What is a better approach to rejuvenate the river Yamuna in Delhi?**

The Yamuna is not just about the water body that flows through **Delhi**. Attention should be given to what **happens upstream**. Care should be taken of the **needs of the people** who depend on it downstream.

A river has its own **capacity to tackle pollution**. But these are contingent on its flow. Flow depends on **upstream aquifers**. Besides, there are **seasonal variations** in the amount of water. Aquatic plants also help the river **assimilate pollution**.

Tackling industrial pollutants is important. No river has the capacity to **cleanse inorganic pollutants**. A better approach should be to account for both **effluent standards** and the **ability of the river to tackle pollution**.



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Delhi should look at **alternate sources** for its drinking water like rainwater harvesting and groundwater recharging.

Absence of a **statutory provision** to safeguard floodplains is a big issue. There is a need for a **River Regulation Zone**, along the lines of the **Coastal Regulation**.

Diversion of water by building barrages does injustice to the river: **“Lift not divert water”** is the right strategy.

### **What are issues with river management in Delhi?**

The master plans of Delhi paid little attention to the **relationship of the city’s people with the Yamuna**. **Urban planning** in the country does not give attention to the **geomorphology of water bodies**.

The industrial and drinking water needs of Haryana on the west of the river and UP on the east are predominantly met by groundwater. However, the Delhi Jal Board is getting nearly **90% of its needs from surface water**.

In the past, Delhi did not depend on the Yamuna for **potable water**. It relied on step wells, water tanks and canals. Things began to change in the late 19th century.

### 22. Getting railway safety back on track after Odisha

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“Getting railway safety back on track after Odisha”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **9th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Disaster management

**Relevance**– Issues related to rail accident

**News**- A major train accident happened at Bahanaga Bazar station in Balasore district, Odisha, on the evening of June 2.

### **What may be the possible causes of the accident?**

There is **interlocking of signals** and routes through a **series of relays and logic gates**. It ensures that a train is guided by signals to a route to avoid an encounter with another train. In this case, this interlocking might be overridden by **manual intervention**.

There are two possible causes. In the first, it was done by a **signal maintainer** who has access to the **equipment hut or relay room**. He may have acted in haste to **expedite the maintenance work** so that the running train is not affected.

In the second instance, it is done with **criminal intention** to cause an accident.

However, it is quite surprising to understand that a signal maintainer can meddle with the system and cause havoc of this magnitude.

The heart of the **interlocking equipment** is housed in a **central relay room** in the main station building. The station master and the maintainer have keys to a double lock.

The **tampering with equipment** in this room is possible by the maintainer, in connivance with the station master. But, the chances of this are low.

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On the other hand, there are some pieces of **remote equipment** installed in **huts and location boxes**. The access to these is possible only by the **authorised maintainer**. The possibilities of tampering are greater in such locations.

### **What is the way forward to avoid such types of accidents?**

**Stronger safeguards** against such misadventures are needed.

The provision of a **double lock system** even for remote huts in railway stations can be explored. But it increases the chances of train delays.

This is an age of mobile phones and IT applications, and it is possible to have a system of **multiple digital authorisations** to access such equipment without the **physical movement** of staff other than the maintainers.

The rail network in India is **largely saturated**, the number of train services has gone up exponentially. There is a need to **fill all vacancies** in the safety categories.

The **provision of Kavach** could not have prevented this accident. But other aspects of safety do demand **faster implementation of Kavach**. This would not only enhance rail safety but also improve the sectional capacity to run more trains.

### 23. Investment: The Next Big Story

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Investment: The Next Big Story**” published in **The Times of India** on **9<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development**

**Relevance:** **About the factors behind increasing investment rates**

**News:** The article explains factors behind the increasing investments rates in India.

### **What is investment and what are its impacts?**

**At an aggregate level**, investment refers to spending by economic agents (households, private corporations and government) on creation of capital assets.

**In the short run**, investment influences GDP via the transactional impact of generation of capital assets while **in the longer run**, it boosts the productive capacity of the economy and increases overall efficiency.

### **What has been India’s investment story?**

India’s share of investments in GDP (investment rate) peaked at 35.8% in 2007-08, while it dropped to 27.3% in 2020-21 due to the pandemic.

However, the investment rate has recovered to 29.2% in 2022-23. Further, the investment rate attained a level of 31.7% on a standalone basis during January-March 2023, the highest in the last 35 quarters.

### **What caused the rise in the investment rate?**

**First**, the government implemented counter-cyclical fiscal policy to support the economy when the private sector withdrew due to uncertainty.

The government’s budgetary capital spending has jumped from its pre-Covid level of 3.6% of GDP in 2019-20 to 4.9% of GDP in 2022-23, the highest since the Global Financial Crisis in 2008.

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**Second**, the government has tried to retain focus on long term macro-stability while announcing structural measures to revive investments.

**For example**, the National Infrastructure Pipeline, National Monetisation Programme, Gati Shakti, etc. has attempted to improve the business climate.

**Third**, with the RBI's intervention, **the twin balance sheet syndrome**, which was a burden on both the corporate sector as well as the banking sector, has now improved.

**As per CMIE data**, the non-financial sector's debt has declined sharply from 16.8% in 2020-21 to 10.7% in 2022-23. This has helped boost profitability in the corporate sector.

This improvement has translated into better asset quality for the banking sector. **As per RBI data**, the gross NPA ratio of all scheduled commercial banks reduced from 11.2% in FY18 to 5.0% in September 2022.

**Fourth**, Normalisation of economic activity after the pandemic has also pushed up investments.

**Fifth**, geopolitical preference of 'China Plus One' strategy has benefited countries like India, Vietnam and Bangladesh in attracting and boosting investments.

**Sixth**, input price inflation has shown signs of moderation. **For instance**, the price of the Brent crude oil has decreased from the previous year. This decline would help lower WPI inflation.

### What can be the way ahead?

The global economic downturn and strong tightening of interest rates over the last year have created near-term cyclical headwinds. These factors may temporarily slow down the pace of investment rate.

However, **according to the IMF**, India has had one of the strongest post-Covid gains in investment rate, and it likely to outperform peer groups in the long run. Therefore, we can continue to expect the investment rate to increase further.

### 24. [RBI puts bank boards on notice](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "RBI puts bank boards on notice" published in **Business Standard** on 9<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy – Money & Banking

**Relevance:** About the recent meeting of the RBI governor

**News:** Recently, the RBI governor held a conference with private as well as public sector banks' directors.

### What are the excerpts of the meeting?

The RBI Governor expressed confidence in the resilience of the Indian banking system, due to the implementation of various initiatives.

**For instance**, the RBI has implemented established a dedicated vertical for supervisors and a college of supervisors.

Furthermore, the central bank has ensured a degree of independence for key assurance functions in banks, **such as risk management, compliance, and internal audit**, through a system of dual reporting to the CEO and the board.

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The **RBI's off-site surveillance**, which requires banks to upload raw data to the RBI, has been beneficial in providing an overall view of risks at individual banks and within the system.

Further, the **Annual Financial Inspection report and the Risk Assessment Report (RAR)**, which the RBI submits to banks, have been crucial at pointing out areas of concern.

Now, the major problem areas highlighted in the RAR is resolved within a few weeks or months of submission of the report instead of taking too much time.

Moreover, the RBI governor presented a 10-point charter for bank boards. Out of which, there were few important issues that require serious consideration.

### **What were the important issues highlighted by the RBI governor?**

**Dominance of CEOs:** The RBI governor has said that the dominance of the CEO is the central problem of governance in bank boards.

He gave the example of **the failure of the Royal Bank of Scotland (RBS)** during the global financial crisis. Despite having a high-profile board with the necessary skills, the board was unable to prevent the disastrous decisions made by the CEO.

Further, it becomes difficult for directors to challenge a CEO especially if he or she has a track record of performance. Therefore, directors worry that they may derail a performing CEO.

**Composition of Board Member:** Board members are often selected from a limited pool of individuals, including former CEOs, retired bureaucrats, and other professionals.

They have good relations with the CEOs. Due to which, they find it difficult to challenge the decisions made by the CEOs.

Further, directors often receive significant compensation, and the CEO plays a crucial role in the renewal of their terms. This creates a situation where directors do not find it suitable in challenging the CEOs.

Hence, to address the issue, **it is necessary to have at least one or two directors whose selection is independent of the CEO and the promoter.**

**Changing the experts:** Currently, the board members include experts from the small-scale sector and agriculture specialists.

However instead of including these experts, the regulator should focus on three areas of expertise: **banking, audit, and risk management.**

### **What can be the way ahead?**

The RBI governor highlighted the concerns and shortcomings in the banking system.

He urged boards to value the system of a bank and make it into a healthy corporate sector as it directly impacts the institution's reputation, stability, and long-term viability.

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### 25. Odisha train collision: Solutions that don't take Railways back to business-as-usual

**Source-** The post is based on the article “Odisha train collision: Solutions that don't take Railways back to business-as-usual” published in the “The Indian Express” on 10th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Infrastructure

**Relevance-** Issues related to safety of railways

**News-** Recently, there was death of nearly 300 passengers in a train accident at Balasore in Odisha. It has drawn attention to the safety preparedness of the Indian Railways.

#### **What are issues related to operation and maintenance that impacts the safety of railways?**

There are issues of **highly-congested trunk routes**. This generates pressure, both on **operations and maintenance**.

**Excess time for maintenance** means **slow operations**. Focussing on train operations without sufficient time for maintenance means a more **failure-prone system**.

A system of **providing traffic blocks** in the passenger timetable already exists. Time is allocated for maintenance along a route, where no trains are scheduled. Earlier, there was **discretion in the utilisation** of this block period.

The reason for providing discretion was to give operations sufficient room to deal with train delays or to push unscheduled freight trains.

Today, it is still not a complete solution even though blocks are granted as required by the maintenance departments.

There is a lack of **mutually agreed annual plan** between the maintenance departments and the operations department for coordinated use of the traffic block.

The second issue is directly connected to the recent mishap. There was **tampering with the signalling equipment**.

It has been suggested that the immense pressure on the field staff at **highly congested routes** leads to the **adoption of shortcuts**.

The current practice of a **disconnection memo** to the station master from the signal maintainer followed by a connection memo is not strictly followed.

The staff is under severe strain to minimise failures and ensure that trains are not detained due to a failure.

The **two-agency authorization** for opening the relay room, where all the **sensitive equipment** resides, is violated. Other equipment like junction boxes and point machines are protected with seals but again these can be broken.

#### **What is the way forward to resolve these issues?**

There are a couple of measures that could address the **systemic constraints**.

The basic idea is **improvement at systemic level** and move away from a reliance on the **ingenuity of the individual**.

It is possible to make an **annual plan of maintenance and map** it on the block corridors so that all infrastructure assets are maintained.

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There is a need to **internalise the paper memo process** and the physical locks and seals as part of the electronic system. It needs to develop the **necessary software** and implement it in the field.

### 26. The necessity of electricity distribution companies

**Source-** The post is based on the article “The necessity of electricity distribution companies” published in “The Hindu” on 10th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Energy

**Relevance-** Issues related to electricity sector

**News-** The article explains the issue of reforms in the electricity sector.

#### **What are the reforms introduced by the Electricity Act 2003?**

It provided the framework for the **dismantling of the State Electricity Boards**. It provided for **separation of generation, transmission and distribution** into separate companies.

Electricity **generation** was **delicensed**, while **transmission and distribution** remained **licenced** and regulated activities.

Under the new regime, a **competitive industry in generation** has evolved. The share of private investment in the creation of **new generating capacity** has increased rapidly.

**Competitive procurement** through **long-term power purchase agreements** has grown. The prices discovered through the market are **lower than anticipated** under the earlier arrangement for determining tariffs.

The impressive growth in renewable power is the result of **private investment**. Further, India now has one of the cheapest rates for solar power supply in the world.

#### **What is practice followed in the United Kingdom?**

In the U.K, a **mandatory power pool** had been created. Here, all generators submitted bids for the next day, indicating the quantity they could supply along with the price. The demand and supply the **pool price for electricity**.

There is **full retail competition**. Consumers could choose from among several suppliers.

#### **Why are these reform ideas unsuitable for India?**

Power is supplied from individual power plants through **long-term contracts** at prices determined for each. As the plant depreciates, the **fixed cost component** in the tariff declines. So, the older the plant, the cheaper its electricity.

If India adopts the **free market model**, all electricity would be sold at the price of the electricity from the **most expensive plant** at which demand would be fully met.

#### **What are issues related to open access and cross-subsidisation in the electricity sector?**

The **Electricity Act** gives consumers with a **load of 1 MW and above** the **right to open access**. It enables them to buy electricity from anywhere and pay the Discom only for the use of their distribution network and a cross-subsidy surcharge.

The Electricity Act calls for progressively **reducing cross-subsidies**. However, it has remained unimplemented. **Cross-subsidy surcharges** are continuing and acting as a barrier.

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Not many large consumers are meeting their electricity needs even now **using open access**.

### **Why is the idea of dispensing with the Discoms not an optimal solution to issues faced by the electricity sector?**

Discoms are seen as the **weak link in the supply chain** of electricity. There are issues related to **rising cumulative losses** and an inability to pay generators on time.

The problems with Discoms lie in the **domain of political economy**. There is the inability of regulators in the States to determine **cost reflective tariffs**. State governments find it difficult to give timely subsidies as required by law.

There is the political economy issue of **misgovernance and rent seeking** in some States.

The Discom has the **universal service obligation** of supplying electricity to meet the full demand of every consumer in its licence area. It does this by entering **long-term power purchase contracts**.

Power-generating capacities have risen rapidly. Investment in **generating capacity** has been taking place primarily on the strength of **long-term PPAs with Discoms**.

The **energy transition to renewables** is accelerating and the **reliability of power supply** is increasing.

Without Discoms this edifice would collapse. Without new investment, India may face power shortages again.

### 27. How FAME changes impact EV fortunes

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**How FAME changes impact EV fortunes**” published in the **Business Standard** on **10th June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

**Relevance:** About the recent changes to FAME II Scheme.

**News:** Recently, the government decided to slash demand incentives by 33-63 percent from June, for the second edition of the FAME Scheme.

#### **What is the FAME scheme?**

**Read here:** [Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and EV \(FAME\) Scheme](#)

#### **What is the FAME II Scheme?**

**Read more:** [Cabinet approves Scheme for FAME India Phase II](#)

#### **What are the key changes brought in the FAME II Scheme?**

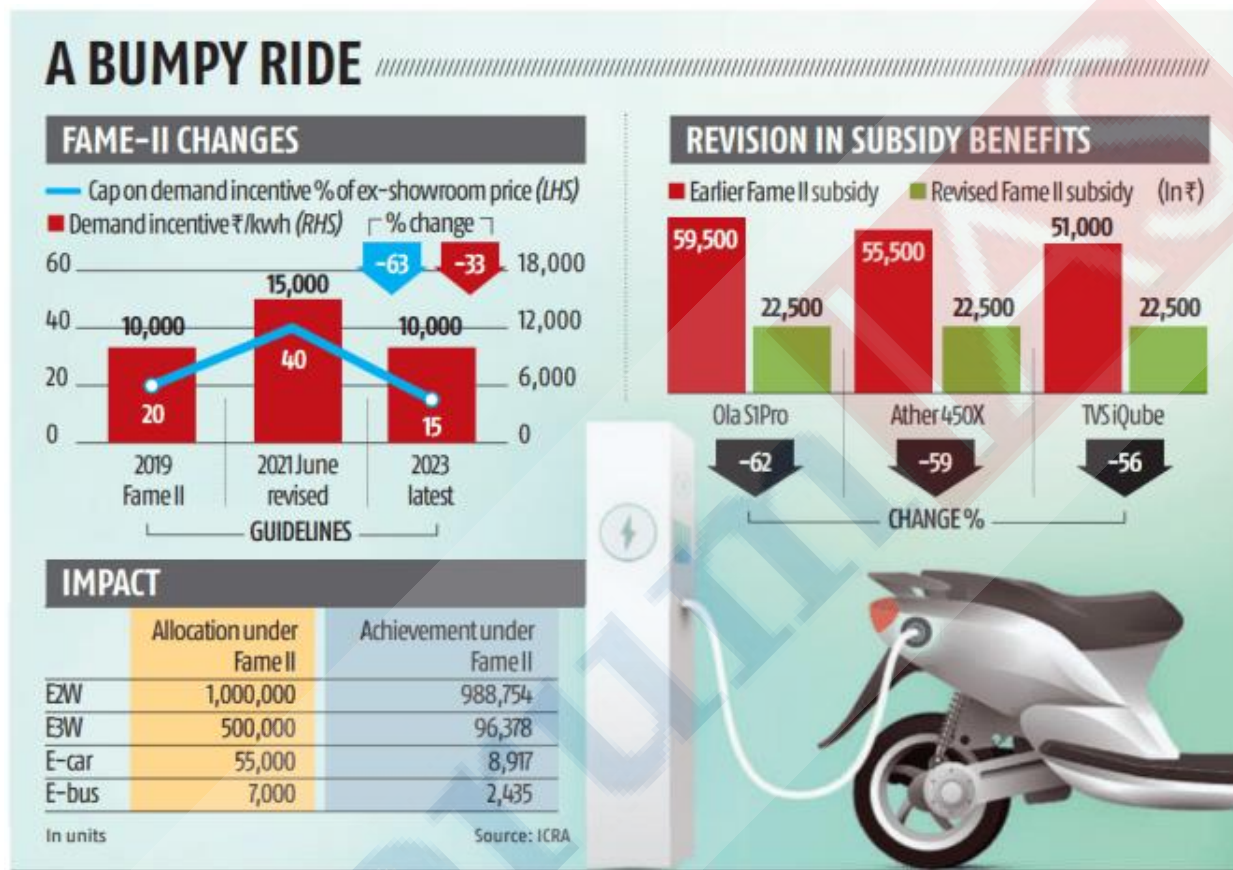
**a)** The cap on subsidy was lowered to 15% of the ex-showroom price from the earlier 40%, **b)** The subsidy benefit available per Kwh of battery capacity was also cut by Rs. 10,000 per Kwh from Rs. 15,000 per Kwh.

The changes will increase the e-Vehicle prices. Further, the EV adoption pace will slow down over the near term, and e2W penetration for FY25 lowered to 10-12% from an earlier estimate of 13-15%. The Sales of registered e2Ws may total only around 1.2 million in FY24, half of the 2.3 million target.

**What is the significance of the FAME Scheme?**

The proper functioning of the FAME Scheme was paramount for India’s plans to have 80% of new sales coming from e2Ws by 2030. Likewise, it is essential to achieve a third of passenger car sales powered by batteries.

**What are the challenges faced in the implementation of the FAME Scheme?**



**Source:** Business Standard

**Lesser support from the government:** The government had sponsored only 41% of the target of more than 1.5 million EVs since the launch of the scheme in April 2019. The scenario for passenger vehicles is much lower. The shortfall in incentives to cars and three-wheelers is over 85%.

The other challenges include **a)** Inadequate Charging infrastructure, **b)** Financial institutions were hesitant to finance battery-operated vehicles, **c)** Last year, the FAME Scheme faced subsidy misuse from some of the e2W manufacturers.

**What should be done to improve the adoption of eVehicles?**

A new report by FICCI-Yes Bank report emphasises the importance of demand incentives and credit pathways to ensure eVehicle penetration. So, the government should revisit its recent changes.



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### 28. Monetary policy: Global and local

**Source:** This post has been created based on the article “Monetary policy: Global and local”, published in Business Standard on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

**Syllabus Topic:** GS Paper 3 – growth and development of Indian Economy

**Context:** The article discusses the recent developments in the monetary policies of the US Federal Reserve (the Fed) and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in the context of global events.

US Fed’s tightening and Russia’s invasion of Ukraine has a big impact on the world economy. In 2021, the Fed had to deal with a big inflation problem. It increased interest rates 10 times from March last year to between 5 and 5.25%. At the same time, Russia invaded Ukraine. These two events had a big impact on the world economy, affecting everything from start-ups and cryptocurrencies in India to the global energy market.

#### **What are its impacts on India?**

In India, actions by the Fed and the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) have slowed down the economic growth that followed Covid-19.

Inflation in India has dropped a lot over the year and is now close to the target of 4%.

#### **What are the future projections for India’s growth?**

The RBI has been successful in managing inflation by predicting future inflation and acting accordingly.

If global food prices don’t rise too much because of the problems with Ukrainian food exports, the RBI might be able to act quickly to keep inflation below 4%.

If the Fed increases interest rates and the RBI doesn’t, the Indian rupee might lose value. This could help the Indian economy by making imported goods more expensive and Indian exports cheaper.

### 29. Manipur, a rude reminder of northeast tensions

**Source–** The post is based on the article “**Manipur, a rude reminder of northeast tensions**” published in the “**The Indian Express**” on **12th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Security

**Relevance-** Issues related to security in northeast region

**News–** Violence in Manipur has been going on for over a month now. It has claimed well over 100 lives and displaced thousands more.

#### **How is the northeast still a divided region?**

There has been **improved communications, better transit facilities, and support for the special needs** of the region. But there does still exist a **divide between the tribes and plains people** within the region.

In the northeast, there is the presence of **ethnic sub-nationalism and identity politics** in an aggravated form. **Ethnic allegiance** had been in conflict with **mainstream nationalism**. **Ethnic identities** still overshadow all other considerations.

**Consolidation efforts** by different tribal entities were resulting in **subterranean pressures**. The result is that many settled issues seem to have been reopened. This applies especially to Manipur.

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### What are some facts about conflict in Manipur?

The confrontation between **Meitei versus Kuki-Naga ultra-radicalism** needs to be viewed in the larger context of the conflict between the **plains Meiteis and the Kuki-Mizo-Chin-Zomi-Naga hill tribes**.

Meitei are seeking to **consolidate their position** within Manipur and across the region, in opposition to the Kukis, Mizos and other tribes.

The Meiteis may lack a **significant militaristic profile**. But, the Meiteis has developed a **strategy of networking** with other northeastern resurgent outfits, and with Maoist groups.

**The polarisation** between the Meitei, and the other tribal communities, in Manipur appears **irreconcilable**. **Relocation** of the two communities is taking place vigorously.

The demand for a **separate administration** as a prelude to the **division of the State** is currently gaining momentum.

### What are the steps taken by the central government in the context of Manipur?

The Home Minister has announced a **judicial probe** into the ethnic violence and a **three-member committee** headed by a judge. He has proposed the creation of a **unified command** to oversee security in the State.

The announcement of a **Central Bureau of Investigation inquiry** into specific incidents of violence is a welcome measure.

The changing of the Director General of Police on grounds of **ineffectiveness** may heighten the gap between the Meitei and Kuki communities. He belongs to Kuki community

**What are the steps needed to be taken by the central government to resolve the conflict?** Northeast is still a **volatile region**. It is in the **process of changing**. The process of achieving a **proper equilibrium** requires both **sensitivity and 'out of the box' thinking**.

Centre needs an **'optimal positioning'** even if it may seem like giving far too many concessions. This demands **innovative thinking**.

Understanding **cultural factors** is critical. The Meitei versus Tribal divide is both a **cultural and sociological phenomenon**.

A solution demands a combination of **adjusting to realities**. There is a need to understand the **moral imperatives** of the numerous tribal communities in the northeast.

The region is home to different cultures often confronting each other. Delhi has consistently avoided an **adversarial policy**. It has **sought dialogue**. This is still the **best remedy**.

All communities across the region **crave 'security'**. The impression that Delhi is **neutral in any conflict** must be **properly communicated**. Delhi should be seen to act based on **overreaching moral principles**.

A solution to the Manipur conflict in quick time is important. Otherwise, it could aggravate **centrifugal tendencies** in the region.

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### 30. [Look Deeper Into The Balasore Tragedy](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Look Deeper Into The Balasore Tragedy**” published in **The Times of India** on **12th June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

**Relevance:** About making urban centres disable friendly.

**News:** Many of those who perished in the triple-train collision near Odisha’s Balasore, were migrant workers from West Bengal who were either heading to southern India to resume work or were travelling in search of jobs.

#### **About the recent train accident and the issue of railway safety in India**

**Must read:** [The Issue of Indian railway safety – Explained, pointwise](#)

#### **About the Migrant workforce of India**

Migrants were part of a 450-million workforce, contributing an estimated 10% to India’s GDP. According to the Census of India, 33 million people migrated for employment-related reasons in 2001, which further increased to 51 million in 2011.

A 2013 survey conducted by Gulati Institute of Finance and Taxation shows 50.6% of Bengaluru’s population comprises migrants. Similarly, 62% of the entire 2.5 million migrant population of Kerala is accounted for by just four states – Bengal, Bihar, Odisha and Assam, with Bengal alone accounting for 20%.

#### **Why there is an increased migration to southern India?**

According to the Census of India (2011), between 2001 and 2011, nearly 5.8 lakh people migrated from Bengal to other states in search of work, with a large number moving to various cities and towns in southern India in view of the higher daily wages. For example, a bricklayer earns ₹1,200 a day in Kerala, the same job would fetch around ₹450 in rural Bengal.

According to the 2017 Economic Survey, Delhi, Maharashtra and Gujarat attracted a large number of migrants, mostly from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. A large number of these workers are employed in unorganised sectors.

**Must read:** [Migrant workers and their Social protection in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

So, the state governments should increase their ability to provide enough job opportunities to their domiciled resident.

### 31. [Ex-ante regulations can hurt the growth of India’s digital markets](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Ex-ante regulations can hurt the growth of India’s digital markets**” published in the **Livemint** on **12th June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy.

**Relevance:** About ex-ante regulations for digital markets.

**News:** Last December, the Finance Committee Report on Digital Markets in India proposed ex-ante (before the event) regulations and a new digital competition law to curb anti-competitive practices in digital markets in India. Their purpose is to ensure fair competition and contestability. The report suggested ex-ante regulations as the competition policy alone is inadequate to address the challenges posed by digital markets.

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### **What are the challenges posed by implementing ex-ante regulations for digital markets?**

**Impact of ex-ante provisions in developed countries:** Ex-ante provisions in Europe's Digital Services Act may result in sizable economic losses thereby offsetting gains from the free trade agreements.

**Hinder innovation and growth:** Regulators often lack business expertise and may disregard potential scenarios for the evolution of sectors and markets. This can stifle innovation and hinder the growth of the nascent digital ecosystem in India.

**Issues with imposing fines based on the global revenues of companies:** While large global corporations may have the resources to withstand such measures, smaller entities that are already financially strained may struggle to survive. Thereby, favours monopoly which is against the goal of the ex-ante regulations.

### **How India is ensuring consumer protection?**

The government is leveraging the country's strong culture of innovation to empower more individuals with technology through the development of unique digital infrastructure. Initiatives such as the Open Credit Enablement Network (OCEN), Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC)

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) follows an ex-post approach to regulate fintech companies. Recently, RBI introduced a [regulatory sandbox](#). This approach facilitates innovation by tech firms while ensuring consumer protection.

A similar approach is being favoured by the Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) and the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI).

### **What should be done?**

**a)** It is crucial to position the country as an attractive investment destination, **b)** A case-to-case ex-post analysis of the impact of innovations on competition is required, **c)** India should tap India's large startup ecosystem which presents vast potential, and **d)** The current culture of internet usage and technological advancements in the country is a result of collaborative efforts between the government and private players. This initiative needs to continue in the area of competition, which can be achieved through collaboration between the competition authorities, sectoral regulators and stakeholders.

### [32. An Atmanirbhar move – on fertiliser sector](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “An Atmanirbhar move” published in the “The Indian Express” on 13th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Infrastructure

**Relevance**- Issues related to fertiliser sector

**News**– The article highlights the progress achieved by current government in fertiliser sector.

### **How has India's department of fertilisers made significant strides in achieving self-reliance in the sector?**

The government secured fertiliser supplies during the crisis precipitated by the Russia-Ukraine war. Despite facing challenges, the government has forged **long-term agreements** and created **joint ventures with resource-rich nations**.

It is supporting industry in **identifying opportunities** across the value chain by strengthening **domestic operations, building long-term partnerships, investing in resource-rich**

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**geographies for securing raw materials and promoting alternate fertilisers and natural farming.**

Industry has been encouraged to set up **overseas joint ventures** to secure raw materials. Joint venture plants have been set up in some countries with **buy-back agreements and assured off-take agreements.**

The government has also encouraged the domestic industry and public sector undertakings to sign **long-term agreements** for the import of raw materials such as ammonia, phosphoric acid, and sulphur.

These initiatives have enabled India to **diversify its product portfolio** and produce more NPK complexes. It offers not only a wider range of products to farmers but also ensures balanced nutrition.

There has been a **remarkable improvement** in the opening stocks of DAP, MOP and other NPK fertilisers in Kharif 2023. T

The Department of Fertilisers has positioned India as a **key player in the global fertiliser supply chain.**

### 33. Seeds of stagnation in Bt cotton: Can newer variants impact productivity?

**Source:** This post is created based on the article **“Seeds of stagnation in Bt cotton: Can newer variants impact productivity?”**, published in **Business Standard** on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

**Syllabus Topic:** GS paper 3 – Science and tech – GM Crops

**News:** GEAC is considering the genetically modified (GM) Bt cotton seed variant, Bollgard-2 Round-up Ready Flex (BG-2 RRF), for approval. It has asked for more information from the company.

In another case, GEAC approved field trials of a new variant of GM cotton by Bioseed Research India Pvt Ltd that has a gene resistant to pink bollworm.

#### **What are the factors behind delay in approval to cotton seed variant?**

Concerns about the efficacy of BG-2 RRF against targeted pests, including the pink bollworm.

Socioeconomic impact of its use.

Agriculture is a state subject. In case of bio seed research's GM cotton, some states have not given their approval for field test.

#### **What are the effects of delay in approval?**

Increase in the use of illegally manufactured and untested second-generation Bt cotton, which could be harmful to farmers' health and the soil.

The pink bollworm has developed resistance to Bt cotton, allegedly due to delays in allowing the growth of non-Bt cotton crops alongside Bt cotton to maintain resistance to new pests.

Cotton is grown in 12-12.5 million hectares in India. The pest can reduce seed cotton yields by 35 to 90% and degrade the quality of the cotton produced.

#### **What should be done to save the crops from pink bollworms?**

Disrupting the pest's mating cycle,

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Releasing sterile moths to control its reproduction, and

The extensive use of advanced varieties of Bt cotton seeds that are naturally resistant to pink bollworm.

### 34. You, I, AI & GOI – on implication of generative AI

**Source:** This post is created based on the article “You, I, AI & GOI”, published in **The Times of India** on 13<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

**Syllabus Topic:** GS paper 3 – Science and tech – GM Crops

**Context:** The article discusses the ongoing debate about the development and regulation of Artificial Intelligence (AI).

OpenAI CEO Sam Altman has been advocating for AI development amidst global calls for a moratorium on the training of AI systems more powerful than GPT-4.

Generative AI systems like ChatGPT, developed by OpenAI are already used by hundreds of millions of people. It has demonstrated impressive skills in processing both text and images, scoring high on American Bar exams and medical assessment exams.

#### **What are the Significances of Generative AI?**

AI systems can significantly improve citizen-government interaction, education, and healthcare, especially in countries like India with limited access to qualified professionals.

In India, AI could help navigate bureaucratic procedures, provide high-quality medical advice, and assist with the resolution of the backlog of legal cases in India.

#### **What are the concerns and challenges associated with Generative AI?**

AI can be used to generate large-scale misinformation and may provide biased results, which are inherent in their training data.

Training of large AI models is expensive as it involves the use of specialized computer hardware called GPUs.

AI system can create outputs that are not necessarily aligned with the objectives of its human designers, which is a source of concern for many AI researchers.

Due to large training dataset, it is not yet possible to interpret and explain every aspect of how the AI model provides a certain output to a given input.

#### **What should be the future course of action?**

Smarter regulations are required to ensure the design of these AI systems are fair and transparent.

India should take the lead in developing and harnessing AI, given its potential to transform Indian society and economy.

### 35. Will a hike in MSP help farmers?

**Source:** The post is based on the article “Will a hike in MSP help farmers?” published in **The Hindu** on **13th June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints.

**Relevance:** About revamping MSP.

**News:** Recently, the Centre announced the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for this year’s summer (kharif) season crops. The price has been hiked between 5-10% from last season.

#### What is MSP?

**Read more:** [MSP \(Minimum Support Price\)](#)

#### About India’s foodgrain production

As per third advance estimates for 2022-23, total foodgrain production in the country is estimated at a record 330.5 million tonnes which is higher by 14.9 million tonnes compared to 2021-22. This is the highest increase in the last five years.

The total stocks of rice and wheat held by Food Corporation of India (FCI) and State agencies as on May 1, 2023, was 555.34 lakh tonnes.

#### What are the challenges faced in implementing MSP?

**a)** There are delays in establishing procurement centres, **b)** Farmers are exploited at the hands of commission agents. For instance, commission agents mostly buy the produce from farmers below the MSP, **c)** There is also a lack of awareness about the MSP among a large section of farmers, **d)** There is an absence of dependable or assured market mechanism for procurement-purchase of crops through MSP in most parts, and **e)** Only three to four crops (mainly wheat, paddy and cotton and at times some pulses), were being procured at MSP while the remaining crops were being procured at much below the MSP.

Non-implementation of MSP and below-MSP-procurement of a large number of crops has been one of the major hurdles in ‘crop diversification.’

#### What are the farmers’ opinion for revamping MSP?

**a)** According to the All India Kisan Sabha, the declared MSP is “unfair, belies the hopes of the farmers and inflicts huge losses in their incomes,” **b)** The Swaminathan Commission recommended MSP of C2+50% (C2 or comprehensive cost of production). But this remains unfulfilled, **c)** Farmers need to have an assurance that their crops will be purchased at the MSP to survive in the otherwise economically-unsustainable agricultural sector, and **d)** Farmers have been demanding a ‘legal status’ to the MSP.

#### What should be done?

The MSP attempts to strike a balance between the interest of growers and consumers. So, the government should **a)** Come up with a system to set up an ‘assured market mechanism,’ **b)** Focus on setting up an effective system to provide assured purchase and returns to farmers for all major crops at the MSP, and **c)** Procure all MSP defined crops. This would certainly bind the private players to procure those crops at least at the MSP. This will also increase crop diversification.

36. [About India's Internet economy: Growth driver – Expanding internet economy will increase opportunities](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Growth driver – Expanding internet economy will increase opportunities**” published in the **Business Standard** on **13th June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

**Relevance:** About the report on India's Internet economy.

**News:** A research report titled “e-Conomy” makes startling projections about India's internet economy.

**What is the Internet economy?**

**Must read:** [Digital or Internet Economy](#)

**About the e-Conomy report**

**Must read:** [‘Internet economy to hit \\$1 trillion by 2030’](#)

-The report also estimates per capita income will rise from \$2,500 (2022) to \$5,500 (2030). Thereby doubling consumption.

-Per capita income in Tier-II cities and rural households (referred to as TII+) will grow 430% between 2019 and 2030.

– Business-to-consumer, or B2C, e-commerce will contribute about a third of the online economy's value by 2030.

**What are the key takeaways from the report on India's Internet economy?**

**a)** Enablers like the Aadhaar, the Unified Payments Interface (UPI), and Digilocker have laid the foundations for the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC), Open Credit Enablement Network (OCEN), Unified Health Interface and the rapid development of the India Stack, or rather stacks, **b)** The willingness of TII+ residents to engage digitally provide more opportunity for high growth, **c)** Software as a service is expected to be a big export-growth area. For example, India is already looking to set up RuPay and UPI-style networks abroad. Six nations are already using the India Stack, and many more have expressed their interest in it, **d)** Multiple Indian unicorns (108 by the e-Conomy report's count) and many of the recognised start-ups could leverage their domestic experience to make a mark overseas, **e)** The report shows the amount of trust consumers placed in local non-celebrity influencers. As their trust has led to a shift in marketing spend, giving India's 80 million-plus content creators new revenue streams.

**What India should do to leverage India's Internet economy further?**

The emergence of India's Internet economy will also coincide with the emergence of unique imperatives across trust, security and responsibility. To combat these, collaborative efforts from India's policymakers and the private sector is necessary. Further, the government should create policies that will be supportive for the Internet economy,



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### 37. [A stunted middle class: Role of the manufacturing, informal sectors](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**A stunted middle class: Role of the manufacturing, informal sectors**” published in **The Indian Express** on **14<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Growth & Development

**Relevance:** reasons behind stagnant middle-class population

**News:** The article explains about the problems persisting with the middle class in India.

**Why isn't the middle class in India growing?**

**Employment in Informal Sector: The informal sector accounts for 90% of employment but generates only a third of the value added in the economy.**

This sector faces numerous constraints, leading to limited efficiency and low productivity. Consequently, **it hampers the development of a genuine middle class in India.**

The informal workers either work as individual casual labour or in micro enterprises with very small operations with conditions of instability in both employment and income.

These conditions within the informal sector hinder the progress of informal workers in becoming part of the middle class.

**Nature of Work in the Informal Sector:** The nature of temporary work prevalent in the informal economy discourages employers from investing in productivity-enhancing tools and training workers to use them.

The informal sector not only hampers workers' access to better tools and learning opportunities but also denies them the benefits of teamwork.

Further, **even higher-skilled occupations like carpenters and tailors work independently** in digital aggregator platforms, which lowers the efficiency of workers.

As per the International Labour Organization (ILO), in 2017, **one-third of Indian workers in the informal sector were the so-called “own account workers”**, leading to low productivity in the informal sector.

**Other Issues with the Informal Sector:** Informal workers and micro enterprises also face problems in accessing finance which further hinders their growth.

**The ratio of domestic credit to GDP**, is far lower in India than China or the United States. It has also been stagnant for a decade, while it expanded in all the key economies in the world.

**Underdeveloped Manufacturing sector:** The stunted middle class in India is also linked to the underdeveloped manufacturing sector, which consists mostly of small and micro enterprises.

**These lack efficiency required for growth and the creation of formal jobs.**

The manufacturing sector in the post-World War II United States allowed individuals with a high school education or less to earn a middle-class income.

However, **manufacturing in India has not been able to achieve the same level of success thus far.**

Moreover, India has seen success in the IT sector, which can expand the middle class.

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### Can the IT sector help in the expansion of the middle class in India?

**According to NASSCOM**, even when the IT industry is defined broadly, the total employment remains at 4.5 million, **which is very low compared to the large workforce of India.**

Even the rest of the service sector has not been able to create a large scale of jobs. The platform aggregators are also unlikely to create large scale jobs due to the nature of their business model.

### What can be the way ahead?

The Indian economy **can either opt for a policy push** that delivers a large, vibrant and prosperous middle class, **or a business-as-usual growth** with a massive informal sector that increases consumption but does not create a genuine middle class.

However, **in order to rapidly expand India's genuine middle class, there is a need to create a large-scale manufacturing sector that can drive formal employment.**

### 38. [IITs and the future of engineering: Why there's hope amid the gloom](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "IITs and the future of engineering: Why there's hope amid the gloom" published in **The Indian Express** on **14<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Employment

**Relevance:** concern associated with employment in India

**News:** The director of IIT Madras has recently said in an interview that IIT graduates are not interested in taking core engineering jobs.

### Should IIT graduates be allowed to take non-core jobs?

Even though society might not be ready to accept it, freedom should be given to the IIT graduates in pursuing their career choice.

Moreover, it is also a high salaried non-core jobs that attract the graduates.

### Why are some non-core salaries so high for IIT graduates?

**The optimistic answer** is that core engineering education equips students with practical and transferable skills due to its emphasis on real-world applications, empirical truths, and attention to practicality.

This distinguishes it from non-core engineering disciplines (Physics, Economics) that may not have the same level of direct applicability and controlled experimentation.

However, **the pessimistic answer** is that employers only look for the tag of IIT and offer a high salary rather than looking at their education.

### What is the current employment situation for other graduates in India?

There are many engineering colleges producing many engineering graduates in India every year. **Many graduates from these colleges have been dismissed as "unemployable".**

However, even if these colleges make their graduates more employable, **there are not enough employers.** Further, non-engineers' graduates face more hurdles in getting employed.

**Out of India's 140 crore people, only three crore report salary income in their tax returns.**

### How are employment conditions worldwide?

**China:** It has relatively few young people and proportionately fewer women. Hence, it has a smaller number of workforces requiring less jobs compared to India.

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**Western Europe:** In Western Europe, several native populations are declining, which will eventually lead to lower employment demands.

**US:** It allowed “practical training” wherein graduating foreign students were given a year to find work. This helped many people stay on permanently. That period of practical training is now three years for STEM graduates.

However, even in the US, the students have shifted from opting core engineering to learning newer topics like AI (artificial intelligence) and ML (machine learning).

Since these fields are new, it attracts funding for the universities and tends to create more jobs.

### What lies ahead?

The population of China is declining while Brazilians are inefficient in speaking English language. This provides India’s next generation opportunity to opt for core engineering as rewarding career plan.

### [39. Shelter From The Storm – As Biparjoy nears, note the quiet professionalism, also evident in Balasore, of India’s disaster management forces](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Shelter From The Storm – As Biparjoy nears, note the quiet professionalism, also evident in Balasore, of India’s disaster management forces**” published in **The Times of India** on **14th June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Disaster management.

**Relevance:** About India’s disaster management forces.

**News:** Due to India’s better disaster management in recent years, there’s little panic over the impact of cyclonic storm Biparjoy. Before the fall of Biparjoy, evacuation is nearly complete, shelter-food-medicine organised, and infrastructure too shored up as best can be.

Similarly, the first unit of Odisha’s rapid-responder team’s response to Balasore train tragedy has also limited the casualties.

### How have India’s disaster management forces improved over time?

Odisha has been exemplary in training and equipping its disaster management authority. Odisha became India’s first to have such authority, it was set up after the 1999 supercyclone. Since then, it has engaged in countless missions including during floods and cyclones in Bengal and Andhra and up to Meghalaya to rescue miners.

Indian military’s relief work in large-scale disasters has helped India to work on disaster diplomacy. For example, in the aftermath of the 2004 tsunami in Sri Lanka, Maldives and Indonesia, India set up shelters and medical camps, supplied food and water, restored electricity and water supply, fixed bridges and so on. This approach is carried forward by NDMA and NDRF.

In Turkey, this February, NDRF and the Indian military formed the fourth largest contingent of the 80 nations on site after the temblor that killed over 50,000.

**Read more:** [India’s G20 presidency can show the way on disaster management](#)

### What India should do?

With adverse climate events and humanitarian crises almost the new normal, rescue missions are set to increase within India and overseas. India should require benchmark response protocols

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and invest in rescue tech such as faster logistics, faster processing of passports etc to meet such requirements.

### 40. [The right incentive – PLI scheme alone would not be enough](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**The right incentive – PLI scheme alone would not be enough**” published in the **Business Standard** on **14th June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

**Relevance:** About issues with PLI Scheme.

**News:** The government is planning to hold a first-of-its-kind meeting to address implementation issues being faced by producers under the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme.

#### **About the PLI Scheme**

The government cleared the first three PLI schemes in March 2020, while another 10 were approved in November that year. The allocation for the scheme was announced in Union Budget 2021-22, with the idea of creating national manufacturing champions, which would generate employment opportunities.

**Must read:** [Production-Linked Incentive or PLI Schemes and its challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

#### **What are the challenges associated with the implementation of the PLI Scheme?**

According to the latest numbers, the gross value added in manufacturing went up by just 1.3% at constant prices in 2022-23. This highlights that the schemes seem to have multiple issues. Such as,

**Lack of clarity:** In the auto industry, firms are looking for clarity on the incentives they are supposed to get. It has been reported that incentives could not be disbursed in 2022-23 because no auto company presented the required documents.

**Lack of disbursements:** Manufacturers are affected by disbursements in other sectors as well. For instance, in 2022-23, the government paid Rs. 2,874 crore to beneficiaries against a claim of Rs.3,420 crore. The outgo thus was about only 1.4% of the Rs. 1.97 trillion allocated for the scheme over a period of five years.

Aside from the documentation issues, the outgo has been low because the scheme has possibly not resulted in the kind of investment that was envisaged.

**Affects competition:** Investment and production in different sectors depend on a variety of factors. The state’s decision to select champions and provide fiscal incentives could affect competition. Like Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles scheme, manufacturers might use different ploys to take advantage of subsidies.

**Read more:** [An analysis of PLI \(production-linked incentive\) scheme – Explained, pointwise](#)

#### **What should be done?**

Policymakers should not excessively depend on the PLI scheme. It is not a way out of the inadequacies in the manufacturing sector.

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Modern manufacturing depends on complex supply chains and giving fiscal incentives to one set of producers may not work. So, the government will have to work on improving the overall industrial environment.

### 41. [How India can become a global maritime power by 2030](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**How India can become a global maritime power by 2030**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **15th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Infrastructure

**News**– In the recently released World Bank’s Logistic Performance Index Report 2023, India has moved up to 22nd rank in the global rankings on the “International Shipments” category from the 44th position in 2014.

#### **What are the reasons behind the improved performance in logistics?**

There is a substantial reduction in the **dwelt time** at Indian ports. It is the amount of time vessels spend in port **actively loading or unloading** cargo.

This has reached an optimum level of **about three days** as compared to **four days** in countries like the UAE and South Africa, **seven days** in the US and 10 days in Germany.

India has done well in another parameter that measures **port operational efficiency**. The country’s **average turnaround time of only 0.9 days** is amongst the best in the world.

In Belgium, Germany, the UAE, Singapore, Malaysia, Ireland, Indonesia and New Zealand it is **1.4 days**, in the US **1.5 days**.

#### **What are various achievements in the ports and shipping sector in the past few years?**

There has been a consistent focus on improvements in **port efficiency and productivity**. **This is achieved** by **reforms, induction of new technologies**, a greater thrust on **public-private partnership** and commitment to the **ease of doing business**.

The capacity at 12 major ports in the country has increased from **871 million metric tonnes (MMT) in 2015 to 1,617 MMT in 2023**.

There has also been a nearly 150% increase in the value of **operationalisation of PPP projects** in the major ports. These PPP projects have contributed significantly to the increased operational efficiencies while adding nearly 300 MMT extra capacity.

The focus on decarbonisation in the maritime sector along with the Panchamrit commitments of the government has reflected in the port sector: There has been a 14-fold increase in the use of renewable energy in major ports over the last eight years.

The **Harit Sagar Green Port guidelines** issued by the government is another important step further in this direction. It aims to bring about a paradigm shift towards **safe, efficient and sustainable ports**.

The efficiency of ports has received a boost with the launch of the **National Logistics Portal (Marine)**. **It is** a single-window digital platform for all stakeholders like cargo services, carrier services, banking and financial services, and government and regulatory agencies.

This along with the **Sagar Setu app** facilitates **seamless movement of goods and services** in ports while substantially enhancing the **ease of doing business**.

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The Centre has also undertaken several **key policy and legislative reforms** to boost the port sector. This includes the **Major Port Authorities Act, 2021** which grants greater **autonomy to major ports**.

The **Marine Aids to Navigation Act, 2021** provides for **increased safety and efficiency** in vessel **traffic services and training and certification** at par with international standards.

The **Indian Vessels Act, 2021** brings uniformity in **law and standardised provisions** across all inland waterways in the country.

The government is also in the process of replacing the **Indian Ports Act, 1908** with a piece of legislation that is in tune with **present-day requirements**.

### [42. The next Finance Commission will have a tough task](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“The next Finance Commission will have a tough task”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **15th June 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Government budgeting

**Relevance**– Issues related to taxation laws

**News**- The government will appoint a Finance Commission in the next few months to determine how much of the Centre’s tax revenue should be given away to States and how to distribute that among States.

#### **What are issues related to horizontal distribution by the Finance Commission?**

**Terms of reference**– Finance Commission in 2017, considered the **2011 population figures** in determining the **expenditure needs** of a State. This was a departure from the standard practice of using the **1971 population numbers**.

States which had done well in **stabilising population growth rates** protested against this change in the base year. They called it a **‘penalty for good performance’**.

**Revenue deficit**– The rationale for revenue deficit grants is that every State should be able to provide a **minimum level of service** to its residents even if it involves **cross-subsidisation**.

This has become a **perverse incentive** for states. States do not make efforts to raise revenues on their own because the Finance Commission **compensates them**.

Finance Commissions have struggled to determine how much a state’s deficit is due to its **fiscal incapacity** and how much is due to **fiscal irresponsibility**.

**Division among states**– These fault lines across States have deepened in recent years along **political, economic and fiscal dimensions**.

Southern States of the country are doing better in terms of **infrastructure, private investment, social indicators and the rule of law**. It has widened the **north-south gap**.

The nature of **horizontal distribution** is such that richer States **compensate** poorer States. There is a need to ensure that this happens without **deepening the divide**. It creates a challenge for the government in defining the **terms of reference** of the Finance Commission.

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### What should be the focus area of the next Finance Commission?

**Cess and Surcharges**– Centre is increasingly resorting to a **levy of cesses and surcharges** rather than raising taxes. Proportion of cesses and surcharges in the Centre's total tax revenue had nearly doubled from 10.4% in 2011-12 to 20.2% in 2019-20.

The Constitution was amended in the year 2000, it gave States a share in the **Centre's total tax pool**. The implicit understanding was that the Centre will resort **only sparingly** to cesses and surcharges, and not as a **matter of routine**.

As a result of this breach, States have felt cheated out of their **legitimate share of national tax revenue**.

The next Finance Commission should lay down guidelines for when **cesses and surcharges** might be levied. It should suggest a formula to cap the amount that can be raised.

**Freebies**– The Finance Commission should look at the **government spending on freebies**. All political parties are guilty on this count.

The restraints imposed by the **FRBM Act** should have acted as a check on such **populist spending**. But, governments have found ways of **raising debt** without it appearing in the budget books.

The next Finance Commission should lay down guidelines on the **spending on freebies**.

### [43. Why approval for Elon Musk's Neuralink for humans is a bad idea](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"Why approval for Elon Musk's Neuralink for humans is a bad idea"** published in **The Indian Express** on **15<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 3 – Science and Technology**

**Relevance:** **About Brain-Computer Interface (BCI)**

**News:** The US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granted approval to Neuralink, a neurotech startup co-founded by Elon Musk, to conduct clinical trials on a Brain-Computer Interface (**BCI**) implant for humans.

#### **About Neuralink's BCI**

**Neuralink aims to address brain disorders** and eventually merge human consciousness with artificial intelligence (AI).

The company hopes to build a surgically implantable chip containing several electrodes that allows the brain to convey intent of movement to a device connected via Bluetooth and then the device decodes the neural data and converts intent to action.

Despite the claims made by Neuralink about its Brain-Computer Interface (BCI) technology, **it lacks transparency and concrete evidence to support its claims**.

Moreover, there are several major safety and viability concerns with Neuralink.

#### **What are the concerns with Neuralink's device?**

**Lack of Reliable Data:** One of the major problems with Neuralink is the lack of published data supporting its technology.

Only one article has been published by the company which described the chip and the surgical implantation process, accompanied by a single image of a rodent with the implant.

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However, before a device is approved for use in humans, its feasibility and safety parameters need in-depth pre-clinical assessment in more mammals such as pigs, sheep and monkeys.

**Dependence on the Existing Technology:** Most of Neuralink's work depends upon existing research in the field.

**For instance,** it has increased data collection, by implanting 3,000+ electrodes in comparison with 256 electrodes that have been done previously.

This may provide the desired increase in speed and accuracy comparable to real-time movement.

**Safety of Materials:** The safety of the materials used in the implants is a major concern, considering the invasive surgical procedure.

Further, it is crucial to ensure the materials are truly inert and stable, even with surface coatings. It is also required to investigate any potential leaching of harmful chemicals into the brain over time.

Another concern is the **use of thin wires**, which may result in higher resistance and susceptibility to heat generation.

The thinness of the wires raises questions about their ability to stay in place within a freely moving human. The movement of the wires and their impact on the surrounding brain tissue are also important factors to consider.

**Animal Welfare:** Neuralink has faced significant scrutiny and legal challenges due to violations of animal welfare in its invasive implant surgeries, specifically involving monkeys.

The animal ethics group's lawsuit has also provided on high mortality rates among animals, primarily caused by surgery-related infections and other complications.

Overall, **the available information to the public regarding the procedure's safety and the implant's effectiveness is limited and lacks comprehensive quantitative data.**

Like these there are many concerns with the Neuralink devices. However, it tends to hide those concerns by showing off the coolness of its device.

### **What lies ahead?**

While the concept of Neuralink's interface holds potential, there are numerous steps required before it can genuinely benefit patients in need.

It is crucial to remain attentive because history has shown instances in the US medical field where profit was prioritized over patient safety, and regulatory oversight failed to effectively address such practices.



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### 44. [Fuelling a truly green transition](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Fuelling a truly green transition**” published in **Business Standard** on **15<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Environment

**Relevance:** challenges with green hydrogen mission

**News:** The government in January this year released its Green Hydrogen Mission (GHM).

**About the Green Hydrogen Mission (GHM)**

[Click Here to Read](#)

**What are the different types of hydrogen and how are they obtained?**

[Click Here to Read](#)

However, carbon capture, use and storage (CCUS) is a very costly technology. It has proved viable only where there are depleted oil and gas wells available for large scale storage of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.

**What are the advantages of green hydrogen?**

**Read Here:** [Green Hydrogen: Potential, Issues and Solutions – Explained](#)

Hydrogen may also be liquefied and transported through pipes or in tanks via roads, rail and ships.

It may be converted to fuel cells to generate electricity or for heating and it may also be used in long distance transportation.

**What are the challenges associated with green hydrogen?**

**According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)**, the majority (95%) of hydrogen production **currently relies on fossil fuels**.

The Green Hydrogen Mission (GHM) in India aims to develop a green hydrogen capacity of at least 5 million metric tonnes per year by 2030.

**This will require an associated addition of 125MW of renewable energy capacity and an investment of approximately 8 trillion.**

The GHM intends to utilize high-performance electrolyzers and decentralized renewable power sources like rooftop solar, micro-hydel plants, and biomass to provide clean and affordable power for electrolysis.

The mission also mentions the potential use of waste water in these processes. However, specific plans with detailed numbers are yet to be formulated.

**Read More:** [Green Hydrogen: Potential, Issues and Solutions – Explained](#)

**What can be the way ahead?**

Hydrogen has the potential to become a clean and abundant source of energy in the future, **but it is not currently a fully viable alternative**.

However, advancements in technology and lowering costs are continuously improving its prospects.

Moreover, **several advanced countries, including Japan, are making significant technological advancements in promoting hydrogen as a fuel source**.

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India, through its Green Hydrogen Mission (GHM), should consider forging closer collaborations and take the lead in establishing an **International Hydrogen Alliance**.

This alliance would facilitate the pooling of technological and financial resources to promote the hydrogen economy on a global scale.

The **upcoming G20 summit presents a favorable opportunity for India** to announce such an initiative and demonstrate its commitment to advancing the use of hydrogen as a clean energy solution.

45. [We're All Aam Aadmi – India's not the biggest mango exporter but the fruit is at its sublime best here. Sad that output is hit by weather](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article **"We're All Aam Aadmi – India's not the biggest mango exporter but the fruit is at its sublime best here. Sad that output is hit by weather"** published in **The Times of India** on **15th June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Transport and marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints.

**Relevance:** About India's Mango Production.

**News:** Unseasonal weather has drastically reduced the expected mango yields this year.

### **How weather patterns destroyed Mango production?**

Due to fluctuations in weather patterns, UP, the largest mango-growing state's, yield may damage 30-40% of this year's crop.

For example, Malihabad, home of the Dussehri variety, was on its way to a bumper crop until mid-March but then unexpected showers destroyed flowers before they could become fruit. This will reduce the yield up to 80%. Last year, it was extreme heat that did the damage.

Alphonso in Maharashtra and Kesar in Gujarat also face a shortage in yield, thereby increasing the prices. But, there's a bumper yield in Malda, Bengal.

**Read more:** [Farmer develops mango variety that bears fruits round the year](#)

### **About India's Mango production and exports**

India grows around 1,500 mango varieties. The unique and complex flavours of different desi mangoes set India apart from bigger exporters like Mexico and Thailand.

Exports have remained below potential. This is because, **a)** Domestic demand has remained very high, **b)** This diversity-friendliness has a challenge too. For example, the mango's fruition is so dependent on specific temperatures at specific times.

**Read more:** [GI certified "Jardalu mangoes" from Bihar exported to the UK](#)

Mangoes need to have two qualities, they need to be sweet and there needs to be plenty. Not all varieties can get impacted by climate change. India should capitalise on that.

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### 46. [Tackling the waste problem](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Tackling the waste problem**” published in the **Business Standard** on **15th June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Pollution

**Relevance:** About the Solid Waste Management.

**News:** A recent report by World Bank, “What a Waste: A Global Review of Solid Waste Management”, stated that 2.9 billion people lived in metropolitan areas 10 years ago, producing 0.64 kg of Municipal solid waste (MSW) per person daily. However, around 3 billion people live in cities today, producing as much as 1.2 kg of municipal solid waste per person per day.

#### **What is Solid Waste Management?**

**Read here:** [Solid Waste Management](#)

#### **What are the key findings of the World Bank report on Solid Waste?**

-Over 200 million metric tonnes of municipal waste are produced worldwide each year by the United States and China.

-Daily per capita waste generation in high-income nations is estimated to climb by 19% by 2050, while in low and middle-income countries it is projected to rise by around 40% or more.

-In terms of total waste production, the East Asia and Pacific region produces the most waste (23%), and West Asia and North Africa produce the least (6%).

-Currently, more than half of the waste is openly dumped in these areas.

#### **Why solid waste management is essential?**

Municipal waste management is not only paramount but a necessary function of city governance, especially in a post-pandemic world. This is because **a)** Poorly managed waste typically results in expenses that are higher in the long run than it would have been to manage the waste effectively in the first place, **b)** Poor waste management has a significant detrimental effect on health, the environment both locally and globally, and the economy, and **c)** Municipal waste plays a significant role in greenhouse gas emissions.

#### **About India’s solid waste generation and management**

According to the Task Force on Waste to Energy Report, 62 million tonnes of MSW waste are produced annually by 377 million people in India’s urban areas in 2017.

Residents of urban areas generate nearly twice as much waste as those in rural areas. The level of industrialisation, socialisation, and regional climate all impact MSW generation rates. Unsanitary, unscientific and poor disposal of solid waste could further result in environmental deterioration and health issues.

The lack of proactive governance mechanisms in cities to manage waste sustainably and the consumption patterns and behaviour of citizens will lead to tremendous amounts of waste generation.

**Read more:** [Solid Waste Management in India-An Overview](#)

#### **What should be done to ensure better solid waste management in India?**

**Integrated strategy for waste management:** It involves the planning, funding, construction, and operation of facilities for the segregation, collection, transportation, recycling, treatment,

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and final disposal of waste. This should be taken into consideration to manage the present issues of urban waste management.

**Focus on sustainability:** Urban local bodies should increase their operation and maintenance of solid waste management systems sustainably. This requires **a)** significant capital investment, **b)** the introduction of cutting-edge, cost-effective technologies, **c)** public-private partnerships in waste management, as well as **d)** the introduction of appropriate waste management practices.

### 47. [India's slow but sure de-industrialisation is worrying](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**India’s slow but sure de-industrialisation is worrying**” published in **Live Mint** on **16<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development**

**Relevance:** **concerns with manufacturing sector**

**News:** The national accounts data released last month showed India’s provisional GDP growth rate at 7.2% in 2022-23. This was higher than the government’s estimates and also that of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

However, the data also suggests that the structural reasons that contributed to the Indian economy’s slowdown before the pandemic are still present and may have worsened.

**What structural reasons are still present in the Indian economy?**

**The continued weakness of private consumption and investment suggests that the economy is suffering from weak demand.**

**The GDP estimates show that the manufacturing sector**, which is the largest sector of the economy in terms of GDP share and the third largest in terms of employment, **grew only at 1.3%**. This is its second lowest growth in the last 25 years.

Moreover, manufacturing sector growth was 7.8% annually between 2003-04 and 2013-14, which increased to 9.1% between 2013-14 and 2017-18, but then declined to almost a third at 3.4% in the last five years.

Similarly, **the share of manufacturing in the GDP has also declined.**

**What does the weakening manufacturing sector imply?**

**A weakening manufacturing sector raises concerns for the overall economy**, especially for employment as this sector serves as a big source of jobs.

According to the employment and unemployment survey of the National Statistical Office (**NSO**), manufacturing accounted for 12.6% of all workers in 2011-12. This declined to 10.9% in 2020-21.

**The declining share of manufacturing in overall economic output as well as employment is a worrying sign for the economy’s long-term growth prospects.**

This decline signifies a **gradual de-industrialization of the economy**, which will not only impact output growth but also employment and income growth.

Despite various policies like the ‘**Make in India**’, **PLI schemes**, and **corporate tax benefits**, the slowdown has continued. This suggests a policy bias in favor of large corporations rather than strengthening small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

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This also indicates the **problem of declining demand in the Indian economy**. Despite policy efforts and state incentives, the manufacturing sector has suffered due to a reduction in its consumer base.

### What can be the way ahead?

Due to the declining trend in the manufacturing sector, workers have shifted from manufacturing to agriculture.

**Although agriculture has played a significant role in the economic recovery from the pandemic, it is unlikely to continue its contribution due to increasing input prices and the threat of El Niño.**

Therefore, a revival of India's manufacturing sector is necessary. Hence, **the key to boost the manufacturing sector lies in boosting overall demand in the economy, especially discretionary spending.**

### 48. Pathways to a Viksit Bharat

**Source-** The post is based on the article "Pathways to a Viksit Bharat" published in the "Business Standard" on 16th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Development

**Relevance-** Issues related in making India an advanced economy

**News-** The Government of India in 2022 set itself the goal of a "Viksit Bharat".

### What is the meaning of an advanced economy?

The **size of the economy** is important for many reasons. But, it does not alone qualify a country for advanced status.

For instance, China is the **world's second largest economy**. But, it is not considered advanced. Its average citizen is **four times poorer** than the average Britisher and **six times poorer** than the average American.

Similarly, India is now the world's **fifth largest economy**, having overtaken the UK. But, the average Indian is **20 times poorer** than the average Britisher.

In 2022, the **International Monetary Fund** categorised **41 countries as advanced economies**. But, its definition is not **clear or consistent** over time.

The World Bank uses a **cut-off of gross national income per capita of \$13,205 in 2022 prices**. It classifies around **80 countries in the "high-income" category**.

The United Nations Development Programme adds a **human dimension through HDI index** to GNI per capita. It classifies 66 countries into the **"very high human development" category**. It is a rough definition of an advanced economy.

### What is the level of growth in GNI and HDI needed for India to become an advanced economy?

The World Bank and the UNDP have clear criteria to define an **advanced economy**. It will take **25 years at a growth rate of 7% per annum** in GNI per capita to reach today's developed country's GNI per capita of \$13,205.

This means GNI must grow at around **8% per annum for the next 25 years**, factoring in population growth.

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India's HDI score in 2021 was 0.633. To reach the cut-off of very high human development at 0.8 will require **HDI annual growth of around 0.9% per annum**.

India's growth in HDI was around 1.25% per annum between 1990 and 2021. India's HDI grew at only **0.88 per cent per annum from 2010-21**. So, to reach the very HDI category will require to keep this rate for the next 25 years.

India must use its **demographic dividend** much better than it has done so far. Rising inequality has also hurt its score.

The UNDP calculates that **India's HDI score** declines by 24% **due to inequality**. Halving inequality would increase India's **HDI score above 0.7** and classify India into the **high HDI category**.

### **What is the way forward for India to achieve the goal of a "Viksit Bharat"?**

To become an advanced economy, India not only needs a more **"Samruddha Bharat"** but also needs to make a more **"Sajit Bharat" (inclusive)**.

Many **upper middle-income countries** such as Argentina and Brazil are stuck in the so-called **middle-income trap**. They did not build the **institutional strength** required to make a successful attempt to become a developed economy.

India must first strive to reach the **upper middle-income status** that requires a **GNI per capita of \$4,255 in 2022 prices**. If India grows at 7% in GNI per capita, it will reach the **upper income status by around 2032**.

Likewise, the UNDP has a **"High" human development category**. India with an HDI score of 0.633 can reach that category **by about 2032** as well.

To reach this intermediate stage, there is a need for **stronger institutions, infrastructure, and human capital**.

If India reaches this stage, it could fall into the **middle-income trap**. Once there with stronger **human capital and institutions**, India can plan for **"Viksit Bharat" @ 100**.

### 49. Reflections on Artificial Intelligence, as friend or foe

**Source-** The post is based on the article "Reflections on Artificial Intelligence, as friend or foe" published in "The Hindu" on 16th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Awareness in the fields of IT, Computers, Robotics.

**Relevance-** Issues related to AI

**News-** Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been dominating the headlines. The Association for Computing Machinery released a statement in October 2022 on 'Principles for Responsible Algorithmic Systems', a broader class of systems that include AI systems.

### **What are the areas of use for AI?**

AI systems are capable of exhibiting **superhuman performance on specific tasks**. This is evident in the field of **chess, biochemistry for protein folding**.

The **performance and utility** of AI systems improve as the task is **narrowed**. It makes them valuable assistants to humans.

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**Speech recognition, translation, and even identifying common objects** such as photographs, are just a few tasks performed by AI systems today. It even exceeds **human performance** in some instances.

A big moment for AI was the release of **ChatGPT**. ChatGPT is a **generative AI tool** that uses a **Large Language Model** to generate text. Writing could now be **outsourced** to it.

### What are limitations of AI?

Their performance degrades on **more “general” or ill-defined tasks**. They are weak in **integrating inferences** across situations based on the **common sense** humans have.

### What are some facts about Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)?

It refers to intelligence that is **not limited or narrow**. Take the example of **human common sense**. It is absent in AI systems.

There are **no credible efforts** towards building AGI yet. Many experts believe AGI will never be achieved by a machine. Others believe it could be in the far future.

**True AGI** will be a big deal. AGI may lead to **AI “machines”** bettering humans in many **intellectual or mental tasks**.

Scenarios of **super-intelligent machines** enslaving humans have been imagined. AGI systems could be a **superior species** created by humans outside of evolution.

However, the hype and panic about LLMs or AI leading directly to **human extinction** are baseless.

Some experts predict that AGI may be evolved from **GPT-4**. AGI could emerge from a **bigger LLM** in the near future.

Other experts refute this. **Current LLMs and their successors** are not even close to AGI.

### What are the possible types of dangers arising from AI?

**Superhuman AI:** The danger of a **super intelligent AI** converting humans to slaves. This is a highly unlikely scenario.

**Malicious humans with powerful AI:** AI tools are relatively easy to build. Even **narrow AI tools** can cause serious harm when matched with **malicious intent**.

LLMs can generate **fake news**. **Public opinion** can be manipulated to affect democratic elections. AI tools work globally. **Individual malice** can instantly impact the globe.

Governments may approve or support such actions **against “enemies”**. There is **no effective defence** against malicious human behaviour.

There are concerns about **AI-powered “smart” weapons** in the military. Unfortunately, calls for a ban are not effective in such situations.

**Highly capable and inscrutable AI:** AI systems will continue to improve and will be employed to assist humans. They may end up harming some sections more than others **unintentionally**.

These systems are created using **Machine Learning** from data and can perpetuate the **shortcomings of the data**. They may introduce **asymmetric behaviours** that go against certain groups.

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**Camera-based face recognition systems** have been shown to be more accurate on fair-skinned men than on dark-skinned women.

**Privacy** is a critical concern. Every person can be tracked always, violating the **fundamental right to privacy**.

Another worry is about who develops these technologies and how. Commercial entities with huge computational, data, and human resources are the centres of action.

There is **no effective public oversight**. Everything that affects humans significantly needs **public oversight or regulation**. There is little understanding about **effective regulation without stifling creativity**.

### 50. [Rules of recovery: Settlement framework provides another option](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Culture shift: UNESCO must act on nations exiting, re-entering on frivolous grounds**” published in the **Business Standard** on **16th June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

**Relevance:** About the Framework for Compromise Settlements and Technical Write-offs.

**News:** Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has announced the “Framework for Compromise Settlements and Technical Write-offs”.

Banks now have the option of recovering loans through the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code. The compromise settlement framework may be useful in settling relatively small loans. The framework gives a bit of flexibility. But some bank unions have termed it a detrimental step that can compromise the integrity of the banking system.

### **What are the key aspects of RBI’s Framework for Compromise Settlements and Technical Write-offs?**

According to the framework, regulated entities are expected to put in place **board-approved policies** for making compromise settlements with debtors as well as for technical write-offs.

**Compromise settlement** would mean a negotiated arrangement with the borrower to settle the claims of the lender in full, which may lead to a sacrifice of some amount due from the borrower. For the borrowers benefiting from the compromise settlement, there would be a cooling period as determined by the boards of the lenders before fresh lending can be made to such entities.

The **technical write-offs** would mean non-performing outstanding loans at the borrower’s account level and those have been written off by the lender for accounting purposes.

Respective boards are expected to give specific guidance. They are also expected to put in place an accountability framework for the staff dealing with such cases. An official who was involved in sanctioning the loan as an individual or as a member of a committee will not be part of this process.

Settlement for wilful defaulters will require board approval in all cases.

### **What are the bank’s concerns with RBI’s Framework for Compromise Settlements and Technical Write-offs?**

**Seeks clarification:** Banks seek clarification on lending to accounts that are classified as wilful defaulters or fraud.



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**Options of restructuring:** Banks make a large number of lending decisions on an ongoing basis and some may go wrong even in the best of circumstances. In the case of businesses, things could be negative because of a variety of factors, including unexpected changes in the macroeconomic environment, affecting the repaying capacity of borrowers. Banks often restructure the terms of loans in such cases.

### What should be done?

**Focus on lending standards:** Lending standards are critical for preserving banking-sector stability. So, the banks must constantly monitor loan accounts and report the true picture to all stakeholders.

**Avoid ever-greening of loans:** The RBI has found innovative ways used by banks to conceal stress. Banks are also said to be using new methods of ever-greening. Such practices tend to undermine the integrity and stability of the banking system and should be avoided.

The banks should proceed with wilful defaulters or fraud with **care and transparency**. Lenders must use all avenues made available to them for recovering as much as possible from non-performing accounts.

### 51. [Between jobs & slavery: Addressing informal employment is the key](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Between jobs & slavery: Addressing informal employment is the key**” published in the **Business Standard** on **16th June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Employment.

**Relevance:** About the issues with Global Slavery Index.

**News:** Recently Global Slavery Index 2023 has been released. The report highlights that the G20 nations alone account for more than half the people living in modern slavery. However, India does not figure in the top 10 nations in terms of the incidence of slavery per 1,000 people.

**Note:** *The last edition of the Global Slavery Index was published five years before in 2018.*

### What are the key findings of the Global Slavery Index 2023?

**Read here:** [Global Slavery Index 2023: G20 nations fuelling modern slavery](#)

### What are the concerns with Global Slavery Index?

**Methodology applied:** It is derived from a broad estimate partially based on a “risk score.” The score deploys the same factors to determine whether a nation falls under the “developing” header or not. This automatically leaves the developed nations, mostly in Europe, with relatively delicate scores.

**Real slavery is underestimated:** Burgeoning African and West Asian refugee crisis and slowing economies suggest that modern slavery may be more prevalent than the surveys suggest.

**Issues with sample size:** In the past, India had complained that the sample size of the surveys was skewed and the survey’s assumptions ignored the country’s unique socio-economic factors.

**The issue with the definition:** Global Slavery Index follows no internationally accepted norm and is constantly recalibrated. For instance, the index includes child labour, sexual exploitation, human trafficking, and forced labour from forced marriage within the definition of modern slavery.

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### About India's measurement of modern slavery

In India, the proximate term for slavery is bonded labour, which was outlawed in 1976. But the term bonded labour is narrowly defined. The Supreme Court expanded the definition to include workers paid below the prevailing market and legal minimum wages. However, there is no definitive data on modern slavery in India.

For instance, according to the Ministry of Labour and Employment, 93% of the country's workforce falls in the unorganised sector. In that area, the benefits and oversight mechanisms against exploitation are non-existent.

### What should be done?

The government introduced the e-Shram portal for unorganised sector workers to register and receive pensions, insurance, and death benefits. About half the workforce has registered on the portal. Now the real test will lie in how easily retired informal workers can access these benefits.

### 52. [Synthetic human embryos: All about life](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Synthetic human embryos: All about life**" published in **Indian Express** on **17th June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS3- Awareness in the field of Biotechnology.

**Relevance:** About Synthetic human embryos.

**News:** At the International Society of Stem Cell Research's annual meeting in Boston, a woman scientist announced that her team has succeeded in creating synthetic human embryos using stem cells, sidestepping the need for egg and sperm.

### About synthetic human embryos

Synthetic embryos are embryos, which are created without fertilization. These are also known as artificial embryos.

These embryos do not require an egg or sperm cell to facilitate their creation. Instead, these are the primitive embryos that include cells that go on to form the placenta, the yolk sac and the embryo itself.

These embryos rely on self-assembling stem cell structures to mimic the natural process of early human development.

**Note:** Last year, the same team demonstrated that the stem cells from mice could be programmed into developing a beating heart and primordial brain.

### What are the challenges associated with synthetic human embryos?

**a)** It's not yet clear whether these embryos have the potential to progress beyond the early stage, **b)** There are ethical concerns related to synthetic embryos, **c)** Their improvement will also create regulatory challenges, and **d)** None of the animal embryos has gone on to produce living species in the past.

It is time for global nations to set boundaries, limit research to welfare and alleviate the trauma of patients.

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### 53. [Germany's net-zero plan for old vehicles](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Germany’s net-zero plans for old vehicles**” published in **Business Standard** on **17<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Environment

**Relevance:** About Germany proposal of adopting carbon-neutral synthetic fuels

**News:** Germany put forward an interesting proposal when the EU was debating legislation to ensure only zero-emission vehicles would be on European roads by 2035.

#### **What has Germany proposed?**

**Germany suggested a transition to carbon-neutral synthetic fuels** for existing internal combustion vehicles rather than phasing out all internal combustion vehicles.

The proposal has been made due to the fact that even though electric vehicles and hydrogen fuel cells have zero-emission during usage, their manufacturing processes have significant environmental impacts.

**Approximately 90% of the world’s vehicles are expected to be internal combustion by 2030**, and replacing them entirely would not be a zero-carbon solution.

Some calculations suggest that manufacturing an electric vehicle may have slightly higher environmental impacts compared to an internal combustion vehicle.

Hence, Germany proposed the possibility of producing carbon-negative fuels for IC engines, which would result in a net carbon impact of zero or even negative during the fuel cycle.

This can be done by replacing fuels like petrol, diesel, kerosene, and compressed natural gas (CNG) by **synthetic hydrocarbon fuels**.

Germans have already manufactured synthetic petrol and diesel substitutes from coal in World War II.

#### **How can synthetic hydrocarbon fuel be manufactured?**

It can be done by capturing ambient carbon dioxide from the atmosphere. This would make the fuel production process carbon-negative.

Additionally, **hydrogen can be generated by using green methods such as running an electric current through water**.

Producing synthetic fuel could be carbon-negative if the carbon emissions from the fuel are less than the carbon captured during the production process.

Even if there is a net carbon release, it may still be lower than the carbon impact of manufacturing a large number of electric vehicles (EVs).

#### **What are the challenges with manufacturing synthetic hydrocarbon fuel?**

**First**, it may be expensive compared to petrol or diesel. However, production costs would reduce with scale and access to cheap, green electricity.

**Second**, there are also engineering challenges with capturing carbon. Currently, carbon capture is not an efficient process, and there is a lack of sufficient scale for green hydrogen electrolysis. Therefore, **investment in R&D, as well as large-scale implementation, would be needed in addressing these challenges**.

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### 54. [How an old report can pave way for central forces to stabilise Manipur](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “How an old report can pave way for central forces to stabilise Manipur” published in the “Business Standard” on 17th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Security

**Relevance-** Issues related to security of northeastern states

**News-** In Manipur, security situation has deteriorated due to ongoing conflict among Meitei and tribal; people

#### **What Are the recommendations of Punchhi Commission that are relevant in context of Manipur violence?**

It studies the feasibility of **supporting legislation under Article 355** for the purpose of **suo motu deployment of Central forces** in the States. An important recommendation made by the Commission was on **Article 355 and 356**.

There was **general reluctance** among political parties to allow the Centre to take over their elected administration even if **law and order** broke down temporarily. The states considered such measures as **political punishment**.

Hence, the Commission recommended to adopt **“Localised Emergency provisions” under Article 355**. It can bring a district or even part of a district under the Central rule. Such take over should **not be for more than three months**.

Another recommendation was to amend the **Communal Violence Bill**. It proposed that state consent should not become a hurdle in the deployment of central forces in a **serious communal riot**.

However, such deployment should **only be for a week** and **post-facto consent** should be taken from the state. This was to prevent a Babri Masjid-type of situation.

Had these recommendations been adopted, the Centre could have taken over the administration of only the Kuki dominant areas in Manipur.

#### **What are the historical examples of such a type of action by the central government to tackle the law-and-order problems in a state?**

Something like this was done in 1950 by the then Union Home Minister C Rajagopalachari to tackle the second phase of the **Telangana insurgency**.

The **entire administration including law and order** of a portion of a state was given to the **Central Intelligence Bureau** with a mandate to get rid of insurgents **“within six months”**.

Their area of operations was confined only to Communist strongholds and not the entire Hyderabad state.

### 55. [Shifting sands – on external trade](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “Shifting sands” published in “The Hindu” on 17th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Indian economy

**News-** The article explains the scenario of trade in recent times.

#### **What are statistics related to India’s external trade in recent times?**

There was a 10.3% decline in **goods exports** in May. It marks the **fourth successive month** of contraction in good exports.

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Except for electronics **exports**, other categories of exported goods did not show good performance.

**Engineering goods** contracted for the 11th month in a row. The **textiles sector** shrank for the seventh straight month.

There was a 30% decline in **petroleum exports**. It may largely be due to **cooling global prices** that are also affecting other commodities' export values.

After a 6.7% rise in 2022-23, **goods exports** are now down 11.4% over the first two months of this year.

The current estimate of \$25.3 billion for May's **services exports** is quite sobering.

**Global service exports** increased by a mere 0.7% in May. There was a **26.7% boom** in services exports last year. The **global slowdown** now appears to be impacting the services too.

**Core imports** excluding oil and gems and jewellery have contracted 5.5% in 2023-24.

May **import bill** was just 6.6% below 2022 levels and almost 14% over April's figure which had been the lowest in 15 months. This has lifted the **merchandise trade deficit** to a five-month high of \$22.1 billion.

It is believed the trend may improve from July or August. The World Trade Organization has upgraded the **global trade growth** from 1% to 1.7% for 2023.

### 56. [How India can lead multilateralism at WTO](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article "How India can lead multilateralism at WTO" published in "The Indian Express" on 17th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Economy

**Relevance-** Issues related to WTO

**News-** The recently concluded meeting of the G20 working group on trade and investment focused on the important issue of WTO reform.

**How has the approach of the global community towards global economic governance changed in recent times?**

Earlier The world favoured **economic interdependence**. The WTO was aimed at **legalising and policing economic interdependence**.

Today's world is dominated by **geoeconomic considerations and heightened securitisation of international economic relations**.

The pursuit of **unilateralism in international economic relations**, especially by developed countries like the US, is on the rise. There is little regard for WTO law.

Economic policies such as **industrial subsidies and local content requirements** have made a comeback. There is a deliberate effort to weaken **trade multilateralism** in favour of **external plurilateral alignments** keeping the big power confrontation in mind.

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**What are the WTO reforms that should be advocated by G20's "middle powers" such as India, Indonesia, Brazil, and South Africa?**

First is related to the **special and differential treatment (SDT) principle** in WTO agreements. SDT provisions give **special rights** to developing countries and **obligate developed countries** to treat the former more favourably.

However, **only 21% of the SDT provisions** in various WTO agreements oblige developed countries to provide **differential treatment** to developing countries. SDT provisions need to be given **more teeth and effort**.

Second is related to the **appellate body**. It remains paralysed since 2019 because of the US.

The remaining G20 countries need to either **persuade the US** to change its position or **resurrect the appellate body** without the US.

Third is related to the **consensus-based decision-making** in the WTO. It is slowing from 2017 onward. There has been a shift away from this principle toward **plurilateral discussions** on select issues such as **investment facilitation**.

While the **plurilateral approach** is a welcome development for rule-making, there is a need to develop a **multilateral governance framework for plurilateral agreements**.

This **governance framework** should include key principles of **non-discrimination, transparency, and inclusivity**. Forcing plurilateral agreements on non-willing members will increase the **trust deficit** between developed and developing countries.

Fourth is related to addressing the **transparency gap in the WTO**, especially in terms of **notification requirements**.

The WTO member countries are **obliged to notify** all their laws and regulations that affect trade. But, the **compliance** with this obligation is poor. This increases the **cost of trade**, especially for developing countries.

### 57. [Railway safety — listen to the voices from below](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article "Railway safety — listen to the voices from below" published in "The Hindu" on 17th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Infrastructure

**Relevance-** Issues related to railway safety

**News-** The triple train collision near Balasore in Odisha on June 2 led to the tragic loss of over 280 lives.

**What is the record of railways on safety in recent times?**

Statistics show that over the last two decades, the **number of derailments** has drastically declined from around 350 per year around the turn of the millennium, to 22 in 2021-22. This is a **commendable achievement** by any standards.

This has been achieved despite a nearly threefold increase in **freight loading** and more than a doubling of **passenger traffic**.

**What is one aspect of railway safety that has not received sufficient attention?**

This concerns the **flow of information** regarding **unsafe practices or situations** on a **real-time basis**.

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Unlike many other organisations, the activities of the Railways are **spread geographically** over a wide area.

It involves a **multiplicity of departments**. They need to work in close coordination on a **real-time basis** to ensure the smooth and safe running of trains.

In order to **ensure uniformity** in the **compliance of rules and regulations and safety**, a large number of **codes and manuals** have been evolved for different departments to standardise the procedures.

**Periodic field inspections** are done by authorities at various levels. It ensures **compliance with laid-down procedures and standards of workmanship**.

Every department has evolved a **set of schedules** for the inspection of various work centres and **operational procedures** for every level of the management. This system suffers from a few drawbacks.

The **“top-down” approach** places the onus of detecting deviations on the higher authorities. They look down on the lower staff with **suspicion and distrust**.

It encourages **window dressing** and sweeping of problems under the carpet. There is a lack of **transparency and frankness** in such a situation.

This can be **counterproductive** in matters that concern railway safety. Many accidents are the culmination of **unsafe practices or deviations from the norm** over a period of time.

### **How real empowerment of lower staff can be done and how it is useful?**

A system called **Confidential Incident Reporting and Analysis System (CIRAS)** was developed by one of the British universities nearly three decades ago.

This encourages the lower staff to point out **deviations** on a **real-time basis**, and the expression of **frank view**. This is an example of real empowerment of staff. The introduction of a similar reporting system on the Indian Railways is necessary.

The **success and effectiveness** of a CIRAS-like reporting system depends not only on the **physical infrastructure**. A total **change in the mindset** of the management, from the highest to the lower levels is required.

There must be an attitudinal change from the **conventional approach of fault-finding and punishment** to a **shared commitment** to ensure safety at all levels. The aim should be to correct, not punish.

### **What are other reforms needed for the railway?**

There is a need for serious rethink on the recently introduced **Indian Railways Management Service (IRMS)** scheme. It can destroy **loyalty and sense of “ownership”** towards a particular department amongst the management cadre.

It is perhaps also time to revert to the earlier system of having a **full-time Cabinet Minister** for the Railways. There is a need for undivided attention at the **highest policy-making level**.

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### 58. [Steering sustainable trade – India needs to push manufacturing exports](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Steering sustainable trade – India needs to push manufacturing exports**” published in **Business Standard** on **19<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development

**Relevance:** concerns with declining exports in India and measures needed

**News:** India’s merchandise exports have been struggling, with declining for fourth consecutive month in May.

#### **What are the highlights of the merchandise exports data?**

The value of exports was \$34.98 billion in May, down from \$39 billion in the same month last year.

Even though the imports have declined, **the trade deficit expanded to a five-month high of \$22.12 billion.**

Among the key sectors, 17 out of 30 experienced a contraction in exports, including petroleum products, gems and jewelry, and engineering goods. However, **electronics exports performed well, showing over 70% growth.**

#### **What are the challenges with Indian exports?**

**The weakness in the global economy poses** a near-term challenge for India’s exports.

According to the projections of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (**OECD**), global economic growth is expected to slow from 3.3 percent in 2022 to 2.7 percent in 2023.

Additionally, the growth rate in the US is also expected to decline from 1.6% in 2023 to 1% in 2024.

Further, **the continued tightening of financial conditions is expected to affect demand.**

#### **What are the future projections for the exports?**

India is expected to maintain a manageable current account deficit (**CAD**) due to **lower commodity prices and a surplus in trade in services.**

**As per the Chief Economic Advisor**, the CAD was expected to remain under 2 percent of GDP this fiscal year.

Moreover, the inflation rate in OECD countries is expected to decrease from 9.4% in 2022 to 6.6% in 2023. However, **despite this, the inflation rate will still remain significantly above the medium-term target.**

Therefore, **financial conditions in advanced economies are expected to remain restrictive in the future**, which will have negative effects on global output and fund flows.

#### **What measures have been taken by India to boost its export?**

The Indian government is taking measures to boost exports by **utilizing its investment promotion agency and diplomatic missions**, with a specific focus on 40 countries that make up around 85% of India’s exports.

**In terms of policy**, the government is **working on a twin strategy** of export promotion and import substitution.



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However, the effectiveness of this strategy remains uncertain in the current global economic and trade environment, especially when India is reluctant to engage in large trade agreements.

### What can be the way ahead for India?

As per a recent report, India's top export items are primarily petroleum products, while mobile phones have entered the top five rankings in 2022-23.

Therefore, **India needs to expand its achievements in the mobile phone sector to other areas to achieve sustained success.**

**Increasing manufacturing exports** will not only contribute to long-term stability in external accounts but also generate much-needed employment opportunities for India's growing workforce.

### 59. Transmitting efficiency – New RE projects could address a major weakness

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Transmitting efficiency – New RE projects could address a major weakness**” published in **Business Standard** on **19<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 3 – Environment – Renewable Energy**

**Relevance:** About NCT's transmission project and challenges associated with it.

**News:** The National Committee on Transmission (NCT) has recently approved six transmission projects. It is an important step toward overcoming hurdles for renewable power projects in India.

### **About NCT's transmission project**

The project **will connect green-energy installations and contribute to the goal of transmitting 500 GW of energy from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030.**

The NCT's approval is part of a plan to transmit 500 GW of energy based on non-fossil fuels by 2030, connecting solar parks and wind-power plants to the national grid.

Under the plan, the focus is on attracting private sector participation through “traffic-based competitive bidding” (**TBCB**) for these projects.

**The transmission projects will connect renewable-energy zones (REZs) in** Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra, as well as hydroelectric power projects in Himachal Pradesh.

**Note:** *Currently, renewable energy (RE) accounts for only 12% of the country's power generation, with coal remaining the dominant source.*

### **What are the challenges with Renewable Energy projects?**

**RE power generation**, unlike fossil fuel-based generation, **is based on various factors. For example**, solar power depends on factors like sunrise, sunset, and cloud cover, while wind power relies on wind speed.

This variable nature of RE power makes it difficult to integrate it with the transmission of power produced by conventional sources.

Since the capacity utilization of the transmission system varies between 20 percent and 30 percent, **there are questions about its economic viability.**

Another concern which arises is regarding the effectiveness of the traffic-based competitive bidding (**TBCB**) process.

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While competitive bidding is generally considered a better approach, recent experiences have shown that the chasing of the lowest power tariffs by bidders does not always result in efficient or viable projects.

**For instance**, in the solar power sector, competition in project bidding drove prices down to a level where power purchasers backed out of purchasing contracts with RE power generators, hoping for even lower prices in subsequent bids.

It is therefore crucial that the **National Committee on Transmissions' (NCT) latest plan** avoids this issue.

### [60. On climate change, wealthy nations must show the way](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “On climate change, wealthy nations must show the way” published in “The Indian Express” on 19th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Environment – Climate Change

**News-** The article explains the need for urgent action on climate change in current times.

#### **Why is action on climate change urgently needed in present times?**

Climate change is creating **variability in our weather systems**. Floods, droughts, extreme rains and subsequent crop damage and health impacts are big challenges for the planet.

The **WMO's recent report on global temperatures** touching 1.5 degrees Celsius is a warning about a climate emergency.

As per **IPCC's 2023 Climate Change Synthesis Report**, governments are just not doing enough to tackle the crisis.

As per this report, the current pace of climate actions will lead to a rise of **global average temperature** by 2.7 degrees Celsius over **pre-industrial levels** by 2100. All the **international net-zero targets** together would still warm the planet by 2.2 degrees Celsius.

An estimated two million people lost their lives between 1970 and 2019 to extreme weather and the economic loss hovers around \$6.5 trillion.

Many believe that **climate impacts** in 2100 will not be severe, and the **current adaptation measures** will be adequate. But Covid-19 has revealed the **under-preparedness** of most countries. Climate change is likely to pose a much more severe challenge.

#### **What is the importance of rich countries in tackling climate change?**

A **mere 10% of the world's richest countries** emit **50% of the greenhouse gases**, while the poorest account for 12%. Delaying climate action to 2030 is likely to push temperatures beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius.

If the major economies of the world want to lead, they will have to do so by making a **long-term commitment** to reducing emissions.

The quantum of **climate finance** has grown only slightly over the past decade, reaching about **\$ 579 billion in 2017-18**. This is about **10 times less** than the **estimated \$ 6.3 trillion** needed every year **by 2030** to stay aligned with the **Paris Agreement**.

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### Why is current timing suitable for climate related actions?

The solutions that exist for climate change can be scaled up faster with **political will**. Solar is now the **cheapest source of power** in the major economies. A new solar plant is three times cheaper than its equivalent in coal.

In 2022, **90% of the world's power sector growth** came from renewables. Twenty-four nations have reported a drop in emissions by expanding their **renewables portfolio**.

The switch to clean energy need not spell doom for the **oil and gas sector**. Professionals can migrate to renewables with **expertise in energy technology and finance**.

By investing their subsidies in **de-centralised solar, wind, geothermal and tidal power**, the corporations could make themselves the primary energy provider for the developing world.

### 61. A reserve currency differs from one that payments are settled in

**Source-** The post is based on the article "A reserve currency differs from one that payments are settled in" published in the "mint" on 19th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Indian Economy – Money and Currency

**Relevance-** Issues related to external account

**News-** There has been a lot of discussions recently on the international usage of the US dollar as a reserve currency.

### What is a reserve currency?

It is the currency held by countries as **foreign exchange reserves**. These are required to meet the gap between a country's **international payments and receipts**. It serves as a **buffer to meet any contingency**.

Such reserves can be held in the form of **gold or any foreign currency** that can be **freely used or fully convertible currency**.

### What are its characteristics?

It should not be subject to any controls by the country that issues it. USD as a **reserve currency** is based on its **credibility**.

The second requirement for a reserve currency is that there should be **sufficient availability** of that currency to be held as reserves.

Countries should be prepared to expand their currency in amounts sufficient to be held by other countries as a reserve asset. It means running **current account deficits on a sustained basis**. This is known as the **Triffin's paradox**.

A reserve currency should be available for investment in **liquid form**. Ensuring liquidity in a currency requires well developed **debt and equity markets** in that currency.

### What is the historical experience associated with reserve currency?

Historically, gold has been used as a **reserve currency**. Over time, the supply of gold was not enough to meet the growing needs of trade and investment.

This saw the emergence of **reserve currencies**. Currencies of **dominant imperialist countries** like the UK were accepted for international payments.

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Initially, the **UK's pound sterling** was the **currency of choice**. It could always be converted to gold by the Bank of England. It lost its **reserve currency status** as it abandoned the **gold standard** during the Great Depression and became bankrupt following World War II.

As the US began to **dominate the global economy**, it became the **preferred reserve currency**. The trend ended in 1971 and the US abandoned the **gold exchange standard**.

The **freely floating exchange rate system** emerged after it. Countries declared the **exchange rate system of their choice** and their **currency of intervention**. Most countries picked the USD for it. The system has broadly stayed the same since then.

One major change was the emergence of the **euro as a single currency** for countries in the Eurozone.

The **currency composition of allocated reserves** in 2022 as compiled by the IMF shows that **58% of reserves are held in USD and 19% in euro**.

**Do recent global events following US sanctions threaten the use of the USD as a reserve currency?**

Countries today are going **alternate currency and even payment arrangements** for their global transactions.

China allowed **limited convertibility** by letting **non-residents hold renminbi accounts** for trade payments.

In 2015, it introduced the **Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS)**, backed by the People's Bank of China.

It offers **clearing and settlement services** for its participants in cross-border renminbi payments and trade. But it does not mean that the Chinese currency can become a **reserve currency**, unless it becomes **fully convertible**.

In 2022, the RBI introduced an additional arrangement for **invoicing, payment and settlement** of exports/imports in Indian rupees through **Special Rupee Vostro Accounts**.

It allows increased invoicing of trade in INR without **multilateral settlement**. But, they are not very different from India's bilateral **trade and payment arrangements** with Russia.

**Geo-political considerations** and the **covid-19 experience of supply chain disruptions** also forced countries to enter trading blocs and set up their **own payment arrangements**.

The role played by a reserve asset, however, cannot be replaced or minimised by these **payment arrangements**.

A **national currency** serving as a reserve currency with key characteristics of **convertibility, usability and availability** will continue to be needed. The role of the USD will continue to be important.

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### 62. Responsibility and the complexities of climate leadership

**Source-** The post is based on the article “Responsibility and the complexities of climate leadership” published in “The Hindu” on 19th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Environment

**Relevance-** Issues related to climate change

**News-** Over the last few weeks, there has been an increasingly vocal campaign to unseat the President-Designate of COP28, Minister Sultan Al Jaber of the host nation, the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

**What are the actions needed by the global community for addressing the challenges presented by climate change?**

For a clean energy future for the planet, there is a need for **united actions**. It is important to **avoid division**. All fellow parties must be engaged at COP28 and elsewhere.

Many of our nations are also crippled by **unsustainable debts**. Some amount of debt is becoming unplayable due to climate damages.

There is a need for a **collective approach** which recognises the **debt problem** and the barrier it creates for **clean energy investment and climate adaptation**.

**Sovereign wealth funds and multilateral development banks** could assist in **de-risking restructured debts** and **insuring re-issued climate bonds**.

Thus, finance continues to be central to the COP outcome. The **Loss and Damage fund** must be utilised properly.

**Fossil fuel-dependent economies** are critical to these efforts. They can demonstrate their commitment by making subscriptions to support funding for climate damages in the most vulnerable countries.

COP28 may be an opportunity to engage the fossil fuels industry to make some **significant and quantifiable commitments** to **emissions cuts and climate action** in general.

### 63. CoWIN leaks: Where's government's due diligence?

**Source-** The post is based on the article “CoWIN leaks: Where's government's due diligence?” published in “The Indian Express” on 19th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Awareness in the field of IT, computers. GS2- E-governance

**Relevance-** Issues related to privacy and security in digitalisation

**News-** The recent media reports about the CoWin data leak are no doubt disconcerting.

**What is the general response of authorities to data-related privacy and security concerns?**

They dismiss it by saying that our phone or Aadhaar numbers may already be there with hundreds of entities anyway.

Keepers of these systems argue that the **security and privacy safeguards** deployed are foolproof because they use “**state-of-the-art best practices**”.

**What should be standard discourse on security and privacy related concerns?**

**Security specifications** should start with a **well-articulated threat model**. It should tell about **security risks and the capabilities** of a hypothetical adversary.

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For large **public service applications**, it is assumed that the adversary can corrupt **all insiders** including system administrators, all custody chains, and all hardware and software.

The system designers are required to either argue for security in some **well-established and standard framework** against such a threat model.

Trusting the **integrity of software or hardware** is usually avoided because such correctness is often difficult to establish.

### **Why does the policy response on privacy require even more due diligence?**

Leakage of **sensitive personal information** from phones, and Aadhaar makes one vulnerable to **direct harms like fraud, identity theft, or illegal surveillance**. There can be **indirect harm** resulting from **unknown entities** using personal data in **unknown ways**.

**For example**, such data may be used illegally for **profiling voters and influencing them**. This is problematic because individuals are often less careful about these **indirect harms**.

### **What is the way forward to prevent the privacy breach in digitalisation?**

It requires standards to ensure that data is only **collected for specific purposes**. Its security, particularly against **insider attacks**, is a necessary condition.

There is a need for **legal standards** to ensure collection of data for **specific purposes** and **access control regulation** to prevent building **parallel copies of sensitive databases**.

Any digitalisation involves some privacy risks at the **interface of the digital and the human**. It needs to be **precisely modelled**.

The interface is a crucial component of the **digitalisation use cases**. It defines how various users, including administrators and operators, interact with digital systems.

### **What is the harm associated with failure to do the required due diligence of privacy risk assessment?**

It results in violations of **data collection for specific purposes**. It is evident from the **imprecise definition** in the Aadhaar Act and the **indiscriminate use** of the “Aadhaar card” in all services. Some of these are backed by laws and some are not.

The other harms that often arise due to inadequate modelling are in **digitalisation of welfare delivery** such as sale of PDS ration or MNREGA payments.

It may result in **exclusions and denial of services, hardships, and increased transactional costs** for the beneficiaries.

### [64. Greenwashed – Aravalis to Goa, rules are being tweaked to allow ecologically dangerous projects and mining](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Greenwashed – Aravalis to Goa, rules are being tweaked to allow ecologically dangerous projects and mining**” published in **The Times of India** on **19th June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Environment and Bio-diversity Conservation.

**Relevance:** About protecting Indian hill ranges.

**News:** A recent study found that India might lose 22% of Aravalis, India’s oldest mountain range, in just 40 years, from 2019 to 2059.

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### What are the findings of the study on Aravali hillocks?

Read here: [100s of Aravali hillocks flattened, sandstorms reaching Delhi-NCR: Study](#)

Aravalis acts as a natural boundary to the Thar Desert and is a natural water recharge facility. But, a flattening Aravali will speed up the desertification of the entire area.

### What are the causes for flattening Aravalis?

These include **a)** Indiscriminate mining, **b)** Environmental laws are routinely diluted by a slew of exemptions, lacunae and reconversions from forest to non-forest land, **c)** Intrusions from developers, urban city departments and state governments into protected eco-zones, and **d)** Allocation of Aravali lands for housing projects of the government.

### Why the issue is not persistent in Aravalis alone?

These are common causes. Forests, lakes and fields from Uttarakhand to Rajasthan, Haryana to Goa and the North East are being depleted by developers to build everything from yoga resorts to film studios.

For example, the recent Goa government regulation freed up 6 crore square metres of Goa's eco-sensitive zone land for sale. In Uttarakhand, policies were altered and rules amended to make mining easier.

The focus on infrastructure development by depleting eco-sensitive zones is myopic. Deforestation and melting glaciers have made hill states vulnerable to mudslides and landslides. So, irreversible" damage to ecology must stop as requested by the Supreme Court.

When the government can ban 10 year old diesel cars to protect the environment, then it can do much more to protect a hill range and a seaside ecological zone.

### 65. [Indian Dollar Transfers That Beat Some GOI Welfare Spends](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Indian Dollar Transfers That Beat Some GOI Welfare Spends**” published in **The Times of India** on 20th June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Indian Economy – Money and Banking

**News-** The article emphasis the importance of reducing the cost of remittances.

### What is the news related to?

India crossed a milestone of achieving **remittances inflow of more than \$100 billion**. India stands **first globally** in remittances receipts with a **long lead over Mexico and China**.

Another remarkable achievement is reducing **the cost of receiving these remittances**.

As per the World Bank, India has reduced the simple average cost of receiving remittances in the last 10 years from around **9% to 4.65% for a typical \$200 transaction**. Which is cheaper than the global average of **6.30%**.

### What are the benefits of reducing costs?

**Firstly**, Cost saving = Higher spending power

**Secondly**, it reduce the **current account deficit** and being less volatile, provide stability to inflow of forex from abroad, and more importantly, remittances provide **financial lifeline** to families and relatives back home.

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**Thirdly**, remittances play a significant role in **poverty reduction** and improving health and educational outcomes of the recipient households.

### What are the challenges in reducing costs?

Global analysis shows that **transaction fees** are the prime contributor to the overall cost. It is typically higher, where the sender and the receiver are not able to access the formal financial system.

The costs are more where **the services of an agent are used** for collection or distribution of remittances.

Studies have pointed out that the frictions associated with **verification, regulatory compliances, data exchange, non-interoperable tech platforms**, and long transaction chains may cause the transaction costs to increase.

### How is India overcoming these challenges?

PM **Jan Dhan Yojana** and pervasive use of **direct benefit transfer** under government programmes have been transformative in intensifying financial inclusion.

Zero cost, safe and efficient money transfer through digital public infrastructure in the form of **Unified Payments Interface (UPI)** is deepening the adoption of mobile mode for transactions.

Interoperable linkages like **UPI-PayNow achieved by RBI and Monetary Authority of Singapore** will enable users of each of the two fast payment systems to make instant, low-cost fund transfers on a reciprocal basis.

With the **emergence of 2,000-plus startups and 20-plus unicorns** in fintech in India in the last few years, the vibrant fintech ecosystem lays the foundation for innovative solutions and healthy competition.

### What is the way forward?

Active **support of other countries** is critical to enable ease of validation, compliance and transmission.

India has been taking up this matter in **various forums like G20, WTO** and with its partners in free trade agreements.

Active pursuit of these strategies has delivered promising results till now and the future looks India's experience and strategies surely provide a pathway forward.

### [66. The time for an honest and open dialogue on climate is right now](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**The time for an honest and open dialogue on climate is right now**" published in **Live Mint** on **20<sup>th</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Climate Change, Energy

**Relevance:** concerns with Renewable Energies

**News:** Governments consider climate change as a serious challenge, but they tend to come up with normal solutions for fixing it rather than looking at the multifaceted angle.



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### **What kind of solution is provided for climate change?**

It is always thought that climate change can be fixed cheaply with solar and wind energy. This restricted thought fails to capture the complexity of the climate challenge and hinders progress in addressing its multifaceted challenges.

Therefore, **it is important to consider the costs and feasibility of proposed solutions**, weighing both the costs of climate change and costs of climate policy.

### **What are the different factors that need to be considered in tackling climate change?**

It is not only climate change but **population dynamics, age distribution, income levels, technological advancements, regulation and governance** all play a role in shaping the supply and demand of economic goods and services.

**As per a UN report**, for most economic sectors, the impact of climate change will be small relative to the impacts of other drivers.

Moreover, many countries believe solar and wind power alone can solve their energy challenges.

However, while solar and wind can contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions, assessing their limitations and potential drawbacks is crucial.

### **What are the limitations of solar and wind energy?**

**Dependence on Geographical Factors:** The effectiveness of renewable energy sources depends on geographical factors and available resources.

These sources require significant upfront investments, and their intermittent nature raises concerns about grid reliability and energy storage.

**Employment Issues:** Transitioning entirely to solar and wind power presents engineering challenges and may have adverse effects on industries reliant on fossil fuels, potentially leading to job losses and social disruptions.

**Environmental Damage:** The mining and processing of critical minerals and rare earths for renewable technologies can cause significant environmental damage and impact communities, traditions, and cultures.

Therefore, **the cost of implementing renewable energy infrastructure and the potential impact on energy prices should be carefully evaluated**, especially for low-income households and industries sensitive to energy costs.

**Limited Battery Storage Capacity:** The battery storage capacity for solar and wind energy storage is limited to a few minutes. This highlights the need for significant investments in battery technologies.

**Must Read:** [The difficulty with renewables](#)

### **What can be the way ahead?**

**First**, to effectively address climate change, it is important to prioritize innovation and technological advancements rather than relying solely on government regulations and subsidies.

**Second**, investing in research and development of clean energy technologies, including nuclear energy and advanced carbon capture and storage can play a crucial role in tackling climate challenges.

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**Third**, there is a need to acknowledge the opportunity costs and trade-offs associated with climate choices because solely relying on market mechanisms for emissions mitigation may not be sufficient.

**Fourth**, exploring complementary energy sources, such as **hydroelectric or low-carbon traditional sources**, can help bridge the gap between intermittent supply and consistent demand.

**Fifth**, it is also necessary to acknowledge that climate change is not the only problem and there is a need for broadening our perspective

### 67. On defaulters, RBI prioritises public interest

**Source**– The post is based on the article **“On defaulters, RBI prioritises public interest”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **20th June 2023**.

**Syllabus**: GS3- Indian economy and mobilisation of resources

**Relevance**- Issues related to banking system

**News**- On June 8, the Reserve Bank of India set out a framework for bank settlements with defaulters.

#### **Why should banks settle with defaulters?**

When there is a default, the primary objective of a bank is to recover as much of the loan as possible. **Various options** might be available to the bank.

The bank decides the best strategy based purely on **commercial judgement**.

#### **Why is it wrong to think that the RBI has permitted something unusual?**

**One-time settlements** are part and parcel of the business of banking. The RBI has simply given a **formal regulatory structure** to a **standard banking practice**.

Some of these settlements can indeed be with **wilful and fraudulent defaulters**. When trying to recover a loan, a bank should not make any distinction between **wilful, and fraudulent default**. It is up to the bank to decide whether a settlement is a **better and quicker option**. The sole motivation behind such a decision should be to **maximise recovery**.

The RBI circular makes it clear that banks can file cases against **fraudulent or wilful defaulters**.

As per circular, banks will undertake settlements “without **prejudice to the criminal proceeding** underway against such debtors”. In other words, the circular does not **condone any crime**.

#### **What are some valid concerns raised by this circular?**

**Government control over public sector banks**– The **settlement process** might be misused to favour **politically connected defaulters** at the cost of the banks’ commercial interests. It is the responsibility of RBI to allow **commercially prudent decisions** and prevent **politically motivated** ones.

There is ample evidence that private sector banks have been settling with wilful defaulters. So, questions arise about the **need for this circular**.

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The answer possibly lies in the fact that two-thirds of the Indian banking system is owned by the government. The RBI circular gives these banks **regulatory cover for settlement-related decisions**.

Therefore, the circular merely **levels the playing field**. But the need for such a circular underscores the **distortions** that the Indian banking system suffers from **government ownership of banks**.

**Regulatory governance**– A year ago, the RBI recommended that the RBI place all draft instructions on its website for **stakeholder comments**. Exceptions should be made only in special circumstances.

There do not appear to have been any **special circumstances** surrounding the RBI circular related to settlement. There were no issues related to **financial stability, or fiduciary duty, or confidentiality**.

At the same time, the circular is of **great public interest** since it applies to entities against whom criminal proceedings are underway.

Hence, the **draft circular** should have been placed on the RBI's website for **public consultation** along with a **discussion paper** clearly **explaining its rationale**.

### 68. [Safety first – India's regulators must ensure quality and safety of drugs](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Safety first – India's regulators must ensure quality and safety of drugs**" published in **The Hindu** on **20th June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

**Relevance:** About issues with Indian-made drugs.

**News:** Two patients have recently died after being given [Indian-made anaesthetic drugs in Sri Lanka](#). This has raised questions about imported Indian drugs.

#### **What are the recent issues highlighted in Indian-made drugs?**

-A few months ago, the United States found a highly drug-resistant bacteria in Indian-made drugs.

-Last year, the World Health Organization (WHO) linked the [deaths of at least 70 children in the Gambia](#) from acute kidney injury, to Indian-made cough syrups. Deadly chemicals such as diethylene glycol and ethylene glycol were used as a cheaper alternative for propylene glycol. A detailed causality assessment by the Gambia and independent investigations found a link between the deaths and the toxic chemicals.

Similarly, last year, [Uzbekistan claimed that children died](#) after consuming India-made cough syrup.

*Note: Diethylene glycol-contaminated drugs have led to at least five incidents of poisoning in Chennai, Mumbai, Bihar, Gurugram and Jammu between 1972 and 2020.*

-Earlier this year, WHO flagged the contaminated drugs found in the Marshall Islands and Micronesia due to Indian-made cough syrup.

**Must read:** [Issues with the drug regulatory system in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

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### What should be done?

The Indian drug regulator has so far failed to institute measures to make sure drugs produced in India for export and domestic use are safe. To protect India as a pharmacy of the global south, the regulator should act as a watchdog to ensure drug safety, and not as a facilitator for the pharma industry.

**Read more:** [INDIAN PHARMACEUTICAL SECTOR CHALLENGES AND REFORMS](#)

### 69. [Record-breaking temperatures: In the hot seat](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Record-breaking temperatures: In the hot seat**” published in the **Indian Express** on **20th June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Environment and Bio-diversity Conservation.

**Relevance:** About 1.5 degree Celsius mark.

**News:** Earlier, the World Meteorological Organisation warned that temperatures in at least one of the next four years would be higher than the pre-industrial era average by 1.5 degree Celsius. Now, the EU’s Earth Observation Arm, Copernicus, has reported that this threshold was breached in the first week of June. This is the first time that global mean temperatures have exceeded the 1.5 degree Celsius figure during a summer month.

### What is the Copernicus programme?

**Read here:** [Copernicus programme](#)

### What will be the impact of breaching the 1.5 degree Celsius mark?

The Paris Agreement refers to global mean temperatures over a 20- or 30-year period. But crossing the 1.5-degree mark frequently will make the cumulative effect of these increases a serious issue. For instance,

-A long-term breach of the 1.5 degree threshold could **aggravate climate impacts**, including heatwaves, floods and droughts.

-Living with such weather vagaries would **require paradigm shifts**, especially in the areas such as agriculture, urban planning, and disaster warning and mitigation systems,

### What are the challenges in mitigation and adaptation financing at present?

**Inadequate finances:** The last IPCC report underlined, “finances for adapting to climate change have been particularly low”. The UNEP estimates that \$340 billion will be needed every year for climate adaptation, but less than \$30 billion gets allocated for the purpose.

**Improper method of financing:** An OECD assessment shows that 70% of public climate finance is provided through loans where the funder expects a financial return.

**Investments provide no immediate return:** Interventions such as disaster warning systems or building flood defences do not generate immediate revenue.

**Disproportionate impacts:** For instance, Pakistan contributes barely 1% of the world’s GHG emissions, but last year’s floods alone cost more than \$30 billion for them.

Overall, the current financing structure does not address the challenges of a large majority of climate-vulnerable countries, they are also amongst the most resource-strapped.

**Read more:** [On climate change, wealthy nations must show the way](#)

### What should be done?

France will soon hold an international summit “aimed at taking stock of the ways and means of increasing financial solidarity with the Global South.” The decisions taken at the meeting are likely to feed into the agenda of COP 28 in Dubai. So, the delegates should consider the recent rise in temperatures seriously.

### 70. [Rationalising prices – Excess use of urea should be contained](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Rationalising prices – Excess use of urea should be contained**” published in the **Business Standard** on **20th June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices.

**Relevance:** About bringing urea under NBS.

**News:** Recently, the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) has recommended that urea should be brought under the nutrient-based subsidy (NBS) regime, like all other fertilisers.

The Objective is to **a)** foster parity in the prices of fertilisers containing nitrogen (N), phosphorus (P), potassium (K), and other plant nutrients, and **b)** ensure fertiliser applications are balanced and need-based.

### What is the need for bringing urea under NBS?

**Overuse of Urea:** The unduly low price of urea, vis-a-vis other fertilisers, has resulted in the overuse of nitrogen and inadequate application of other equally essential nutrients, including some vital micro and secondary plant nutrients. This has consequently adversely affected the soil health and its fertility. For instance, the consumption of urea increased by over 33% since 2010. But other fertilisers registered only marginal gains. The latest estimates reckon the NPK use ratio at 13:5:1, instead of the ideal 4:2:1.

**Increased fertiliser requirement:** Due to the above issue, higher doses of nutrients are now required to get the same level of crop yields. Continuing this situation would severely impact farming, particularly profitability, which has already been severely eroded.

**Increasing fertiliser subsidies:** Farm scientists have been demanding the inclusion of urea under NBS ever since the mechanism of NBS was conceptualised in 2010. But successive governments have rejected it as urea pricing is a politically sensitive issue. As a result, fertiliser subsidies have touched a high of nearly Rs, 2.3 trillion in 2022-23.

**Failure of other measures:** Initiatives like mandatory neem-coating of urea, and the introduction of soil health cards were intended primarily to promote judicious use of plant nutrients. But these measures have failed to produce the desired results.

Considering the above points, rationalising prices seems the best way to restore the nutrient-use balance for the sake of sustainable agriculture.

**Must read:** [Why urea rules India's farms](#)

### Why it is the right time for bringing urea under NBS?

Due to the re-commissioning of three defunct fertiliser plants and the availability of innovative Nano urea, domestic production of urea has begun to increase and the need for imports is waning

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rapidly. Further, the Russia-Ukraine conflict has eased fertiliser prices. So, the government thus should take this opportunity to rationalise fertiliser prices, as advised by the CACP.

**Must read:** [The need for a new fertilizer policy in India.](#)

### 71. [Semiconductor fab: the unfinished agenda](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Semiconductor fab: the unfinished agenda**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **21st June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy – Industrial Policies

**News** – The article explains the issues related to the semiconductor industry in India.

#### **What were the earlier attempts by India for semiconductor manufacturing?**

The first serious attempt was made in 2007 in the form of a **Special Incentive Package**. But it yielded no response.

The second attempt in the form of **Modified SIP** in 2012 fared better. India came close to having a fab. **Two consortia** were approved by the Cabinet.

The government **offered incentives** amounting to nearly \$5 billion in the form of cash and tax cuts. But finally, both failed to **mobilise resources**.

#### **How has China established itself as a major player in semiconductor manufacturing?**

China started late in the **semiconductor fab industry**. But backed by massive government financial support over the last two decades, it acquired hundreds of **loss-making fabs** from around the world and built its fab industry.

China’s chip production has grown rapidly. China has become one of the **major producers** of chips. It has a **strategic stranglehold** on chip-making due to its **market supremacy** in rare earths.

#### **What is the response of western countries to China’s dominance in semiconductor manufacturing?**

Over the last year, the U.S. and its Western allies have blocked the transfer of the latest **fab-related technology** to China.

The U.S. enacted the **CHIPS and Science Act** in 2022, with nearly **\$40 billion in subsidies** for semiconductor manufacturing to the country. The European Union sanctioned **€7.4 billion for a new fab** in France.

#### **What are issues involved in semiconductor manufacturing?**

Investment in a semiconductor fab is risky. Billions of dollars need to be recovered before the technology becomes obsolete.

There is a need for **substantial production** volumes for **economic viability** that is adequate to meet **global demand**.

Developing an ecosystem for chip manufacturing in a **greenfield location** is a major challenge. Hundreds of chemicals and gases are required for **chip fabrication**.

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The advantage of semiconductors having a **small freight-to-price ratio and a zero-custom duty regime** under the Information Technology Agreement, 1996, facilitates production in a single location and global sales.

People need to be trained. **Abundant clean water** should be available. The art of chip-making is important. Despite the best of equipment, poor quality and low yields can make fabs fail.

There are other issues, such as whether to set up a **logic/processor, memory or analog fab**. The most advanced set of technologies is needed to manufacture them.

A relatively easier option is **Assembly, Testing, Packaging and Marking (ATMP)**. But ATMPs have **little value** in terms of **actual chip-making**.

**Semiconductor fabrication** represents the ultimate frontier of **human tech advancement**. As per **Moore's law**, the number of transistors in a unit area doubles every 18 months. But the miniaturisation involves higher complexity and costs.

### **What is the way forward for the success of semiconductor manufacturing in India?**

China acquired **loss-making fabs** and then set up its own logic fab. It provides lessons. Acquiring existing fabs has many advantages. They are **reasonably priced, have stabilised technology, and a supply chain ecosystem**. They have an **established product line, and market**.

They will enable India to build the **fab ecosystem** and train human resources. **Much lower subsidies** would be required. Funds saved could be used for **advanced R&D in fab technologies**.

Another strategy could be setting up **ATMPs**. China has over 100 ATMPs.

### 72. Growth versus equity: A debate that India should've long settled

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**Growth versus equity: A debate that India should've long settled**" published in **Live Mint** on **21<sup>st</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy- Growth & Development

**Relevance:** Impact of higher growth on poverty and on inequality

**News:** There has always been debate over growth versus equity, means, how growth of nations impact the well-being of the people. This article explains the impact of growth on poverty and on inequality.

#### **What is the impact of higher growth on poverty?**

It is often argued that growth and poverty are in conflict, i.e., when the growth of a nation increases, it increases poverty.

However, in a democratic society, it is difficult to argue that poverty would decrease with high GDP. **For instance**, a higher GDP growth rate, such as 15%, is likely to reduce poverty more significantly than a lower rate, around 10%.

Moreover, the government's measures to redistribute income would also face less resistance with higher growth.

#### **Does higher growth increase inequality?**

**The relationship between growth and inequality is the inverse. For instance**, a 15% growth rate is likely to be accompanied by greater income inequality compared to a 5% rate.

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This is because capabilities are unevenly distributed in society, and different sectors of the economy grow at different rates.

**For instance**, those with the most suitable skills for the faster-growing sectors will experience proportionately higher income growth, while other sectors may find their skills inadequate for the new economic changes.

This structural adjustment occurs irrespective of the country's political system. **Even in China**, income inequality has increased over the past decade.

**The United States has also witnessed** the shift of manufacturing production to developing countries, like China and east Asia.

However, **in the US, the market has driven the re-skilling of workers, whereas in developing countries like India, there is a consensus that the state should fund or direct such re-skilling.**

Therefore, the issue of inequality is critical for India, and it is often associated with the challenge of poverty reduction.

### **What are the challenges associated with India's growth?**

There has been a significant structural change in the country's economy after 1991 economic reforms.

Due to these reforms, certain industries, such as small-scale textile and handloom sectors, faced intense competition from abroad, for which they were unprepared.

Despite the government support to the textile industries, **the dominance of textiles as an export item has declined over time.**

**Countries like Vietnam, Bangladesh, and Pakistan** are now leading the textile export economy in South and Southeast Asia.

### **What can be the way ahead for India?**

There is a need for **strong government incentives and support for Small Scale Industries (SSIs) and prioritizing re-skilling initiatives.**

**Economic growth with government support for re-skilling**, rather than picking growth over equity, (or vice versa), is the right political choice.

### 73. A national innovation system for pharma

**Source:** The post is based on the article "**A national innovation system for pharma**" published in the **Business Standard** on **21st June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

**Relevance:** About making the Indian pharmaceutical industry a world leader in innovation.

**News:** Recently a closed-door roundtable on innovation in the pharmaceutical industry was jointly hosted by the Centre for Technology Innovation and Economic Research and the Ananta Centre.

**Note:** This article is an expansion of [Towards a National Innovation System](#) article.



**About the Indian pharmaceutical industry**

From an overwhelming dependence on foreign firms and brands 50 years ago, India today has a vibrant and large pharmaceutical sector with highly entrepreneurial Indian players operating alongside multinationals. The industry is the third largest in volume worldwide, with a 10% share. However, in sales, it is the 14th largest in value, with just a 1.5% share.

Read more: [The pharmaceutical industry's self-regulation is a deceptive blocking strategy rather than a means for the industry to police itself.](#)

What should be done to make the Indian pharmaceutical industry a global giant?

## TOP FIVE PHARMACEUTICAL FIRM SPENDING ON R&D AND AVERAGES FOR SELECT COUNTRIES (2021)

	Average R & D spending (\$ Mn)	Average sales turnover (\$ Mn)	Average R & D intensity (%)	
USA	10,800	59,600	18	
Switzerland	5,070	24,500	21	
Germany	3,000	25,100	12	
UK	2,950	17,400	17	
Japan	2,490	14,300	17	
China	790	7,030	11	
India	150	1,500	10	
South Korea	130	1,200	11	

Source: Business Standard

**Incentivise investment in in-house R&D:** India must start with much greater investment in R&D by the industry. The US, Japan, Germany, Switzerland and the UK have giant pharmaceutical companies, each investing billions of dollars in R&D. So India needs a 10-year ambition for leadership, as foreign giants on average spend much more on R&D (\$7 billion) than the turnover of our top five pharmaceutical firms (\$1.5 billion). This can be facilitated by initiatives such as providing full tax credit against income tax for increases in R&D spending, etc.

**A regulatory system that supports innovation in firms:** Few of the regulatory framework officials do not understand what it takes to discover a new molecule. This forced Indian pharma companies to conduct Phase I trials of new drugs in Australia instead of India.

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**Note:** In Australia, the phase I trials costs 10 times higher, but the process is systematic, transparent and sure.

So, by revamping the regulatory system, India could turn our huge population and low labour cost into a major competitive advantage for drug discovery.

**Reorient public research:** India invests only around 0.4% of gross domestic product (GDP) in publicly funded R&D, just below the world average of 0.5%. A little over half of national R&D is done by the government in its own autonomous laboratories. Defence comes first, then Space, Atomic Energy, CSIR and Agriculture.

Healthcare research comes sixth, at under 6% of government spending on R&D. In the US, healthcare R&D (at 27%) is second only to defence. The same goes for the UK too (at 20%). So, allocating a larger share of government R&D spending to healthcare would be fruitful and spur investment within industry.

**Facilitate talent search:** Any Indian pharma industry can easily hire fresh graduates from Indian pharmacy courses. But they struggle to get advanced research talent. So, they often set up laboratories in the US and UK to tap into pools of specialised talent.

Almost every other country conducts public research within universities. So, their shift to foreign countries also connects them to well-funded universities that do a lot of healthcare research.

But in India, most of our public research happens in autonomous government laboratories. So, India too should shift public research to our higher education system. Thereby, India would simultaneously train more advanced talent that pharmaceutical firms need.

**Follow Chinese approach:** Fifteen years ago, the Indian pharmaceutical industry was well ahead of China in innovation. Today it is 10 years behind. This is because of impacts of regulatory changes made in China. These impacts **a)** Made it easier to conduct clinical trials, **b)** Facilitated competition between different local governments incentivised firms to expand R&D facilities in their city, **c)** The Thousand Talents programme attracted experienced technologists, etc.

So, building a broad national purpose will turn the Indian pharmaceutical industry into a world leader in innovation.

**Read more:** [INDIAN PHARMACEUTICAL SECTOR CHALLENGES AND REFORMS](#)

74. [Dead Wrong – Telangana charging the deceased with UAPA brings to life how the most severe laws are casually misused by govts](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Dead Wrong – Telangana charging the deceased with UAPA brings to life how the most severe laws are casually misused by govts**” published in **The Times of India** on **21st June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Security Issues.

**Relevance:** About misuse of stricter laws.

**News:** In Telangana, police charged the two dead people for two years under the anti-terror law, [Unlawful Activities \(Prevention\) Act, 1967](#). This is a classic example of the casual misuse of one of India’s most stringent laws.

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### About the status of UAPA cases

Analysis of NCRB data by various experts shows the conviction rate of people charged under UAPA is below 3%. Although 97% of those arrested and jailed get acquitted eventually, getting bail is tough. For instance, hardly 16% alone got bail in 2020. Thirteen of 4,690 accused under UAPA between 2018 and 2020 were below 18; 53% were between 18 and 30. The conviction rate for cases is 27%, almost half the convictions in IPC cases.

At the end of 2021, the highest number of cases pending investigation for over 10 years was in Manipur, with 1,597 of 2,041 such cases.

**Read more:** [Issue of Bail under UAPA \(Unlawful Activities Prevention Act\) – Explained, Pointwise](#)

### About the sedition cases

UAPA, along with the sedition law and a clutch of state laws, gives police sweeping powers to apply severe procedures for offences that are mostly loosely defined. The misuse of the sedition law prompted the Supreme Court to delay its decision until the government reconsiders. However, the [law commission cited national security to seek a stricter sedition law](#). The debates led the new law minister to indulge in “further consultations” on sedition.

**Supreme Court changes stand; now mere membership of a banned outfit is a crime under UAPA**

SC must not wait indefinitely for the government to reconsider the sedition law. Further, the government should consider the Telangana example as a grave “tendency” to violate rights and reconsider it.

### 75. Poor productivity – Cotton farmers need genetically modified seeds

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Poor productivity – Cotton farmers need genetically modified seeds**” published in the **Business Standard** on **21st June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Awareness in the field of biotechnology.

**Relevance:** About the need for GM cotton crops.

**News:** For the past several years, India’s cotton production has been stagnating at 34-36 million bales (one bale is 170 kg).

### What is the present state of India’s cotton production?

The cotton sector supports the livelihood of 45-50 million people, including 6 million cotton farmers.

Though India leads the world in cotton acreage, India ranks only 38th in productivity. For example, the average productivity of cotton is only around 500 kg a hectare, which compares poorly with the global average of over 800 kg.

While the old Bt-cotton hybrids, responsible for increasing output, have become outmoded. The new ones to replace them are not forthcoming. The moratorium on testing genetically modified (GM) crops imposed by the government in 2010 is thwarting the development of new Bt-cotton seeds.

**Read more:** [A fresh beginning – New GM cotton can reverse the yield decline](#)

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### What is the status of research for other GM cotton crops in India?

**BG-2 RRF:** It is a second-generation variant of the Bt-cotton seed, developed by the well-known seed company Mahyco. The Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee (GEAC) has delayed the permission by seeking additional data.

**Cry2Ai gene:** It is the Bt-cotton strain containing the pink bollworm-resistant, developed by Hyderabad-based Bioseed Research India. State governments are putting up hurdles in the field-testing of the new seeds. Three states — Maharashtra, Telangana, and Gujarat — have not even allowed field trials of the new seeds. Haryana, the only state that has agreed to permit testing, is under pressure from the anti-GM lobby.

**Read more:** [Seeds of stagnation in Bt cotton: Can newer variants impact productivity?](#)

### Why does India need GM cotton crops?

-Agronomic means such as expansion in plant density and improvement in input-use efficiency can increase in crop yields to some amount. But these cannot save the crops from diseases and pests, which are turning more virulent.

-None of the present Bt-cotton hybrids is capable of withstanding the onslaught of pink bollworm, which has become the major nemesis of this crop now. Farmers have little option but to spray pesticides repeatedly, with grave environmental implications.

**Read more:** [Transgenic Crops in India: Need and Challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

### What should be done?

The government should effectively counter the disinformation being spread by some anti-GM activists about gene-altered crops. The state governments need to appreciate the merits of modern technology and facilitate the advent of new strains to sustain the cotton revolution.

### 76. [The aviation industry: Flight to the future](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**The aviation industry: Flight to the future**” published in the **Indian Express** on **21st June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.

**Relevance:** About recent aircraft acquisition deals.

**News:** India’s civil aviation sector witnessed two back-to-back jumbo aircraft acquisition deals over a span of four months. One is IndiGo’s historic 500 aircraft deal and the other is Air India’s combined purchase of 470 aircraft.

### What are the significances of aircraft acquisition deals?

**a)** The two deals cumulatively ensure that India is now ensconced in second place in the list of carriers having the largest aircraft order book, behind the US, **b)** The deals reflect the optimism about the potential of India’s aviation market. In May, India’s domestic passenger traffic numbers touch a record 13.2 million flyers, surpassing the pre-pandemic peaks, and **c)** The deals reaffirm India’s position as the world’s fastest-growing aviation market and the third-biggest market globally in terms of domestic traffic.

**Must read:** [Indian aviation industry: Potential and challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

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### What are the challenges highlighted by the aircraft acquisition deals?

With Go First facing issues, SpiceJet financial problems and Jet Airways' revival taking time, India's domestic **aviation market is heading in the direction of a duopoly** that has market leader IndiGo and the Tata group airlines.

For instance, IndiGo has a market share (in terms of passengers carried) of over 60%. This new acquisition order ensures a steady supply of aircraft for the carrier till 2035 and equips it to consolidate its position on the leaderboard in India's booming aviation market.

**Must read:** [Aviation Sector in India: Status, Opportunities and Challenges – Explained, pointwise](#)

### What should India focus on?

In cumulative terms, Indian carriers have a fleet strength of over 700 aircraft. This is less than half the 1,500 aircraft with American Airlines, the biggest of the four major carriers of the US aviation market have around 1,300 aircraft each. So, India has a long way to go.

India's annual passenger capacity in the six major metropolitan cities is likely to nearly double to 420 million passengers by 2030. The government is also redoubling the efforts to create aviation hubs in India, starting with Delhi. So, the present aircraft acquisition deals are a good sign for the Indian aviation industry.

### 77. [Why EU's carbon levy helps rich countries get richer](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Why EU's carbon levy helps rich countries get richer**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **22nd June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Environment

**Relevance-** Issues related to climate change

**News**– EU has introduced a **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)**.

### What is the issue of differentiated responsibility sharing in climate change negotiations?

Historically, the **primary responsibility** for climate change has been with the advanced economies, and their **process of industrialisation**.

The **contribution of the Global South** was negligible. The Kyoto Protocol recognised the “**common but differentiated responsibilities**”.

The **Paris Agreement** required the richer countries to make **financial transfers** to the developing economies. It set a floor of **\$100 billion per year** for these transfers.

### What are some facts about CBAM?

This involves imposing tariffs on imports from other countries that use **carbon-intensive methods of production**.

A tariff on the import of these goods by the EU would restore **competitive parity** to the domestically produced goods that are subject to a higher price of carbon.

The CBAM is expected to achieve **three objectives**. **First** is to **reduce the EU's emissions**. **Second** is that the EU should not **lose competitiveness in carbon-intensive goods**. **Third** is to make the targeted countries reduce the **carbon intensity of their exports**.

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This mechanism, **starting in 2026**, will cover products such as cement, steel, aluminium, oil refinery, paper, glass, chemicals and electricity generation.

The **countries most affected** will be Russia, [Ukraine](#), Turkey, India and China. Only three of the 12 exporters to the EU have a mechanism for **“pricing carbon”**.

**What are issues related to CBAM?**

**Need for more details– First**, is related to countries that will be **exempted**.

**Second is related to emissions** that will be included in the levying of the import tax. Are **indirect emissions** embodied in inputs like machines to be considered or only **direct emissions**?

**Third is related to products** that are to be included in CBAM.

**International laws–** The WTO has promoted **free trade**. The CBAM is a **unilateral move, against the spirit of multilateralism**.

The **problems of measurement** mean that it could be used for protectionism. It targets production processes that the WTO does not approve of.

**Revenue collection–** The **analytical framework for tackling climate change** is based on putting a **price on carbon emissions**.

Burning of carbon anywhere in the world affects climate change across the world. So, there is a need for a **global price for carbon** to redress this **global “externality”**.

In the absence of a world government, who gets to keep the **tax revenue** is important. In the case of the CBA, it is the EU that will keep the revenue.

**Concerns related to the global south–** This mechanism also seeks to **penalise “free riders”**. A free rider is one who is not contributing towards fighting climate change, although has the means to do so. The country that fits this definition is the US.

The developing countries did not create the problem and have limited means to pay for a **“clean up”**.

There are **equity concerns** also. It's designed to help rich countries avoid paying for creating the climate problem.

**Other issues–** There is **some arbitrariness** involved in the coverage of a CBAM. It is not always easy to infer the **process of production** by looking at the final product.

CBAM is targeting the emissions embodied in a **limited number of traded goods**. Its **effect on climate change** is likely to be small.

### 78. [Why libraries are liberating spaces](#)

**Source–** The post is based on the article **“Why libraries are liberating spaces”** published in **“The INdian Express”** on **22nd June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Issues related to development and management of education

**News–** The article explains the issues related to public libraries in India

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### What are issues related to public libraries in India?

Under the Indian Constitution, public libraries are a state subject. Nineteen states have passed the Library Legislation Act and five states levy a library cess.

In 2013, the **National Mission on Libraries** came into being under the Ministry of Culture, to revive and modernise public libraries.

They have utilised most of their budget for creating **digital libraries including the National Digital Library of India**. But it has not made much difference due to **digital inequality** existing in the country.

There is no move by the National Mission on Libraries to bring state public libraries under **one policy** or address the issues of **access to existing libraries**.

There is **wildly conflicting data** on the state of the **Indian public library system**. No reliable data exist for functioning libraries at the national, state and district level.

There is **no standardisation** across public libraries or guidelines for **curriculum, and best practices**.

NGO and citizen-led efforts in some of India's most **under-served, remote and neglected regions** are working on **public libraries**. But there is no concerted effort to help **sustain them**.

### What are efforts by the government for a national policy on public libraries?

The most recent **draft national policy** was written in 1986 and it recognised that all public libraries must be free. Though it was never ratified,

Last year, it was reviewed by a **Rajya Sabha standing committee**. The committee recognised that a national policy was needed to convert **state legislations** into an **enforceable tool for reform**. But it dropped the need for **free libraries**.

### What is the way forward to improve the conditions of public libraries in India?

There is a small but growing group of library workers from all over India coming together to campaign for a **free library movement**. Everyone from **bookmakers, policy wonks and educators** to the public should join librarians in demanding it.

The need of the hour is a **national library policy** to ensure **free, accessible and excellent libraries for all**.

### 79. [An ode to start-ups in defence](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article **“An ode to start-ups in defence – Policy initiatives like Idex have put the defence industry on the path to self-reliance”** published in **Business Standard** on **22<sup>nd</sup> June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** **GS 3 – Indigenization of Technology, Defence Technology**

**Relevance:** **Atmanirbharta in defence**

**News:** The Indian defence industry is growing. India, from being the world's largest importer of arms and ammunition, is expected to become one of the top five defence exporters before 2030.

### What has caused the growth in the Indian defence industry?

**PM's call for atmanirbharta in defence has brought unprecedented change to the sector.** It is now recognized that genuine defense preparedness is only achievable through self-reliance.

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### How did atmanirbharta in defence came up?

The desire to become atmanirbhar is not new. It has been the proclaimed goal of the Ministry of Defence (MoD) for decades.

Several high-level committees were set up over the years. **A new Department of Defence Production was instituted in 1962.** Private industry was allowed entry in 2001, but **imported equipment remained dominant.**

However, **between 2018 and 2022, the current government implemented several policy decisions that brought transformation.**

These included the introduction of Innovation for Defence Excellence (iDEX), redefining DefExpo and Aero India as platforms to showcase India's defense industry capabilities, ease-of-doing business reforms, positive indigenization lists, etc.

The PM's call for atmanirbharta received support from the armed forces, public sector units (PSUs), and domestic industry. However, the most significant impact was made by the start-ups under [iDEX](#).

### How did iDEX helped in transforming the defence sector?

**Innovation by the Startups:** iDEX helped in the emergence of startups, which developed indigenous technologies and domestic solutions for the defence forces in India.

This allowed India to get the required products at a cheaper rate domestically than those imported.

The solutions developed by the iDEX start-ups were as good or better than those imported. They excelled in emerging technology areas like artificial intelligence, quantum computing, and drones.

**For example,** QNu Labs developed Quantum Key Distribution over fibre, and achieved distances that were 60 percent higher than the best in class.

**Scalability:** Scalability was another major benefit of iDEX. Military equipment consists of thousands of sub-systems, which can now be developed simultaneously because of thousands of start-ups responding to these.

**Fostering Teamwork:** iDEX showcased the power of collaborative teamwork among diverse organizations within the Ministry of Defence.

Representatives from the armed forces, DRDO, PSUs, and the Acquisition Wing worked together, acting as facilitators rather than figuring as bosses.

**Other Sectors:** iDEX also benefited other sectors in need of an indigenous innovation ecosystem, such as railways and Space.

### What can be the way ahead?

The Make in India initiative saw its success in the form of iDEX. However, the true success of iDEX will be realized if it serves as a stepping stone towards a broader vision of "Make in India 2.0".



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### 80. [Overkill: The Manipur government's decision to extend net shutdowns lacks merit](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Overkill: The Manipur government's decision to extend net shutdowns lacks merit**” published in **The Hindu** on **22nd June 2023**

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – The role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

**Relevance:** About Internet shutdowns in Manipur.

**News:** The Manipur High Court granted limited Internet access in designated places in the State after a petition seeking the restoration of net access. This is because, citizens have been unable to access vital services such as e-commerce-related activities, except for those who can get exemptions from the shutdowns with government permission.

The Manipur HC also said that the government is merely using the shutdown as a substitute for enforcing law and order.

#### **About rules governing internet shutdowns and Court intervention**

According to Section 5(2) of the Telegraph Act, 1885 and Telegraph Rules, governments can explicitly seek to retain internet bans in case of a public emergency or in the interests of public safety.

The Supreme Court, in Anuradha Bhasin vs Union of India (2020), held that an indefinite suspension of Internet services was in violation of the law, as freedom of expression and the freedom to conduct commercial work via the Internet are fundamental rights. It also held that such suspensions should adhere to the “principle of proportionality and must not extend beyond necessary duration”.

**Read more:** [Internet shutdowns hurt much more than we realize: UN rights office](#)

#### **How to tackle the situation in Manipur?**

The situation in Manipur can be tackled effectively by **a)** restoring the confidence of all stakeholders, **b)** engaging with civil society actors in restoring inter-community dialogue, **c)** isolating the extremists and **d)** pursuing a step-by-step approach towards restoring peace and normalcy. So, the government should stop focusing on the Internet shutdown.

**Read more:** [Internet shutdowns in India: impacts and way forward](#)

### 81. [Why inflation and WPI is down, but not \(all\) prices](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Why inflation and WPI is down, but not (all) prices**” published in **The Indian Express** on **23rd June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development

**Relevance:** About the trend of inflation

**News:** The headline retail inflation rate reached a 25-month low in May and the wholesale price index (WPI) also showed a significant decrease.

#### **What has caused the decline in inflation rates?**

**The high base effect** has helped the easing of headline inflation. However, the inflation rate for certain household items still remains high. A high base effect has also helped in a sharp decline in the **WPI-linked inflation rate**.

**According to a data,** WPI inflation hit a seven-and-a-half-year low in May, due to the high base effect, lower global commodity prices, low costs of food, fuel, and manufactured items.

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However, previously, the wholesale inflation rate had reached double digits during April-September 2022, and reached 16.63% in May 2022.

Moreover, despite the lowering inflation, some items still show a high inflation rate.

### **Which items have displayed high inflation rates?**

**Food and Beverages:** In this category, 'cereals and products' have remained in double digits since September 2022, peaking to 15.27% in March 2023. However, the inflation rate for this category decreased to 12.65% in May.

**Milk and Products:** This category has seen an inflation rate of more than 7% since September 2022, peaking at 9.65% this February.

**Spices:** The inflation rates have remained persistent for the spices. Over the last one year, except in May 2022, the inflation rate for spices has remained in double digits, peaking to 21.09% in January this year.

**Prepared Meals, Snacks and Sweets:** These have also witnessed a persistent rate of inflation. Prepared meals, snacks, sweets too have recorded a 6%-plus inflation rate in the last one year.

**Non-food items:** Among non-food items, the inflation rate for household goods and services has remained above 6% for the last one year.

**Education:** It has seen inflation above 5% since July 2022.

**Personal care and effects:** The inflation rate for this category has been rising steadily.

### **Which items have displayed a low inflation rate?**

**Meat and Fish:** This category has been in the deflationary zone for the last three months.

**Oils and Fats:** This category has recorded a sharp decline in inflation, remaining in negative territory for the last four months.

**Fruits and Vegetables:** These have remained in the negative zone for the last seven months on a year-on-year basis. The inflation rate for vegetables was in double digits during April-September 2022, and entered negative territory thereafter.

### **What kinds of inflation risks lie ahead?**

While the headline inflation number is expected to remain below 5% in the near term, **most economists expect the inflation rate to rise marginally** in June 2023.

Further, **the development of El Nino conditions and their influence on the monsoon could affect crop yields, causing food inflation.**

Although food inflation is expected to remain manageable, it is likely to rise on a year-on-year basis in the second half of FY24, due to seasonal factors. Commodities such as milk, sugar, cereals, etc. may also see a rise in prices.

**Note:** *Weight of different products in CPI – Food and Beverages (54.18%), Cereals and product (12.35%), Milk and products (7.72%), Spices (3.11%), Education (3.46%), Oils and fats (4.21%).*

**Note:** *The base effect relates to inflation in the corresponding period of the previous year. If the inflation rate was too high in the corresponding period of the previous year, then even a smaller rise in the Price Index will give a low rate of inflation and vice-versa.*

**Source:** The Indian Express

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### 82. [The uproar over the new COP28 President](#)

**Source-** The post is based on the article “The uproar over the new COP28 President” published in “The Hindu” on 23rd June 2023.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Environment

**Relevance-** Issues related to climate change

**News-** Questions are being raised over the COP28 Presidency of United Arab Emirates (UAE) Industry Minister Sultan Ahmed al-Jaber.

#### **Who is Sultan al-Jaber?**

Mr. al-Jaber has been the CEO of the **Abu Dhabi National Oil Company** since 2016. He was appointed as UAE’s Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology in 2020.

Also in 2020, he was for the second time appointed as the **UAE’s special envoy for climate change**.

His team has been accused of attempting to **“greenwash” his image**. It emerged that members of his team had edited Wikipedia pages that talked about his role as CEO of ADNOC.

#### **Why is Sultan al-Jaber’s appointment facing criticism?**

There is discontent with the appointment of an **oil executive** to head a summit focussed on **mitigating climate change**.

The decision to name the chief executive of one of the world’s largest fossil-fuel base companies as president of COP28 risks **undermining the negotiations**.

Reducing **carbon emissions** is a necessity in the fight against **climate change**. There is a need to reduce the production and use of fossil fuel resources.

Al-Jaber does not talk about a **concrete plan** to phase out fossil fuels. **ADNOC 2030 strategy** is to build a more profitable upstream, more valuable downstream and more sustainable and economic gas supply.

The appointment is a perfect example of a **conflict of interest**. It is like putting the tobacco industry in charge of ending smoking.

Experts also highlight that it is in the **UAE’s national interest** to continue the production of fossil fuels as the **10th largest oil producer** in the world.

#### **Why has Mr. al-Jaber’s advocacy of carbon capture been criticised?**

On climate goals, some world leaders have been pushing for a **phaseout of fossil fuels**. Others insist on oil and gas continuing to play a role in the future, provided their **emissions are curbed**. Mr. al-Jaber belongs to the **latter school of thought**.

Climate campaigners and scientists have expressed caution that technologies proposed so far to **capture fossil fuel emissions** have not been **tested at scale**.

They also argue that such responses do not **hit at the root cause** of the problem and propose **containment** once emissions are released. Such responses could **divert attention and resources** from **effective alternatives** such as renewable energy.

**Carbon capture and storage technologies** should only be restricted to sectors where cutting emissions is extremely hard, such as the cement industry.

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Mr. al-Jaber has talked about the need to **tackle fossil fuel emissions**. As per him, the goal should be a global system “**free of unabated fossil fuels**”. It is related to **reducing or capturing greenhouse gas emissions**.

As per al-Jaber, his country wants “a **comprehensive, holistic approach to an energy transition** that includes all sources of energy.”

Developing nations like Bangladesh and the Maldives have also said that **fossil fuel-dependent economies** are critical to **climate negotiation and mitigation efforts**. They have a more difficult task in defining their **energy transition strategy**.

### 83. [PLI schemes are in need of a coherent trade policy](#)

**Source:** The post is based on an article “**Our PLI schemes are in need of a coherent trade policy**” published in “**Mint**” on **23rd June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

**Relevance:** About the need of a trade policy to support PLI schemes.

**News:** The debate over the PLI schemes is silent on trade policy. It is a critical aspect of manufacturing strategy.

#### **Why is a coherent trade policy important?**

A coherent trade policy reduces tariff barriers and incentivizes technology transfers from countries and companies that dominate the production of ICT hardware and semiconductors.

India wants to emulate China, Taiwan and Vietnam by improving domestic infrastructure and logistics with tax breaks and financial incentives for ICT manufacturing. But their liberalized trade policies are not emulated.

India’s trade policy is marked by a tendency to raise tariffs, particularly since 2015, as Aatmanirbhar Bharat gained momentum. Ad hoc tariff hikes are inconsistent with India’s obligations under the ITA-1, as the WTO has recently ruled in a dispute filed by the EU, Japan and Taiwan.

Data shows that India’s tariff barriers have not reduced Indian dependence on foreign suppliers. High tariffs also make high-quality components from foreign suppliers expensive. Therefore, domestic ICT manufacturers are at a disadvantage as they compete on cost with other global players.

#### **Why are companies not tariff-jumping FDI?**

The prospect of accessing India’s rapidly-growing demand should have convinced MNCs to set up local manufacturing or assembly operations via tariff-jumping FDI. (Foreign companies invest in a subsidiary in another country to avoid tariff barriers.)

However, studies have shown that for ICT and semiconductor sectors, tariffs may deter foreign manufacturing investment and Global Value Chain integration, bypassing the benefits of tariff-jumping FDI.

India’s integration into ICT and semiconductor Global Value Chains is in progress. To speed up the process, New Delhi must discard its protectionist trade policy. That will help leverage its advantages of a large market, low labour costs and strategic partnerships with the US and others.

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Recent initiatives like the Indian Semiconductor Mission and National Policy on Electronics, 2019, suggest growing policy cohesion on FDI, fiscal incentives and manufacturing infrastructure. Now it is time to revamp our trade policy.

### 84. [Amid roar over increase in tiger count, murmur for NTCA revamp](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Amid roar over increase in tiger count, murmur for NTCA revamp**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **24th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Conservation.

**Relevance:** About NTCA Revamp.

**News:** Indian Forest Service officers in Madhya Pradesh are debating the revamp of the [National Tiger Conservation Authority \(NTCA\)](#).

While some officers are in favour of delegating greater powers to those experienced in tiger conservation, others believe NTCA is the best organization of its kind in the world.

#### **What are the arguments for NTCA revamp?**

**Ensure timely action in emergencies:** Delegation of greater powers to the experienced custodians of the forest will take conservation efforts to the next level. Empowering the local custodians will ensure timely action in emergencies.

**Placements in NTCA:** Transparency in the placement and presence of officers with unparalleled experience in NTCA would guide the NTCA towards more effective strategies.

**Coordination:** Despite being a nodal agency, NTCA has not done much to develop better coordination between tiger states.

**Capacity building:** NTCA should also focus on capacity building of people around the tiger reserves. If proper steps are not taken, they might be misled. NTCA can generate funds that can be utilized for their training and skill development.

**Budget:** The number of tiger reserves has doubled in the last few years, but the budget remains the same.

**Read more:** [Tiger translocation project: Need and significance – Explained, pointwise](#)

#### **What are the arguments against the NTCA revamp?**

**A powerful public body:** Only NTCA has the power to ensure that any land in India (lying between two Protected Areas) is not used for ecologically unsustainable purposes. NTCA has the power to give binding directions to any person, officer, or authority regarding tiger conservation.

**Non-compliance by states:** Non-compliance of NTCA’s directions by tiger range states is hazardous for tiger conservation. Government should amend the Wildlife Act for stricter compliance of NTCA directives.

**Enough budgets:** The government of India has enough budgets. Compensatory Afforestation Fund Management and Planning Authority (CAMPA) money is also being allotted.

**Must read:** [Increasing tiger population in India and government initiatives – Explained, pointwise](#)

85. [Our lives depend on plants — we must have plant literacy to understand climate change](#)

**Source:** The post is based on the article “**Our lives depend on plants — we must have plant literacy to understand climate change**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **24th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Environment

**Relevance:** About the issues faced by the plant species.

**News:** Recent research has shown how the construction of different vascular systems allows plants to live in disparate regions of the world. The study also shows how plants evolved as well as how they will respond to future climatic conditions.

**What are some key features of plant architecture?**

**Vascular system:** The vascular system is a series of cells arranged similar to pipes. Plants developed this system 400 million years ago to transport water.

There is a strong relationship between the amount of water a plant can extract from soil and transport to its leaves and its productivity which translates to growth in agricultural systems.

**Stomata:** Microscopic valves called stomata regulate the flow of carbon dioxide into leaves for photosynthesis. However, when the stomata open to allow carbon dioxide in, they also expose the inside of the leaves to dry air. As a result, plants lose approximately 400 water molecules for every CO<sub>2</sub> molecule they take up, with greater water loss in dry environments.

When water is limited, the plant closes its stomata, cutting off the CO<sub>2</sub> it normally takes up from the atmosphere. Plants have been fine-tuning the cells that control water flow in them over millennia.

**Read more:** [Insects outnumber all species on Earth — some beetle groups are as old as dinosaurs](#)

**How anthropogenic conditions are impacting plant species at present?**

Plants have evolved over millions of years to cope with all sorts of variability. That includes fluctuations in temperature, humidity, pathogens and pests.

Plants created a range of adaptations for water stress also. For example, they evolved gravitational sensing mechanisms which allow them to know which way to grow deeper for water and nutrients.

But due to climate change and associated droughts, the variability changes much more frequently and plants face challenges in adapting to them.

**Read more:** [1 million animal and plant species face extinction threat: Study](#)

**What should be done to protect the plant species?**

As a species, humans are completely dependent on plants for day to day lives. So, to protect them, **a)** There should be a **clear understanding of the physiological tipping points** for plant species to create solutions for climate resilience, particularly in farming, and **b)** The government’s around the world should work on **improving plant literacy among the public** –to understand what climate change means for Earth’s flora, forests and farming.

### 86. [The uproar over the new COP28 President](#)

**Source**– The post is based on the article “**Credit for India-US bonhomie goes to Xi Jinping**” published in “**The Indian Express**” and the article “**Soft or hard power?**” published in “**Business Standard**” on **24th June 2023**.

**Syllabus:** GS3- Bilateral groupings and agreements

**Relevance**– India and US bilateral relationship

**News-** The article explains the importance of India and US bilateral relationship for Asian geopolitics. It also explains the importance of hard power in strengthening the bilateral relationship.

#### **How is evolving India and US relations important in the context of Asian geopolitics?**

This new moment in bilateral relations is important for the **evolution of Asian geopolitics**. The new [India-US defence partnership](#) can ensure that Asia is not vulnerable to **domination by any one power**.

The **India-US defence compact** is not an effort to **contain Beijing**. China is **too large and powerful to contain**.

It is an attempt to build a **multipolar Asia** with **sufficient deterrent capabilities** and ensure respect for the **sovereignty and territorial integrity** of all states in the region.

Both [Delhi](#) and Washington want **productive relations** with China. India’s engagement with China, to restore peace and tranquillity on the disputed border reflects that approach. The US is **re-engaging China** so that current tensions do not escalate into a shooting war.

The outlines of a **more expansive defence cooperation** unveiled by the two leaders shows the **convergence of their geopolitical and geo-economic interests in Asia**.

The US support for the **modernisation of India’s defence industrial base** is part of the effort to strengthen **India’s military capabilities** and enhance its **deterrence against China**.

#### **What were the India-US differences over Asian order during the cold war and efforts to deal with these differences?**

This inability of Delhi and Washington to build a **productive relationship** in the past was rooted in a profound disagreement on the preferred geopolitical order in Asia.

The divergence included the **assessment of Soviet Russia and Communist China, Washington’s Cold War alliances, and the US tilt to Pakistan**.

There were occasional moments after the Chinese attack on India, and more recently in the early 2000s, to explore a common agenda for Asia.

The formation of the Quadrilateral Forum in 2007 and the emergence of the Indo-Pacific construct provided a basis for serious India-US strategic collaboration in Asia.

#### **How has China always concerned about the strong bilateral relationship between India and the US?**

Chinese concern about **India-US strategic cooperation** was evident in Beijing’s intense opposition to the Bush-[Manmohan Singh](#) **civil nuclear initiative** and its continued blocking of **India’s membership of the Nuclear Suppliers Group**.

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China did not have to work too hard to keep Delhi and Washington separate. India's **own reluctance** to develop **strong defence cooperation** with Washington, in the name of "**non-alignment**" helped China.

Keeping distance from the US, or "**strategic autonomy**" was defined as a **first principle of India's foreign policy**. It left China free to build a relationship with the US on its own terms.

Beijing has become the **greatest champion of India's "strategic autonomy"**. The Chinese commentariat praises Delhi's **independent foreign policy**.

**What are the push factors behind the increasing closeness between India and the US?**

The credit for moving India and the US closer than ever before goes to the **assertive policies of Xi Jinping**.

The **crises of Doklam (2017) and Galwan (2020)** persuaded India to boost its **deterrence against China** as the **principal strategic objective**. This led Delhi to seek **stronger strategic partnerships** with the US and its allies.

Washington too has changed in the interim. In the last two years, Washington has moved away from an **Asia policy** framed around the **bilateral relationship with Beijing**.

The US has revitalised its **traditional alliances** with Japan, South Korea, the Philippines and Australia, created **new coalitions like the AUKUS**, and **upgraded the Quad forum** to the **summit level**.

Underlying this is a new US strategy to build a **more balanced Asia**. That suits Delhi. It is not seeking an **alliance** with the US but a **partnership** that will elevate **India's capabilities** and help contribute to a **stable Asian architecture**.

**How can the logic of hard power explain the bilateral relationship?**

It has India's **growing military and economic clout, and the potential of the market**. The aircraft ordered by IndiGo and Air India are only one manifestation of this.

India's is the **world's fifth-largest economy** and likely to become the **third-largest** before too long.

The Indian economy is only **15% of the US' in size**, but its **contribution to world growth is 60%** of the US' because it is growing four times as fast this year.

**India's military** too matters, especially in the **Indian Ocean**. Here, it can counter **China's expanding navy** aided by the **surveillance and attack capabilities** of a dozen **American Poseidon aircraft and the 31 Sea Guardian drones** being ordered.

India's **defence budget** is the **world's fourth-largest**, and it is the **world's biggest defence importer**.

Many Western companies see a brighter future like General Electric, which, with HAL, will make engines in India for the Tejas, Mark 2. India can therefore afford to be **more assertive in its foreign policy**.

On the other side of the equation, the US economy has comfortably **outpaced the European Union** in the last decade-plus and is now **25% bigger**.

It is uniquely positioned as the **home of the major tech companies**. It is the source of **vital technology and capital**, and with a critical role when negotiating **multilateral issues like trade and climate change**.



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87. [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.

### 88. 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.

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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.

### 89. [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.

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### 90. [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**.

### 91. [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](#)

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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,"**

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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.**

### 92. [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.

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**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.

### 93. 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.

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### 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.

### 94. 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.



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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.

### 95. 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**.

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### 96. 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**.

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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.

### 97. [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.

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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**.

### 98. [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.

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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**.

### 99. [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.

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**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.

### 100. [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](#)

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### 101. [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**.

### 102. [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 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?

Take is up in the beginning after the intro part [\[AS1\]](#)

done [\[DB2\]](#)

Make it a single heading on what are the challenges faced by startups in India. Merge [\[AS3\]](#)

done [\[DB4\]](#)

### 103. [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 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