



9 PM

Compilation

31st July to 5th August, 2023

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General

Studies

Paper – 1

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General Studies - 1

1. [Preserving tribal culture: Odisha's Special Development Councils model is worth emulating](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Preserving tribal culture: Odisha's Special Development Councils model is worth emulating**” published in **The Hindu** on **1st August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India.

News: The author discusses how tribal cultures are fading due to modern development. The Central government's development projects don't consider tribal cultures. The Odisha government's Special Development Councils (SDCs) initiative helps preserve tribal culture while promoting development.

Why is tribal culture fading in India?

Tribal culture in India is fading due to:

Modern development: Societies adopting global norms overshadow tribal cultures.

Central government projects: These have a one-size-fits-all approach, not considering tribal customs.

Focus on development: Programs like the Aspirational Districts Programme prioritize development over cultural context. For instance, except Odisha, other states follow the Central government's approach which doesn't prioritize tribal culture.

This has led to a decline in the richness and diversity of tribal traditions.

How is Odisha government's Special Development Councils (SDCs) initiative helpful in preserving tribal culture?

The Odisha government's Special Development Councils (SDCs) initiative aids in preserving tribal culture through:

Languages:

Odisha has over 22 tribal languages. The SDCs promote the use and spread of these languages.

Example: 21 tribal proficiency centres have been set up to educate people about tribal culture and dialect.

Sacred Groves:

These are vital for tribal culture and religion.

Data: 4,500 groves were near extinction. Now, 4,730 groves are protected in nine districts.

Artisan Support:

Recognizing tribal artisans helps in preserving their craft.

Data: 40,000 tribal artisans received ID cards, ensuring both cultural preservation and job opportunities.

Tribal Resource Centres:

They ensure knowledge transfer.

Data: Over 50 centres built in Sundargarh district, with more planned in other districts.

Representation:

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The SDCs involve tribes in decision-making, preventing majoritarianism.

Example: The Councils have members from all tribal groups, including Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs).

By integrating development with cultural preservation, the SDCs initiative ensures that tribal culture thrives alongside progress.

What should be done?

Adopt the SDCs model: Central government should use Odisha's SDCs approach for tribal areas.

Focus on Culture: Development projects should prioritize preserving tribal customs.

Inclusive Decision Making: All tribal groups, especially smaller ones, should be involved in decisions.

State Funding: Ensure projects are state funded to cater to local needs.

Expand to Other States: Apply Odisha model in tribal-dominated areas like Madhya Pradesh and Sikkim for effective preservation and development.

2. [Not going to down – urbanisation in India](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Not going to down**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **1st August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Urbanisation

Relevance: Challenges faced by emerging urban centres

News– The surge in India's daily mean rainfall since the last week of June again showed up the poor state of urban India's infrastructure.

What are the challenges related to urbanisation in India?

Smaller urban centres are facing more challenges. In emerging urban areas, **infrastructure** doesn't exist.

As per **Census 2011**, there were **7,933 urban settlements**. As per **Niti Aayog report in 2021**, about **65% of these settlements** didn't have a master plan. Almost half of them continue to be governed as rural entities.

What are the root causes behind these challenges?

First, states have not followed the **true essence of the 74th constitutional amendment**. It provides for the transfer of the **urban planning function** to an elected local government.

Secondly, the insufficient **delegation of powers** has resulted in **master plans** losing touch with reality. They do not align with the evolving nature of urban settlements. These plans **lack flexibility and overly focus on zoning**.

Master plans fail to consider the **informal nature of India's urban employment market**. Consequently, zoning plans encounter unforeseen growth of clusters linked to informal jobs.

What is the importance of urban areas?

GOI estimated that urbanisation contributed to almost **60% of GDP**. **Almost 75% of the population increase by 2036** will be due to urban growth.

Way forward-

Master plans play a crucial role in improving the **urban living standards**.

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Achieving this goal involves addressing two key aspects. Firstly, political power needs to be **decentralised** to urban local governments.

Political executives should have **greater ownership and influence over master plans**. This involvement can bring a dose of **practicality and realism** to the planning process.

3. [India@75, Looking at 100: From Mathura to Manipur: The journey for gender justice](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “India@75, Looking at 100: From Mathura to Manipur: The journey for gender justice” published in “The Indian express” on 4th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- social issues

News: The author discusses the increasing violence against women in India. Despite reforms, incidents like rapes continue to rise. Key cases like the Mathura rape and Delhi gang rape shaped legal changes. However, current events, like conflicts in Manipur, show persisting challenges. The article questions India’s progress on gender justice as it nears 100 years of independence.

About Current State of Gender Justice in India

Gender justice in India faces serious challenges due to high violence rates against women.

In 2021, India saw 31,677 registered rape cases, showing an increase from 2020.

Despite laws like the 2012 POCSO Act, these incidents continue, including 10% involving minors.

Important cases like Mathura, Delhi, and Hathras have led to law reforms.

However, gender-based violence persists during conflicts, like in Manipur.

As India approaches 100 years of nationhood, it’s crucial to address these systemic issues.

How have rape laws evolved?

Start of Movement: The Mathura rape case in 1979 ignited the campaign against rape.

1983 Amendment: After the case, rape laws saw the first amendment. Minimum seven years for general rapes and ten years for aggravated ones were set.

Vishaka Guidelines: Introduced in 1997, these led to the 2013 act against workplace sexual harassment.

2012 Change: POCSO Act introduced, addressing sexual crimes against children under 18. It expanded the definition of sexual assault.

Post Delhi Gang Rape: After the 2012 incident, the rape law further evolved, including wider definitions from POCSO into the section 376 of the IPC.

2019 Update: Kathua case’s aftermath led to death penalties for rape of minor girls under 12.

Caste-based Atrocities: Cases like Hathras underline the need for laws recognizing caste-related sexual violence.

What notable cases marked the campaign?

Mathura Case (1979): A tribal girl raped by policemen, leading to a Supreme Court judgment.

Rameeza Bi & Maya Tyagi: Husbands killed by police; both women raped.

Suman Rani (1989): Sentence reduced due to the victim’s “character and conduct”.

Bhanwari Devi (1992): Acquitted due to caste beliefs; sparked workplace harassment guidelines.

Khairlanji Massacre (2006): Dalit family targeted; mother and daughter gang-raped.

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Kathua Case (2018): Muslim girl raped and murdered; led to death penalty for rape of minors under 12.

Hathras Case (2020): Dalit woman raped by upper-caste men; delayed medical care and controversial cremation.

Manipur Conflict: Ethnic conflict saw increased sexual assaults, compelling national attention.



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General Studies Paper –2

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General Studies - 2

1. [Indian gig workers ought to get a well-crafted social security net](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Indian gig workers ought to get a well-crafted social security net**” published in **Mint** on **31st July 2023**.

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

Relevance: **concerns with the** Rajasthan Platform-based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Act 2023

News: Rajasthan Government has enacted the Rajasthan Platform-based Gig Workers (Registration and Welfare) Act 2023. It aims at regulating the gig economy in the state.

It is a positive step for gig workers as Niti Aayog expects 200% growth in gig employment by 2030.

What are the key features of the Act?

Read Here: [Rajasthan’s move spells some hope for gig workers](#)

What are the concerns with the Act?

Implementation: The Act establishes a statutory framework for the protection of gig workers. However, adequate execution is required for it to be effective.

Lacks Architecture on the Social Security System: The Act emphasizes inclusive governance and financial assistance for welfare goals.

However, it lacks information on the specific architecture of the social security system as well as actual implementation, leaving design and execution to bureaucracy.

Centralizes Welfare Fund: It centralizes welfare contribution into a single fund, administered by a government-appointed welfare board. Hence, instead of empowering the individual worker, the Act empowers appointed government authorities and other board members.

A more effective approach would have been to transfer funds directly into individual gig worker welfare accounts through separate accounts created by the welfare board.

The fund should not only be used for long-term returns but also to buy group insurance (life, term, health, and accident) for its members.

The fund could also be used to alleviate the impact of gig income volatility by providing discounted micro-overdraft loans through the already implemented Open Credit Enablement Network.

Funding the Social Security System: The Act intends to support the social security system by levying a 2% tax on aggregators.

However, **social security is the responsibility of society and should be financed by the state’s exchequer**, using taxes from individuals and corporations.

The government could also offer matching grants to encourage voluntary contributions.

What can be the way ahead?

India requires a national, multi-contributor social security system that leverages the existing digital public infrastructure. It is also necessary to create a system that combines various government schemes to benefit gig workers.

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2. [Rap on the knuckles: Supreme Court has tried to hold States and Centre to account on mob violence](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Rap on the knuckles: Supreme Court has tried to hold States and Centre to account on mob violence**” published in “The Hindu” on 31st July 2023.

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

News: The Supreme Court criticized the Union and State governments for not acting against mob violence and lynchings, especially targeting Muslims and marginalized groups by “cow vigilantes”. Despite guidelines from a 2018 judgment, such incidents continue, with political influences playing a role.

What is Supreme Court view on mob violence and lynchings?

- **Criticism of Governments:** The Supreme Court has criticized the Union and State governments for their “consistent failure” to act against mob violence and lynchings over the past five years.
- **Duty of the State:** In the 2018 case, **Tehseen S. Poonawalla vs Union of India**, the Court emphasized that it’s the state’s “sacrosanct duty” to protect its citizens. They should prevent any form of “vigilantism”.
- **Guidelines Issued:** The Court provided guidelines in 2018. This included:

Appointing a nodal police officer in every district.

Identifying areas with recent mob violence.

Using police intelligence to tackle such incidents.

Sensitizing law enforcement.

Warning the public about the consequences of mob violence.

What should be done?

- **Implement Guidelines:** Governments should follow the 2018 Supreme Court guidelines, which include appointing nodal police officers and identifying violence-prone areas.
- **Sensitization:** The Home Ministry and State governments should sensitize law enforcement and the public about the repercussions of mob violence.
- **Civil Society Action:** Communities need to promote understanding and prevent the stereotyping of minorities. This will help curb mob violence and vigilantism.
- **Political Accountability:** In regions like Tamil Nadu, where secular movements are active, political leaders face backlash for any communal incidents. This level of accountability should be adopted everywhere.

3. [States’ lax response to lynching](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**States’ lax response to lynching**” published in “The Hindu” on 31st July 2023.

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

News: This article discusses the Supreme Court’s request to several Indian states to respond to a petition by the National Federation of Indian Women. This petition addresses the states’ alleged inaction against mob violence targeting Muslims and seeks justice for the victims based on a previous court judgment against vigilantism.

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About National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) petition.

Concern: NFIW raised issues regarding inaction against mob violence targeting Muslims.

Highlighted Incidents: Examples include the lynching of a man in Haryana for transporting a cow and two men attacked in Odisha on suspicion of smuggling beef.

Court Response: The Supreme Court asked various states to address these concerns, referencing a past judgment against vigilantism.

Desired Outcomes: NFIW seeks police examination, constitutional violation checks, compensation for victims, and consistent support for affected individuals.

What was major judgment related to mob violence and lynching?

Tehseen Poonawala vs. Union of India case (2018):

Key Points:

The state has a “**sacrosanct duty**” to protect citizens’ lives.

Vigilantism, whether cow-related or otherwise, was condemned, with warnings against anarchy and chaos.

State authorities must prevent any form of vigilantism.

What were the seven remedial directions given by the SC to States?

Seven Remedial Directions by the Supreme Court

1. **Nodal Officer Appointment:** States must appoint a nodal officer, not below the rank of Superintendent of Police, to address bias-motivated crimes.
2. **Immediate FIR Lodging:** For any lynching or mob violence incident, local police must promptly file an FIR.
3. **Informing the Nodal Officer:** The officer registering the FIR must inform the district’s nodal officer.
4. **Victim’s Family Protection:** Measures should be in place to protect victims’ families from further harassment.
5. **Investigation Monitoring:** The nodal officer should personally oversee crime investigations.
6. **Compensation Scheme:** States should establish schemes to financially support victims.
7. **Official Accountability:** Officials failing in their duties regarding lynching incidents will face disciplinary action, potentially leading to departmental actions.

How are States responding to the contempt petition?

Status Report: States are directed to provide year-wise data from 2018 detailing lynching incidents, FIRs registered, and actions taken.

Compliance Measures: The court accepted the Attorney General’s suggestion for the Ministry of Home Affairs to discuss the compliance steps with State department heads, based on the Tehseen Poonawala judgment.

Central Role: The Supreme Court asked the Centre to report on the outcome of this meeting.

Next Steps: The case will be revisited in October, with the states and Centre providing more insights into their measures and actions.

Read more: [Committee to suggest necessary amendments in IPC, CrPC to curb mob lynching](#)

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4. [Express View on India-China ties: Riding on hope](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Express View on India-China ties: Riding on hope**” published in the “**The Indian Express**” on **31st July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance: Bilateral relationship between India and China

News- The Chinese President Xi Jinping might visit Delhi in September for the G20 summit.

Why are some strategic experts optimistic over the Xi visit?

Xi's presence in Delhi is an opportunity to end the **current stalemate in bilateral relations** that began with **China's aggression in Ladakh in the summer of 2020**.

There was a meeting between National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Wang Yi, in Johannesburg on the **margins of a BRICS forum**.

A Chinese statement issued after the meeting referred to the “**Bali Consensus**” between **Modi and Xi** on the need to “**stabilize bilateral relations**”.

Why are the prospects of resolving the stalemate in the relationship during Xi's visit weak?

There was not **much interaction** between Modi and Xi at the G20 meeting in Bali, Indonesia, last November.

The Modi government has consistently emphasized that a return to **normalcy in bilateral relations** will not occur until Beijing restores **peace and tranquillity** along the border.

In contrast, Chinese officials have urged India to **set aside the border issue** and focus on **cooperating in other domains**. However, Delhi has maintained its stance that the condition of the border reflects the overall state of the relationship.

China is reluctant to address the **territorial disputes** with its neighbouring countries, such as Japan, the Philippines, Vietnam, Taiwan, and India.

Despite this, Xi's diplomatic representatives try to present a **positive outlook** on the discussions with these neighbours and **assert progress**, even when there is none.

Recently, Beijing issued “**stapled visas**” to Indian athletes from Arunachal Pradesh participating in World University Games in Chengdu, China. Beijing uses the stapled visas to assert its **territorial claim over Arunachal Pradesh**.

Territorial sovereignty is the major cause of **multiple disputes** between Delhi and Beijing. The **PLA's aggressive behaviour** on the disputed border has undermined the efforts to manage these issues.

5. [A critical lapse in Jan Vishwas Bill](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**A critical lapse in Jan Vishwas Bill**” published in **Business standard** on 1st August 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

News: This article discusses the Jan Vishwas Bill passed by Lok Sabha, which amends many provisions, including those in the Drugs & Cosmetics Act. Recently, Indian drug quality was questioned due to several incidents. The new amendments favor manufacturers more than consumers, reducing penalties for producing substandard drugs. The author believes patient safety shouldn't be compromised for business ease.

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About Jan Vishwas Bill

Purpose: Boost ease of living and business by amending provisions.

Changes to D&C Act: Might favor drug manufacturers over consumers.

Quality Issues: 48 brands found substandard; concerns from US FDA and other countries.

Penalty Reduction: Lighter penalties for substandard drug production.

Concerns: Potentially compromises patient safety and India's drug reputation.

What is the need for Jan Vishwas Bill?

Addressing Over-Criminalization: The existing laws might have been too penalizing, hindering businesses.

Aligning with Business Growth: The need to make India a more attractive business destination while ensuring quality and safety.

Pharmaceutical Industry Concerns: With reported substandard brands and international issues, a revision was deemed necessary.

Enhancing Reputation: Incidents in countries like Gambia, Sri Lanka, and the US FDA's findings spotlighted the need for legislative action.

Ensuring Consumer Safety: Despite the bill's potential biases, the overall intent was to safeguard consumers from health risks.

What are the implications of Jan Vishwas Bill?

Simplifies Regulations: Aims to boost ease of living and doing business by amending various provisions.

Potential Bias: Changes to the Drugs & Cosmetics Act might favor drug manufacturers over consumers.

Quality Concerns Highlighted:

Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation found 48 brands to be substandard.

US FDA pointed out issues in Indian factories exporting generics.

Deaths in Gambia and Uzbekistan linked to an Indian-made cough syrup.

Sri Lanka and Nepal raised concerns over Indian drug quality.

Weaker Penalties: Producing substandard drugs may lead to lighter penalties, risking patient safety.

Reputation at Risk: India, known as the pharmacy of the world, might see its reputation damaged.

What should be done?

Strengthen Regulations: Ensure the Drugs & Cosmetics Act prioritizes patient safety over business interests.

Stricter Quality Checks: Address issues like the 48 substandard brands and concerns raised by the US FDA.

Review Penalties: Reconsider Jan Vishwas Bill's lenient penalties for producing substandard drugs.

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Preserve Reputation: Protect India's status as the "pharmacy of the world" by ensuring high-quality generics.

Balance Business and Safety: Improve business conditions without compromising patient rights and drug safety.

6. [Who's listening to the teacher? HEI Rankings aren't](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "**Who's listening to the teacher? HEI Rankings aren't**" published in the "**The Times of India**" on **1st August 2023**.

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

Relevance: Higher education

News- The article explains the issues related to the ranking system for educational institutions and importance of qualitative methods to assess the quality of education

Why are qualitative methods important to assess the quality of education institutions?

To achieve a well-rounded approach, qualitative research holds equal importance.

Quantitative methods are effective for analysing certain aspects such as **faculty research and publications**. But, they may not suffice when it comes to evaluating **qualitative elements like the quality of teaching**.

The **quality of teaching** is the **most important** among all the criteria used in rankings to judge the strength of an educational institution. This is particularly relevant for institutions that prioritise teaching in India.

What are the issues with the rankings system of educational institutions?

Certain ranking mechanisms tend to blur the distinction between the **quality of teaching and learning outcomes**. They overlook the **intricate examination of pedagogy**.

Most ranking systems fail to adequately capture the **subjective aspects of teaching and learning**. They tend to prioritise the **objective data** on an **institution's accomplishments**.

Ranking systems mention **innovations** in teaching methods. But, their approach often remains **quantitative and lacks qualitative elaboration**.

Teaching is inherently a **creative and critical endeavour**. It involves a teacher infusing their **passion** for the chosen subject, combining it with **effective pedagogy**.

If ranking exercises are **merely quantitative**, it fails to acknowledge the fundamental **creative and critical nature of education**.

What are the challenges faced by a teacher in case of overcrowded classrooms?

The **recent report by QS rankers** highlighted the discouraging **faculty to student ratio** in Indian higher education institutions.

In such overcrowded classrooms, **pedagogy** becomes the first and **most critical casualty**. It makes it difficult for teachers to effectively deliver their lessons.

The **imagination and creativity** a teacher brings to the classroom are undermined when faced with an excessive number of students per class.

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7. The dangers in the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill

Source– The post is based on the article “**The dangers in the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **2nd August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Indian Polity – Fundamental Rights

News– The government is set to introduce the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill in Parliament.

What is the importance of the Right to Information Act?

It has been a **tool to empower** millions of Indian citizens since 2005. Access to information is necessary for **governments accountability** in a democracy.

According to the Supreme Court of India, individuals have the **right to access information** about wilful defaulters and the specifics of Non Performing Assets held by public sector banks.

In democracies, voter lists containing names, addresses, and other personal information are regularly made public to facilitate **public scrutiny and prevent electoral fraud**.

Poor and marginalised people can enjoy the benefits of government schemes and welfare programmes, if they must have access to relevant information.

What are the issues related to the draft Data Protection Bill?

Exemptions under RTI Act– The RTI Act includes a provision to **protect the privacy** of people. It contains an **exemption clause under Section 8(1)(j)**.

Personal information is exempt from disclosure if it is not related to **public activity; or any public interest**. The information is also exempted if it leads to **invasion of privacy**.

Therefore, **data protection law** does not require any amendment to the existing RTI law. The **Justice A.P. Shah Report on Privacy** also mentions it.

However, the DDP Bill 2022 includes an **amendment to Section 8(1)(j)**. It exempts all personal information from disclosure. This is not good for the **transparency and accountability regime** in the country.

Excessive power to executive– A primary objective of any data protection law is to curtail the **misuse of personal data**, including for financial fraud.

Government is the **biggest data repository**. It should not have **wide discretionary powers** under the data protection law.

The **DDP Bill, 2022**, grants **extensive authority** to the executive to **formulate rules and notifications** covering a wide array of matters.

For example, the central government holds the power to **exempt any government or private sector entity** from adhering to the law’s provisions by issuing a **notification**.

This raises the possibility of the government selectively **exempting entities like the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI)**.

In contrast, smaller non-governmental organisations, research institutions, associations of individuals, and Opposition parties would be required to establish systems to comply with the **stringent responsibilities of a data fiduciary**.

Data Protection Board– it is critical that the **oversight body** set up under the legislation is **adequately independent**.

The draft Bill does not ensure the autonomy of the **Data Protection Board**. The **strength and composition** of the board, and **process of selection and removal** of its chairperson and other members will be decided by central government

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Government will have power to **appoint the chief executive** responsible for managing the board.

Data Protection Board has power to impose fines up to ₹500 crore. It can be misused by the executive to target the **political opposition** and those critical of its policies.

8. [C Raja Mohan writes: South Asia, now open to business](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**C Raja Mohan writes: South Asia, now open to business**” published in **The Indian express** on 2nd August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- India and its neighborhood-relations.

News: In this article author talks about India’s growing economy and its potential positive effect on South Asia. They discuss how regional integration, influenced by economic reforms, can overcome political disputes. Despite challenges, there are new factors accelerating this process, including India’s increasing economic ties with neighbors, economic openness in the region, and support from Western countries. Ultimately, the author suggests India’s economic growth can benefit all South Asian countries.

How India’s growing economy and its potential positive effect on South Asia?

India is emerging as the **third-largest economy and a major tech hub**.

Effects on South Asia

Trade Increase:

Intra-regional trade grew from 2% in 1990 to 6% now.

India’s exports: \$16 billion to Bangladesh, \$6 billion to Sri Lanka, and \$8.5 billion to Nepal in 2022.

Regional Integration:

Leaders from Nepal and Sri Lanka are showing interest in deeper economic ties with India.

Cross-border projects like rail, road, and energy are gaining momentum.

Great Power Influence:

The US and allies are focusing on India as a counter to China, helping promote India’s ties with its neighbors.

Japan is promoting connectivity between India and Bangladesh.

How South Asian regional integration can overcome political disputes?

Trade as a Bridge:

Intra-regional trade in South Asia grew from 2% in 1990 to 6% currently.

As trade benefits economies, it encourages nations to resolve political issues.

Leadership Engagements:

Visits by Nepal’s PM and Sri Lanka’s President to India have led to stronger economic commitments.

Such direct discussions can pave the way for resolution of disputes.

Economic Alliances:

Countries like Nepal and Sri Lanka show increased interest in economic ties with India.

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Economic interests can overshadow past political differences.

External Influence:

Japan's effort in promoting India-Bangladesh connectivity is an example of foreign nations pushing for regional unity.

The US's \$500 million grant to Nepal for energy and road connectivity emphasizes regional collaboration.

Alternative Cooperation Routes:

Instead of relying solely on SAARC, nations are pursuing bilateral and sub-regional cooperations, bypassing traditional hindrances.

9. [Expansion worries: Enlarging Brics will not inevitably restore relevance](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Expansion worries: Enlarging Brics will not inevitably restore relevance**" published in **Business standard** on 2nd August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

News: This article discusses the potential expansion of the BRICS group. China wants more countries like Russia to join. India and Brazil prefer democracies like Indonesia over autocracies like Saudi Arabia. This reflects BRICS' challenges in staying relevant as its original purpose has shifted. India wants a careful, consensus-based expansion approach. The upcoming August summit will address these issues.

About BRICS current situation

BRICS includes Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa.

They discuss global economic matters.

China wants countries like Russia to join.

India and Brazil prefer democracies joining, like Indonesia.

There's debate over Saudi Arabia's potential membership.

BRICS' relevance has changed over time.

China's growth and anti-Western stance influenced this change.

India now values the Quad and G20 more.

The August summit will discuss BRICS' expansion.

India seeks a consensus-based approach to expansion.

What are the challenges faced by BRICS?

Differing Expansion Views: While China wants countries similar to Russia to join, India and Brazil lean towards democracies like Indonesia.

Potential New Members: The debate on including Saudi Arabia highlights differing priorities. While its addition would favor China, India remains cautious.

Shift in Relevance: Originally, BRICS was a stage for large emerging economies. However, China's economic growth and its anti-Western approach have changed its focus.

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China's Dominance: The risk of BRICS becoming a “China-plus” grouping can reduce its balanced influence.

Balancing Act: India wants to stay independent of Sino-Western tensions, affecting its commitment to BRICS.

Alternate Forums: China has developed other platforms for engaging emerging countries, overshadowing BRICS.

Relevance Concern: With India valuing the Quad and G20 more, BRICS' importance is questioned.

What should be done?

Consensus-based Expansion: All BRICS nations should agree on new members.

Objective Criteria: Use clear criteria for adding new members, not just geopolitical shifts.

Avoid Dominance: Prevent BRICS from becoming a “China-plus” group.

Value Democracy: Prefer established democracies like Indonesia over autocracies like Saudi Arabia.

Re-establish Purpose: Refocus on BRICS' original goal of shaping the global geo-economic order.

Consistent Approach: Decisions should not be influenced by temporary geopolitical events.

10. [Apar Gupta writes: On Manipur, internet shutdown is no cure](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Apar Gupta writes: On Manipur, internet shutdown is no cure**” published in “The Indian express” on 3rd August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2-Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential;

News: The author discusses the frequent internet shutdowns in India, which are meant to maintain law and order but also harm citizens' rights and the economy. Different methods of “limited internet shutdowns” are used, like restricting certain mediums, limiting time, geographically targeting areas, or blocking specific websites. These shutdowns can favor the rich, are hard to enforce, and can increase surveillance. Despite their regular use, no government study confirms their effectiveness.

About frequent internet shutdowns in India

India frequently shuts down the internet to maintain law and order.

In 2018, India led globally in internet shutdowns.

Jammu and Kashmir faced a 550-day mobile data blackout until 2021.

Manipur's ongoing ban has lasted over 80 days since May 3, 2023.

Rajasthan had 85 shutdown orders between January 2020 and September 2021.

Despite shutdowns, no government study confirms their positive impact.

What are different judicial cases related to internet shutdown?

Gujarat High Court Case:

Concerning Gauravbhai Sureshbhai Vyas in 2015.

The court found shutdown orders proportional because they limited only mobile internet.

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Manipur High Court Case:

The court restored wired internet but continued to block social media and VPNs.

Supreme Court's Anuradha Bhasin Judgment:

Condoned selective internet bans.

What are different methods of "limited internet shutdowns"?

Restriction by Medium:

Internet access is limited based on its medium, like mobile or wired.

Example: Gujarat High Court's 2015 decision allowed only wired internet.

Data: Only 3.8% of Indians use wired connections; most rely on mobiles.

Restriction by Time:

Internet is shut down for specific hours or days.

Example: In Rajasthan, shutdowns are often limited to two-three days.

Geographical Localization:

The shutdown targets specific districts or areas instead of an entire state.

Example: 26 out of 85 shutdown orders in Rajasthan targeted Udaipur.

Website or Service Specific:

Blocks or permits specific websites or types of services, like social media or banking.

Example: In Jammu and Kashmir, whitelisting allowed 153 sites, but 80 didn't work effectively.

Recent trend: Banning VPNs, social media, and messaging apps, although enforcement is challenging.

What are the implications of "limited internet shutdowns"?

Socio-economic Impact: Limited access affects mostly the less affluent.

Challenging Enforcement: Restricting specific services or apps is hard to implement. For example, in Jammu and Kashmir, 80 out of 153 whitelisted websites didn't work effectively.

Increased Surveillance: Whitelisting can lead to invasive checks like physical stop-and-frisk measures.

No Confirmed Effectiveness: No government study proves the positive impact of these shutdowns.

Hinders Peaceful Protests: Social media shutdowns can prevent citizens from organizing non-violent demonstrations. For instance, shutdowns limited the spread of information about the Phaknung gangrape protest in Imphal.

Possibility of Increased Violence: Some studies suggest violence can rise during shutdowns as peaceful protests are stifled.

What should be done?

Empirical Study:

The government should study the actual effects of internet shutdowns.

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The standing committee on IT urged an assessment of shutdowns' impact on the economy and public safety.

Evidence-based Policymaking: Policymakers should base decisions on concrete data rather than assumptions.

Promote Accountability: Encourage the use of the internet for holding the state accountable.

Re-evaluate Policies: Avoid "limited internet shutdowns" that endanger citizens without proven benefits.

[11. As Article 370 hearings begin in the Supreme Court, question of the 'temporary' provision](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**As Article 370 hearings begin in the Supreme Court, question of the 'temporary' provision**" published in "The Indian express" on 3rd August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure,

News: The article discusses the debate on Article 370, which gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir. The Supreme Court is examining if its 2019 removal was legal.

What are the arguments in favor of removing Article 370?

Temporary Provision: Article 370 is titled "Temporary provisions with respect to the State of Jammu and Kashmir". This suggests it wasn't meant to be permanent.

Self-contained Exit: Article 370(3) allows for the President to declare the article inoperative, indicating a mechanism for its removal.

Uniformity: Removal can lead to uniform application of Indian laws to Jammu & Kashmir, integrating it fully with India.

Development & Growth: Some believe removal can boost the region's development, as it would get equal attention and opportunities like other states.

What are the arguments against removing Article 370?

Original Agreement: The accession of Jammu & Kashmir to India was based on certain terms, with Article 370 being central.

"Temporary" Misunderstood: The term "temporary" in Article 370 refers to the period before J&K's Constituent Assembly created its Constitution (1951-1957), not the Article's lifespan.

Constituent Assembly's Role: Clause (3) of Article 370 mandated that any change to the relationship between J&K and India needed the J&K Constituent Assembly's recommendation.

End of Constituent Assembly: Since the Constituent Assembly ceased to exist after 1957, the power to alter Article 370 also ended, making the Article permanent.

Preservation of Identity: Article 370 ensured J&K maintained its unique identity and relationship with India.

Collaborative Relationship: The petitioners saw Article 370 as fostering a collaborative relationship between J&K and India. Removing it could disturb this balance.

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12. How UIDAI is using AI to tackle payment frauds

Source: The post is based on the article “How UIDAI is using AI to tackle payment frauds” published in “The Indian express” on 3rd August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability, e-governance applications, models, successes, limitations, and potential;

News: The article discusses increasing fraud in India’s Aadhaar-enabled Payment System (AePS). The Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI) is using artificial intelligence to fight this, especially by identifying fake fingerprints. Despite this, fraud continues due to issues like dishonest bank agents and lack of awareness.

About financial crime in India

Fraud in Aadhaar-enabled Payment System (AePS) is rising.

UIDAI uses AI to identify real versus fake fingerprints.

In 2020-21, 2.62 lakh financial crimes were reported.

Crimes jumped to 6.94 lakhs in 2022.

Payment frauds increased from 700,000 in FY21 to 20 million in FY23.

Many don’t report cyber frauds; only 2.6% of 2022’s complaints led to FIRs.

Business correspondents, local bank agents, sometimes cheat users.

Crime Branch warned about cyber criminals cloning fingerprints from government sites.

Why there is increased fraud in Aadhaar-enabled Payment System (AePS)?

Growing Usage: As AePS gains popularity, it becomes a bigger target for fraudsters.

Fake Fingerprints: Criminals have created fake fingerprints using silicone to steal money.

Rural Users: A significant part of AePS users are in rural areas, often less aware of fraud risks.

Business Correspondents (BCs): BCs sometimes misrepresent transaction amounts. For example, they might give out Rs 500 but record a higher amount.

Lack of Receipts: Rural users often don’t ask for or receive transaction receipts from BCs, making fraud easier.

Limited Awareness: Many people don’t know about cyber frauds and thus don’t report them.

How India is fighting with fraud in Aadhaar-enabled Payment System (AePS)?

AI Integration: UIDAI is using artificial intelligence to detect fake fingerprints.

Fingerprint Technology: UIDAI introduced the Finger Minutiae Record – Finger Image Record (FMR-FIR) modality. It checks fingerprint “liveness” to spot cloned prints during authentication.

Facial Recognition: In collaboration with the National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI), Airtel Payments Bank implemented facial recognition for transaction authentication.

Liveness Detection: New technology differentiates between live fingers and cloned ones.

Awareness Campaigns: Efforts are being made to raise awareness about cyber frauds, especially in rural areas.

Increased Monitoring: The RBI’s ombudsman received over 2,000 AePS complaints between November 2021 and March 2023, indicating active monitoring.

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Law Enforcement: Crime Branch wing of Haryana Police is investigating numerous AePS-related cyber fraud complaints.

13. From state visit to a more robust trade relationship

Source: The post is based on the article “**From state visit to a more robust trade relationship**” published in “The Hindu” on 3rd August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests

News: In this article author discusses the historic visit of India’s Prime Minister to Washington. They highlight the growing U.S.-India partnership, especially in defense and technology. However, the trade relationship, though improving, hasn’t reached its potential. Both nations should prioritize creating a strong Free Trade Agreement to maximize benefits.

About India-US trade

Historic Visit: India’s PM 2023 visit to Washington strengthens U.S.-India relations.

Current Trade: Exceeds \$120 billion.

U.S. Approach: Shifted from traditional FTAs, emphasizing resilient supply chains and labor rights.

Enhancing Relations: Resolved six WTO disputes during India’s PM US visit; potential for a major Free Trade Agreement.

Agriculture Trades: Exchanges like mangoes for India and cherries for the U.S. without an FTA.

Trade Potential: By prioritizing, bilateral trade could reach \$500-\$600 billion by 2030.

What is the U.S.’s current trade approach?

Shift from FTAs: The U.S. has evolved away from Free Trade Agreements.

Supply Chain Focus: Emphasis on creating resilient supply chains.

Reshoring and Friend-shoring: Aim to bring production back to the U.S. or move to friendly countries.

Labor and Environment: Prioritizing labor rights and environmentally friendly production over traditional globalization.

Skeptics’ Views: Many believe the U.S.’s goals could be better achieved with a revamped FTA strategy.

How can both countries enhance their trade relationship?

Resolve Disputes: During recent India’s PM US visit, six disputes under the World Trade Organization were settled.

Explore FTAs: Both countries should consider major Free Trade Agreement negotiations.

Utilize Past Successes: Examples include small trade deals like exchanging mangoes, pomegranates from India for U.S. cherries, hay, and pork.

Agriculture Opportunities: India has shown willingness to open its agricultural market in exchange for concessions, as seen with Australia gaining access for wine, wool, and sheep meat.

Work Towards Major Agreements: Initiating negotiations for a comprehensive Free Trade Agreement could cover a wider range of goods and services.

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Stronger Leadership Mandate: Trade needs more attention from both Biden and Modi administrations for better outcomes.

Set Ambitious Goals: Aiming for \$500-\$600 billion in bilateral trade by 2030 is possible with a focused approach.

14. The Will's Not There For Our Woods

Source: The post is based on the article **"The Will's Not There For Our Woods"** published in **The Times of India** on **3rd August 2023**.

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

Relevance: concerns associated with the Forest Conservation Amendment Bill 2023.

News: The article explains the concerns associated with the Forest Conservation Amendment Bill 2023.

Why was FCA originally enacted?

[Click Here to Read](#)

What did the Supreme Court say in Godavarman (1996)?

The judgment made two key observations:

1. The term "forest land" in the FCA referred to all forest areas, regardless of ownership or condition.
2. The FCA applied to lands recorded as forests in government records and also to forest lands not officially notified or recorded but fulfilling the dictionary definition of forests (often known as "deemed forests").

As a result, **states were mandated to establish district-level committees responsible for identifying and reporting all forests**, including degraded and denuded forest areas.

In 1997, states submitted expert committee reports on forest identification, but there were significant variations in the process.

What did the Lafarge judgment (2011) require?

In the judgment, the SC issued guidelines instructing states to conduct an exercise to identify forests, including those falling under the dictionary meaning.

The court provided a specific procedure to follow in cases where there was uncertainty about whether an area should be classified as a forest or not.

How does the FC Amendment 2023, impact forests as per dictionary meaning?

Section 1A of the Act states that the provisions of FCA will cover lands that are either **(a)** notified by statute as forest, or are **(b)** not notified by statute as forest, but recorded as forest in government record.

The FC Amendment does not address forests as per the dictionary meaning, raising uncertainties about the future status of already identified forest lands as per dictionary meaning.

The Ministry of Environment, Forestry and climate change has clarified that areas identified in 1997 by the expert committees will be recorded as forests. However, the wording of the amendment creates ambiguity.

Must Read: [Forest \(Conservation\) Amendment Bill, 2023: Explained](#)

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Who are other potential impacts of the amended act?

First, the real estate and mining lobbies are expected to benefit the most from the proposed changes. Forest lands in states like Haryana and Uttarakhand may decrease if they are not identified as forests as per the dictionary meaning.

The threat is particularly high in the NCR region, where the potential windfall gains for real estate in the Aravallis could lead to the loss of significant forested areas.

Second, citizens who rely on the hydrological functions of forests, such as groundwater recharge and stream flow, will be the biggest losers.

This is because forested watersheds play a crucial role in sustaining springs, streams, and groundwater sources, which are essential for the success of the [Har Ghar Nal Se Jal program](#).

15. [Express View on Delhi services Bill: A self-goal](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Express View on Delhi services Bill: A self-goal” published in “The Indian express” on 4th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Functions and responsibilities of the Union and the States, issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure.

News: This article discusses the GNCTD Bill, which can allow the central government in India to override decisions of Delhi’s elected officials. This raises concerns about democracy and federalism. The article also critiques regional parties supporting this bill, warning it could harm their political influence.

About Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill (GNCTD Bill)

The GNCTD Bill allows the central government to override Delhi’s elected decisions.

Once passed, the Lieutenant-Governor (Centre’s nominee) becomes the final authority in Delhi.

Previously, the Supreme Court ruled Delhi’s elected government had more powers.

BJD and YSRCP, two regional parties, support the bill, which could affect their future political influence.

What are the issues with GNCTD Bill?

Central Overreach: The GNCTD Bill enables the central government to overrule the decisions of Delhi’s elected government.

Lieutenant-Governor’s Power: The Lieutenant-Governor, appointed by the Centre, becomes the final decision-maker in Delhi, bypassing elected representatives.

Contradicts Supreme Court: The bill goes against a recent Supreme Court decision that granted Delhi’s elected government more powers.

Undermines Democracy: The bill challenges the fundamental promise of electoral democracy and the federal spirit of the Indian Constitution.

Federal Concerns: By impacting Delhi’s autonomy, there’s a fear that other states might face similar central interventions.

Erodes Checks and Balances: The bill could weaken the balance of power, concentrating authority with the Centre rather than distributing it federally.

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16. Workplace safety is not negotiable at any level

Source– The post is based on the article “**Workplace safety is not negotiable at any level**” published in the “**mint**” on **4th August 2023**.

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

Relevance: issues related to women

News– The article deals with the issue of sexual harassment of women at workplaces.

What are some statistics related to sexual harassment of women at workplace?

According to a 2022 **report by the International Labour Organization**, nearly 23% of employed individuals globally experienced violence and harassment at work.

In India, an **analysis conducted by Mint** revealed that the country’s leading publicly traded companies witnessed a significant 70% increase in sexual harassment complaints during the period of 2022-23.

This rise in reported cases was particularly prominent among **23 large-cap firms**.

Which factors are responsible for increased reporting of sexual harassment cases at workplaces?

In the previous fiscal year, a significant number of employees transitioned back to work on **hybrid models** after the **pandemic-induced shift** to remote work. The increase in reported cases of harassment could potentially be attributed to this shift.

The rise in reported cases could also be explained by **improved reporting mechanisms** due to **clearer guidelines** and **policies implementation**.

There is a greater sense of confidence in the **redressal process** and people now feel **more empowered** to come forward and seek resolution.

In Indian workplaces, **awareness of rights and grievance mechanisms** has increased significantly since the introduction of the **Supreme Court’s Vishaka guidelines in 1997**.

These guidelines laid the foundation for the **Sexual Harassment of Women in the Workplace Act of 2013**, commonly known as the **PoSH Act**.

Well-managed companies are **educating their staff** about this law seriously. As a result, office employees now have a **clearer understanding** of the **scope of the PoSH Act** and the various forms of harassment.

The global movement of speaking up and exposing predators has also influenced India Inc. Employers have established **Vishaka panels** to address harassment cases. Discussions about **gender ratio and autonomy** have become common topics in office conversations.

The COVID-19 pandemic has prompted companies to address the **emotional and physical safety** of their employees.

Well-managed companies have established a PoSH apparatus. But, they are exceptions. The majority of **formal and informal organisations** in the country lack **adequate safety measures**.

Way forward-

It is crucial to recognize that this law is to **safeguard every individual** across all levels of employment, regardless of positions.

Addressing this challenge requires **collective effort from all stakeholders**. **Gender justice** must be at the forefront of this endeavor.

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17. [Details Awaited – Personal data protection bill this time does well to emphasise purpose limitation. But subsequent rules are the key](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Details Awaited – Personal data protection bill this time does well to emphasise purpose limitation. But subsequent rules are the key**” published in **The Times of India** on **4th August 2023**.

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

Relevance: About Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023

News: Recently, the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023, was introduced in Lok Sabha after the changes made on recommendation of the parliamentary committee.

What are the key provisions of the new Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023?

The Bill has three notable features:

Firstly, it emphasizes purpose limitation to prevent data misuse, ensuring that even unwittingly given consent does not grant access beyond the specified purpose.

For example, a food delivery app may in its fine print also seek the phone contact list. The bill clearly spells out that even if consent is unwittingly given, purpose limitation will apply. In this example, the phone contact list will be out of bounds for the app.

Secondly, individuals have the right to have their data erased.

Thirdly, the bill introduces consent managers, licensed intermediaries, to help people navigate the legal aspects of consent.

However, the effectiveness of the bill depends on the subordinate legislation or rules that the government will later draft.

Must Read: [Data Protection Bill approved by Cabinet: Content, concerns and The dangers in the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill](#)

What can be the way ahead?

First, the drafted rules should provide clear definitions for exemptions from the checks imposed by data protection law.

Currently, **the government has a broad exemption for using the personal data for upholding sovereignty and public order**. However, these exceptions should be more specific and precise, considering that governments collect significant amounts of personal data.

Second, privacy being a fundamental right, **the bill needs to be thoroughly debated in the Parliament**. However, considering India’s significant amount of unprotected personal data, the bill’s passage should not be delayed.

18. [The lessons of Hiroshima must not drift away](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The lessons of Hiroshima must not drift away**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **5th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International relations

Relevance: Issues related to nuclear weapons and disarmament.

News– The article explains the concept of nuclear taboo and nuclear deterrence.

What are some facts about the concept of nuclear deterrence and nuclear taboo?

With the increasing threat of nuclear weapons, it became evident that nuclear weapons will be a **global problem**. This led to **development of taboo** against their actual use.

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Nina Tannenwald has defined the nuclear taboo as a **collective norm** that strongly opposes the use of nuclear weapons. These weapons are regarded as so **morally reprehensible** that there are very few circumstances in which their use can be considered justified

This strong aversion extends to **all types of nuclear weapons**, regardless of their explosive power. It advocates for a **universal prohibition** on their use.

However, this taboo lacks a **legal foundation**. Instead, it is rooted in **notions of morality, proportionality, and accountability**.

It is deeply entrenched in our perception of them as **distinct and unique**. As per Bernard Brodie, nuclear weapons are considered the **'absolute weapon.'**

The **exceptional treatment** given to nuclear weapons does not solely stem from their **sheer destructive potentials**. Instead, it is largely founded on the profound knowledge we have gained from the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The experiences of people affected by the bombings have shown that nuclear weapons are **indiscriminate**.

They leave **lasting contamination** on the environment for decades and have far-reaching effects on future generations due to radiation exposure. In **Japan**, people are still living with the consequences of the events that unfolded in August 1945.

How has the notion of nuclear taboo been tested in recent times?

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has challenged our understanding of deterrence and the nuclear taboo. Throughout the conflict, Russian President Vladimir Putin has issued **various nuclear threats**.

These threats have ranged from reminding the world of **Russia's nuclear weapons status** to ordering Russia's nuclear forces into a **'special regime of combat duty'**.

In September 2022, Putin declared Russia's readiness to **make use of all weapon systems**. It raises concerns about the possibility of Russia using **tactical nuclear weapons**.

This had several **dangerous implications**. This speculation may create certain expectations that could influence the behavior of the Russian leadership. It also undermines the **long-standing nuclear taboo**.

Furthermore, there is still no consensus on the definition of a **tactical nuclear weapon**. **Battlefield or tactical weapons** are delivered over **shorter distances and are smaller in size**.

However, the yield can significantly vary depending on the **delivery method**. For instance, the U.S. possesses tactical weapons with yields ranging from a fraction of 1kt to 170kt.

Why there is reason for optimism in the official reactions from the NATO and other nuclear weapons states concerning Mr. Putin's aggressive posturing?

Washington made it unequivocally clear that any nuclear use would be met with a **robust and proportionate response**. It did not specify that this response would be nuclear.

On the contrary, it emphasized a **carefully calibrated and conventional reaction** to any **nuclear adventurism** at NATO's borders.

Furthermore, the U.S. did not alter its **nuclear preparedness**, which prevented **further escalation and nuclear speculations** in Europe.

In November, even China's President Xi Jinping called upon the international community to **collectively oppose** the use of nuclear weapons or any threats of their use.

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19. [Express View on restrictions on laptop imports: Licence raj dot com](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Express View on restrictions on laptop imports: Licence raj dot com**” published in **The Indian express** on 5th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilisation of resources, growth, development and employment. & Effects of liberalisation on the economy,

News: The Indian government now requires licenses to import devices like laptops. This is like old restrictive policies. The aim is to boost local manufacturing and reduce imports, mainly from China. However, this can cause supply issues and higher prices. Recent policies show a return to past socialist approaches, which could harm economic progress made since the 1990s.

What are the benefits of imposing licenses to import devices like laptops?

Promote Domestic Manufacturing: The government aims to strengthen local industries and reduce dependency on imports.

Curb Chinese Imports: In 2022-23, personal computer imports stood at \$5.3 billion, with China being the major contributor. Reducing these imports can balance trade.

Economic Strategy: By controlling imports, the government can influence the market, encouraging businesses to set up manufacturing units in India.

Job Creation: Boosting domestic manufacturing can lead to more jobs for the local population.

National Security: Reduced dependence on foreign tech may reduce potential cyber risks and protect sensitive data.

What are the limitations of imposing licenses to import devices like laptops?

Disruption: No prior warning to manufacturers can lead to sudden market disturbances.

Supply Shortages: Immediate licensing requirements can cause a lack of available products.

Price Surge: Limited supply often results in higher equipment prices for consumers.

Bureaucratic Hurdles: Licensing introduces more red tape, slowing down business operations, similar to pre-1991 era challenges.

Cost Disadvantages: Domestic manufacturing might not always be cost-effective, making products pricier.

Tech Ecosystem Impact: India’s IT services and startups, essential for “Digital India,” may suffer.

Regressive Approach: It reflects a return to older, restrictive policies, potentially hindering modern economic growth.

Global Trade Relations: Such policies might strain relations with trade partners like China.

20. [Centre tables Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023: What it says and why it's being criticised](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Centre tables Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023: What it says and why it's being criticised**” published in “The Indian express” on 5th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Parliament and State Legislatures – structure, functioning, conduct of business, powers & privileges and issues arising out of these.

News: This article discusses India’s new Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023. The bill outlines how businesses, and the government can use citizens’ data. Critics argue the

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government has too much power and exemption in this bill. The Indian government says these exemptions are necessary for national security and public health reasons. The article also compares data protection approaches in the EU, the U.S., and China.

About India's New Data Protection Bill

Overview: India has introduced the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023. This legislation guides how businesses, and the government can use citizens' data.

Evolution of the Bill: Initially inspired by European privacy laws, it later adopted features from the U.S. and China models.

Key Criticisms: Critics are concerned about the bill's exemptions. For instance, the government can appoint members to the data protection board and has more leniencies.

Government's Defense: The Indian government believes these exemptions are vital. As Rajeev Chandrasekhar mentioned, carve-outs are necessary for national security and public health.

What are the major benefits of Data Protection Bill?

Guidelines for Data Collection: The bill sets clear rules for how corporations and the government can gather and use citizens' data.

Balancing Security and Privacy: The government claims exemptions are crucial for addressing national security, law and order, and public health emergencies.

Learning from Others: Officials stated they've learned from Europe and Singapore's mistakes, creating a bill suitable for India's economic reality.

Equal Rules for Data Breaches: Both government and private entities are governed by the same rules regarding data breaches.

What are the major criticisms of the Data Protection Bill?

Major Criticisms of India's Data Protection Bill:

Government Exemptions: The bill grants the government significant exemptions, allowing it to bypass some norms.

Data Protection Authority's Role: There's a weakening of the Data Protection Authority of India, the main regulatory body.

Government's Control on Authority: The government can appoint members to the data protection board, raising concerns about potential biases.

Bypassing Consent: Provisions allow the government to skip seeking express consent from citizens for data collection.

What are the different global models for data protection laws?

Different Global Models for Data Protection Laws:

EU Model:

Based on the GDPR, focusing on comprehensive personal data protection.

Prioritizes individual's right to privacy.

Contains clear exemptions like national security.

US Model:

Viewed as a "liberty protection" against government intrusion.

Lacks a comprehensive set of privacy rights.

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It has sector-specific rules and legislation like the Privacy Act.

China Model:

Introduced laws like the Personal Information Protection Law (PIPL) and the Data Security Law (DSL).

Emphasizes government control over data.

Firms like Didi faced heavy fines, showcasing strict enforcement.

21. Bin This Law: SC's Rahul call reminds why we must decriminalize defamation

Source: The post is based on the article "**Bin This Law: SC's Rahul call reminds why we must decriminalize defamation**" published in "Times of India" on 5th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Structure, organization and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

News: Rahul Gandhi was convicted by a Surat court of criminal defamation and given a two-year sentence, disqualifying him from Lok Sabha. The Supreme Court (SC) later stayed this conviction. This article criticizes the defamation law as outdated and misused. It suggests this law should be removed.

About criminal defamation law

Read here: [Criminal defamation in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

Why did the Supreme Court put a stay on the Surat court's order for Rahul Gandhi on criminal defamation?

The Supreme Court put a stay on the Surat court's order for Rahul Gandhi on criminal defamation for these reasons:

Abuse of Defamation Provision: The Supreme Court observed that the defamation law had been misused in this case.

Maximum Sentence without Reason: The trial judge gave Rahul the maximum two-year sentence without explaining why.

Impact on Representation: Rahul's two-year sentence disqualified him from Lok Sabha, affecting not just him but his entire constituency.

Colonial Nature of Law: The article mentions the defamation law as having a "colonial sting", hinting that it's outdated.

Ambiguous Wording: The law's vague terms allow it to be used against various speech acts, from dissent to satire.

What should be done?

Review Defamation Law: The criminal defamation provision has been misused, suggesting a need for review.

Clear Sentencing Guidelines: Judges should provide clear reasons when giving maximum sentences.

Protect Representation: Ensure that legal decisions don't unjustly affect entire constituencies.

Clarify Law Wording: Make defamation law clear to prevent misuse against dissent, humor, or satire.

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General Studies Paper –3

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General Studies - 3

1. [Incentivising fiscal prudence for states](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Incentivising fiscal prudence for states**” published in **Business Standard** on **31st July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Public Finance

Relevance: measures needed to reduce debt of states.

News: The article explains the increasing debt of state governments and measures needed to reduce it.

What is the present situation of debt?

States, at 28 percent of GDP, account for nearly a third of the total debt of Indian governments. The central government accounts for the rest.

There is also variation among states holding debts. **For example**, debts of Gujarat and Maharashtra remain below 25 per cent of their respective GDP.

Whereas, debts of Punjab, Rajasthan, and Kerala as a proportion of their state GDP have exceeded 40 per cent at the end of 2020-21.

What is the predicted situation for states' debt?

The debt-to-GDP ratio of the states is projected to increase on average. The states with the highest levels of debt now are also those where debt is expected to rise the greatest.

For example, Punjab's debt is expected to rise sharply from its present level of about 48% of state GDP to almost 55% in 2027-28.

What are the differences between states with high levels of debt and states with low burdens of public debt?

The primary budget deficits and contingent liabilities of more indebted states are more than twice as high as those of less indebted states. Higher indebted states also show slower GDP growth.

However, **one thing that doesn't vary across high- and low-debt states is borrowing costs.** Gujarat and Punjab, despite differences in the level of debts, issue debt at the same interest rate.

What are the concerns with the same borrowing cost for all the states?

Due to the absence of interest rate variation, there is absence of market discipline because states with higher debts are not prohibited from borrowing by paying higher interest rates.

Even though the RBI implements measures to keep interest rates stable, it grants some flexibility to states with higher debt to avoid the perception of debt distress spreading to other states. This, in turn, leads to a loosening of market discipline.

Further, the horizontal devolution of taxes among states, awarded by the Finance Commission, mandates to allocate more resources to states with larger revenue deficits. This again gives an advantage to states that have higher debts.

What can be done to strengthen state finances?

First, states could increase revenue mobilization through expanding digitization, widening the tax base, raising property taxes, implementing new taxes, and increasing privatization receipts.

Second, states should redirect their spending towards capacity- and infrastructure-building investments, which promise to improve state GDP and income.

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Third, states should pursue fiscal-management reforms to reduce the dangers that contingent liabilities pose to their public finances.

Fourth, the RBI should oblige states that vary with their present and future debt levels to pay market interest rates.

Fifth, there is a need to strengthen the finance commission. The commission gets dissolved after they submit the report and there is no parallel institution or body to monitor states' finances. Hence, there is a need to establish a permanent fiscal or expenditure council to monitor state finances.

Sixth, fiscal experts and the media need to scrutinize the budgetary processes of the states.

2. [Hurdles to overcome before becoming 'Digital India](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Hurdles to overcome before becoming ‘Digital India**” published in “The Hindu” on 31st July 2023.

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

News: In this article author discusses how UPI has grown rapidly in India, outpacing other digital payment methods. Despite this growth, many bank accounts remain inactive, and digital transactions are not widespread across all demographics. Comparing to other countries, India's digital adoption, especially among women and rural areas, lags.

About UPI payments in India

Growth: UPI payments have seen rapid growth, with its share in digital retail payments rising from under **20% in 2021 to 27% in 2023**.

Comparison: UPI's growth outpaces other methods like NEFT, IMPS, and debit card payments. For instance, from June 2021 to April 2023, UPI payments grew at an average monthly rate of 6%. The corresponding figures for NEFT, IMPS, and debit card payments were 3%, 3%, and 1.5%, respectively.

Financial Inclusion: While 80% of Indians have bank accounts, only 35% conducted digital transactions in 2021 (22% in 2014 and 29% in 2017).

Gender Gap: More **men (41%) than women (28%)** made digital transactions in 2021. Comparatively, in Vietnam, 48% of men and 44% of women did. Brazil had 80% men and 73% women, China saw 87% men and 85% women, and Kenya reported 82% men and 74% women.

What are the benefits of UPI payments?

Rapid Adoption: Since its introduction in 2016, UPI transactions have shown consistent growth. By March 2023, UPI accounted for 27% of digital retail payments in India.

Speed and Efficiency: UPI is a real-time payment systems, unlike NEFT. This means faster and instant transfers, making it preferable for many users.

Push for Financial Inclusion: The rise of UPI payments has the potential to enhance financial inclusion. As of 2021, 80% of the Indian population had bank accounts, with UPI simplifying transactions for them.

Wider Acceptance: The reach of UPI is evident when even local shops or “kirana” stores adopt it, showcasing its ease and accessibility.

Shift from Traditional Methods: The increasing UPI usage led to a decrease in NEFT transactions from 64% in mid-2021 to less than 54% by 2023.

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What are the challenges of UPI payments?

Inactive Accounts: While 80% of Indians had bank accounts in 2021, 38% of these were inactive. This high rate of inactivity could hinder the broader use of UPI.

Limited Use: Only 35% of the population carried out any digital transaction in 2021, showing limited UPI penetration despite its growth.

Gender Disparity: A significant gap exists between men (41%) and women (28%) using digital transactions, indicating potential barriers for women to access or trust UPI.

Rural-Urban Divide: Digital payment adoption is lower in rural areas (30%) compared to urban areas (40%).

Global Comparison: India's digital adoption lags behind countries like Vietnam, Brazil, China, and Kenya, both in overall usage and gender parity.

3. [Feroze Varun Gandhi on cities' flooding: Perils of unplanned urbanisation](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "**Feroze Varun Gandhi on cities' flooding: Perils of unplanned urbanisation**" published in "**The Indian Express**" on **31st July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Urbanisation. GS3- Disaster management

Relevance: Issues related to flooding in cities

News - In the past few weeks, three major cities — Delhi, Ahmedabad, Mumbai — have been flooded.

Why has damage and disruption caused by flooding have increased after independence?

Due to unplanned urbanisation and population growth, there has been a surge in **construction**, particularly in low-lying areas. It has resulted in the **depletion of water bodies**.

The **process of concretization** has reduced **rainwater percolation**. It has led to an increase in **stormwater run-off**.

Most Indian cities are situated on the bank of rivers, having **extensive floodplains and wetlands**. India has lost **40% of its wetlands** in the last three decades.

For instance, Baroda experienced a 30% decline in its wetlands between 2005 and 2018. This loss of natural "**blue infrastructure**" has heightened the **risks of flooding**.

What should be done to stop flooding?

Understand the gravity of the problem- It is essential to conduct studies in all cities to assess the **catchment area** and **flooding risks** associated with urban water bodies and land use.

Comprehensive lake and river management plans need to be developed. **Active involvement from the local community** is needed to ensure **proper maintenance and the removal of encroachments**.

Geographic information systems can be utilised to tag local water bodies. It will aid in the **monitoring of encroachments** and understanding their **seasonal variations**.

There is a need to enhance **early warning systems** for providing **real-time updates on local weather patterns**. Local rainfall data should be integrated with the **Central Water Commission and regional flood control efforts** to improve **flood preparedness**.

As rainfall patterns change, **simulations** will be essential. These simulations can be incorporated into **flood risk maps and insurance products**.

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City-wide databases should also be established to facilitate **immediate relief efforts** in the event of a **flooding-related disaster**.

Improve drainage and stormwater networks– Most of India's cities and towns lack a **well-functioning sewerage network**. In Delhi, the drainage system has a limited capacity. Its **stormwater drains** are quite old.

In Delhi, there are areas where the **drainage slopes** are incorrectly positioned, leading to issues against gravity. In other places, there is **no clear distinction between drainage and stormwater drains**.

To address these issues, most cities need to develop **comprehensive drainage master plans**.

It is essential to conduct **surveys of existing pipelines** to identify locations prone to waterlogging.

There is a need to ensure that **stormwater networks** remain separate from the **drainage network**.

Improving urban planning-

In Delhi, the city drainage system is managed by a range of civic agencies. It leads to **coordination challenges**. Information is not shared or shared with delay. It leads to a lack of transparency. Coordination between agencies and institutions must improve.

Awareness generation– Furthermore, there is a need to **enhance awareness** about wetland and water body conservation.

The efforts made by the Central government, such as promoting the **National Mission for Clean Ganga**, conducting a **Census on Pan-India water bodies**, are encouraging steps. However, a **well-defined urban water policy** is necessary.

Regulatory bodies like the **Central Wetland Regulatory Authority** should be granted **statutory powers** to enforce conservation measures. Additionally, **involving local communities** in the **conservation efforts** would be beneficial.

Identify and replicate local examples-

1. **Mangalore**– Earlier, wastewater flowed through **open drains** and into the city's water bodies, polluting the freshwater sources.

The Mangalore City Corporation established **wastewater treatment plants** and created **connections for end-users**, particularly for industries. These industries faced challenges due to a **limited and irregular water supply**.

To address this, the MCC proposed **supplying treated effluent** to industries to fulfil its industrial water requirements. Private entities within MSEZL contributed to 70% of the **operations and maintenance costs** for the **pumps and sewage treatment plant**.

- **Kaikondrahalli Lake in Bengaluru** – It suffered from **sewage inflow and eutrophication**. There was encroachment on the lake bed.

BBMP went for a **community-driven approach** to revive the lake in a phased manner. BBMP demarcated the lake's boundaries.

Pollution was tackled by **diversion of sewage flow through tapping pipelines**.

Development of inlets and outlets for the lake was carried out. **Embankments and a pathway** around the waterbody were created. All of this was done with **local participation**.

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4. [Manmohan Bahadur writes: Soldiers in the digital age](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Manmohan Bahadur writes: Soldiers in the digital age**” published in the “**The Indian Express**” on **31st July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance: Issues related to armed forces

News- The article explains the issues of impact of social media on armed forces recruits

What are issues faced by armed forces due to increasing use of social media in recent times?

There is a significant lack of research on how the **modern-day recruit**, influenced by social media, differs from his counterpart of twenty years ago upon entering service.

Recently the Army has issued a directive suggesting the **potential suspension of pension** for veterans whose remarks on social media spoil the Army.

There is the **attraction of consumerism** and the irresistible desire to move ahead quickly. Combined with the allure of **social media fame**, it is causing a shift in the **standards of political and social norms, values, and ethics**.

There is the growing trend of polarisation based on cultural, ethnic, linguistic, and religious differences.

Social media platforms are filled with videos **showcasing the divisions** that have seeped down to even the school level. The armed forces recruit their personnel from this environment.

Way forward-

There is a need to **detoxify the mass** that enters at the training institution level. They need to be taught that in the armed forces, all Indians are seen as **just Indians**.

Existing **organised and structured training programs** should be **thoroughly reviewed**. The **actions of junior leaders** play a crucial role as **effective training tools** in this regard.

The **reduced training duration** for enlisted Agniveers presents a new challenge in this regard. Their **four-year engagement period** is not sufficient to assimilate the **values and norms of their service**.

5. [Pathways for digital inclusion](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Pathways for digital inclusion**” published in **The Indian Express** on **31st July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – e-governance. GS 3 – Inclusive growth

Relevance: Issues related to flooding in cities

News- The article explains the Indian DPI and issues related to it.

What are some facts about DPI in India?

DPIs replicate **physical infrastructures**. These DPIs are **digital pathways** for **seamless provision of essential services**.

The Indian DPI ecosystem is envisioned as “**India Stack**”. India Stack is interconnected yet independent “**blocks of a stack**”. Each block ensures **financial and social inclusion** across sectors and benefits a diverse population.

It has **multiple use cases**. It generates **novel solutions that drive innovation, inclusion and competition** in the digital space.

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What are successful examples of DPI in India?

Aadhaar has facilitated **financial inclusion**.

The **Jan Dhan-Aadhaar-Mobile trinity** has ensured the direct **benefit transfers of welfare subsidies** to bank accounts of the beneficiaries.

Unified Payments Interface has enabled citizens to **transfer money** from one bank account to another bank account digitally.

Future of India's DPI involves **sector specific DPIs** such as **account aggregators, Open Network for Digital Commerce, Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission and Agristack**.

What should be done?

Placing users at the forefront-

User-centric design is needed to reduce the risks related to use of technology and **reduce the inequalities** amongst rural and urban populations, genders or economic groups.

For DPI usage, **compatible protocols** for feature phones, **assisted-tech models and Interactive Voice Response System** should be implemented. These should provide support to consumers with **limited smartphone access or low digital literacy**.

The RBI's launch of **UPI123Pay** is an example of inclusivity. It gives feature phone owners an app that enables them with most UPI features.

Inclusion– It should be a **key policy objective** for DPI participants. It must be embedded within the **regulatory framework**.

Several countries like Nigeria, the UK and Brazil, have adopted **open banking for financial inclusion within the regulatory framework**. Estonia's information policy emphasises avoiding **information disparities** between regions or communities.

There is a need to identify the **underserved target segments** and **develop use cases** that caters to their needs for promoting inclusion.

For instance, MSMEs have limited access to **formal sources of credit**. The **account aggregator ecosystem** can ensure access to **low-cost, low-ticket-size, collateral-free sources of credit** by utilising the **digital trail** of all consented transactional data.

For the successful implementation of any digital public infrastructure on a large scale, it is essential to establish **meaningful engagement with the DPI. Digital connectivity and literacy** are big challenges in India, and addressing these issues becomes crucial.

Offline channels should be considered, alongside efforts to enhance **institutional capacity for generating trust and awareness**. This approach not only ensures **access to the last mile for vulnerable consumers**.

For example, business correspondents play a crucial role as intermediaries that banks rely on to expand access to and usage of financial products.

6. [In the wilderness: Forest Bill defeats purpose of the law](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**In the wilderness: Forest Bill defeats purpose of the law**" published in **Business standard** on **1st August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment

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News: Last week, the Lok Sabha passed the Forest Conservation (Amendment) Bill, which makes significant changes to the original law.

What are the major changes to the Forest Conservation (Amendment) Bill?

Renaming the law in Hindi: This might exclude non-Hindi speaking regions, especially the northeast.

Exemptions for Forest Land:

Alongside rail lines or public roads leading to habitation or amenities up to 1,000 sq. metres.

Within 100 km of international borders for “national importance” projects.

Up to 10 hectares for security-related infrastructure.

Up to 5 hectares in areas with left-wing extremism.

Land not marked as forest on government records after October 25, 1980.

Limiting the Act:

Only applies to land notified before October 25, 1980. This challenges the 1996 Supreme Court’s Godavarman judgment.

Definition Changes:

Includes man-made constructions like zoos, safari parks, and eco-tourism under forestry activities.

Power to Central Government:

The Bill gives more powers to the central government, even though forests were included in the Concurrent List of the Constitution.

What are the implications of this change?

Decreased Forest Cover: Exemptions can reduce India’s forest area.

Biodiversity at Risk: Relaxations threaten fragile ecosystems, like the Aravalli hills.

Indigenous Communities: Changes may infringe on the land and rights of these communities, especially in the northeast and central India.

Legal Conflicts: Limits challenge the 1996 Supreme Court’s Godavarman judgment.

Zoos and Parks: They aren’t natural forests but are now under forestry activities.

Tensions in Governance: More central government power could strain relations with states.

[7. The debate on data](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The debate on data**” published in “The Hindu” on 1st August 2023.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth development and employment.

News: The author discusses concerns over India’s statistical system and the accuracy of its data. Once admired globally, the system’s reliability has declined. There are issues with data credibility, multiple agencies providing conflicting data, and delays in publishing essential data. The author emphasizes the need for an overhaul to provide credible data for better policymaking.

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What are the major issues with India's statistical system?

Major issues with India's statistical system:

Data Credibility:

Surveys, like household ones, face credibility questions.

Concerns about samples selected and non-response from households.

EAC-PM paper says urban data isn't captured well.

Conflicting Data Sources:

Different agencies give different numbers for the same indicators.

Example: Manufacturing data from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs' MCA21 portal differs from the Annual Survey of Industries.

A 2019 report found 36% of MCA21 companies, used for GDP, were not traceable or classified properly.

System Competence:

Delays in conducting and publishing surveys.

Example: Processed data of completed surveys withheld, hindering assessments of poverty.

Macroeconomic data like wholesale price series and consumer price index are overdue for revisions.

Data Non-availability:

2021 Census yet to happen.

Policymakers use thin samples, like NITI Aayog's 2023 index based on 6 lakh households, while India has over 30 crore households.

What should be done?

Improve Data Credibility:

Use realistic samples to reflect the transforming economy.

Re-examine definitions, like 'urban', to ensure accuracy.

Standardize Data Sources:

Address issues like the MCA21 portal's glitches and inaccuracies.

Reduce conflicting data from different agencies.

Enhance System Competence:

Timely conduct and publication of surveys.

Revise outdated macroeconomic data series.

Transparent Data Dissemination:

Move beyond dashboards for clear data sharing.

Review Past Recommendations:

Revisit reports, like the Rangarajan Committee Report (2001), to assess and implement past suggestions.

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8. [Success with chips will take much more effort](#)

Source: The post is based on articles

“Success with chips will take much more effort” published in Live Mint on 1st August 2023 and

“Chip tactics: on India’s bid to attract major global chip manufacturers” published in The Hindu on 1st August 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Industrial Policy

Relevance: challenges associated with establishing semiconductor industry in India

News: Taiwan has been a cause of tussle between China and the West, due to its significance in manufacturing advanced microchips for digital devices. India has also entered into the race to become a supplier of advanced microchips.

How is India trying to become a supplier?

Despite the setbacks faced by India in failed [Foxconn-Vendanta venture](#), the PM has still taken efforts to move ahead to attract investment for the establishment of semicon fab units.

At the [Semicon India 2023 conclave](#), PM offered 50% financial backing to companies looking to establish chip manufacturing facilities in India including offer for low corporate tax rates.

US-based companies like AMD and Micron have shown interest in investing in India to cover their supply risks. However, looking at the the challenges, it remains uncertain if India can become a significant global player in the chip industry.

What are the challenges with India in becoming a leader in the semiconductor industry?

Lack of Capabilities: Chips are of various kinds and manufacturing of sophisticated chips is dominated by Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company (**TSMC**).

While a few other companies can produce these chips, catching up with TSMC’s capabilities is challenging.

Supremacy of the Advanced Economies: The US has shifted away from free trade and adopted an inward industrial policy, **under the Chips Act to enforce technology denial to China**. China also has its local chip fabrication projects.

The U.S. has also announced \$52 billion in financing support and drawing over \$200 billion in commitments. Intel alone has committed \$80 billion in investments across the European Union.

In India, a \$10 billion production-linked incentive scheme was introduced, however, a \$20 billion venture by Vedanta and Foxconn failed.

Therefore, while India has an opportunity to establish a modest chip-making ecosystem, **becoming a global supplier would remain a challenging task given the geo-strategic interests of the advanced economies.**

Must Read: [Semiconductor manufacturing in India: significance and challenges](#)

What can be the way ahead?

Diplomacy: Diplomacy could play a significant role in India’s bid to join the global chip race. Indian Foreign Minister S. Jaishankar encouraged global chip investors **to optimize globalization** by investing in chip fabrication units in India, combining the advantages of offshore production with risk reduction goals.

However, **India’s best chance of becoming a major player in the chip industry lies in its own R&D efforts.**

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Efficient Policy Framework: To encourage semiconductor investments and attract other investors, India must support Micron through its incentives. Additionally, India also needs a stable operating environment with predictable policies framework and trade linkages with global markets to attract investors.

9. [Recalibrating India's clean cooking strategy](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "**Recalibrating India's clean cooking strategy**" published in "**The Hindu**" on **1st August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Infrastructure: Energy

Relevance: Issues related to cooking fuels

News- The article explains the issues related to LPG adoption in India and need for alternate clean cooking fuels.

What are efforts by the central government to improve LPG adoption in poorer and rural households?

The **Grameen Vitrak Yojana** was launched in 2009. With its help, the **rural distributor base** has grown from 18% to 60% of the total LPG distributor base today.

The **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana** has provided more than 9.5 crore new households with LPG connections since 2016.

What are issues with LPG adoption in India?

LPG consumption saw an **absolute reduction** in FY23 after years of steady growth.

As per **Council on Energy, Environment and Water data**, the share of Indian households using LPG as the **primary cooking fuel** had risen to 71% in 2020 from 33% in 2011.

However, COVID-19 pandemic, the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the resulting volatility in crude and product prices on the other, have impacted **universal use of LPG** in Indian households.

In 2020, **subsidy for LPG consumption** was withdrawn for all consumers. **Average refill rates** for active non--PMUY consumers are in slow decline. **40% of PMUY consumers** get two or less refills in a year now.

India's dependence on **imported LPG** has steadily increased to over 64% in FY23 .

Way forward-

India's clean cooking policy must adopt **clean- cooking technologies**. **LPG- only strategy** needs a relook. **Electric cooking**, including **induction cooktops**, can be adopted.

Rural households have the potential to switch some of their **cooking requirements to electricity**. According to a **study conducted by CEEW**, cooking with electricity remains more **cost-effective** than using LPG even at a high tariff of ₹8 per unit of electricity.

In urban areas, around 10% of households already employ **electric appliances for their cooking needs**. They can set an example for the **larger transition** in rural regions.

One possible approach is gradually **increasing LPG prices** beyond a certain threshold. This strategy could displace LPG in higher consumption groups. It will create a demand for **new e-cooking technologies and models**, and trigger a **domino effect of adoption**.

The initial demand from t could drive the growth of the domestic **manufacturing ecosystem for e-cooking technologies**.

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To support this transition, **targeted assistance** should be provided to manufacturers. They can be encouraged to focus on **efficiency and design** catering to the needs of Indian households.

There is a requirement for **financial support and business strategies** that recognize the significance of India's **clean cooking shift** by taking into account its **positive impact on climate and air quality**.

10. [Express View on India's economy: Sweet and sour](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Express View on India's economy: Sweet and sour**” published in the “**The Indian Express**” on **1st August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and growth

Relevance: Growth prospects of Indian economy

News- The article explains the present economic scenario

Which indicators show a favourable economic situation?

The IMF has recently upgraded its projection for the country's **economic growth to 6.1%**. **Inflation** has been kept below the upper limit set by the central bank's **inflation targeting framework**.

India's **foreign exchange reserves** are at approximately \$600 billion. The government has also successfully maintained its investment in **infrastructure development** throughout the nation.

MNCs are increasingly considering India as a **viable option** in their business strategy, often referred to as the “**China plus one**” approach.

What are challenges for economic growth?

Economic growth has been **uneven**, leaving significant segments of the population with **limited benefits**. Lower sections have not experienced **substantial improvements**, especially after the Covid pandemic.

Several indicators show signs of distress. **Real wages** in rural areas have remained nearly stagnant, and more households are resorting to work opportunities provided by the MGNREGA compared to pre-pandemic levels.

FMCG companies have not witnessed significant volume growth in consumer staples. Two-wheeler sales remain below pre-Covid levels, and **non-suburban railway traffic** has declined.

Way forward-

Complacency is not an option. While some countries have experienced periods of growth, only a small subset has achieved **sustained high growth rates** over several decades.

According to a recent study conducted by economists at the RBI, the Indian economy must maintain a **growth rate of 7.6 per cent** over the next twenty-five years to attain high-income status by 2047.

The policy framework must be designed with the aim of enhancing the country's **growth prospects over the medium to long term**. This calls for **focused and urgent action** to ensure progress in the desired direction.

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11. Core comfort – On Infrastructure development in India

Source– The post is based on the article “**Core comfort**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **2nd August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Infrastructure

Relevance: Core sector of economy

News– Output at India’s eight core sectors strengthened in June.

What are some facts and statistics related to core sector output?

The overall **year-on-year growth** in production estimated at a five-month high of 8.2%.

Seven of the sectors, including steel and cement and electricity, achieved high growth. Steel was the best performer. **Steel output** was increased by 21.9%.

The growth in **Cement sector** was in double-digit. It reflects the continuing momentum in demand.

Steel grew 15.9% and 12.2%, respectively, over the April-June period in the fiscal first quarter. **Infrastructure sector** is key factor in growth of these two sectors

As per Controller General of Accounts data, **total capital expenditure** by the Centre in June increased by 62% year-on-year to ₹1.10 lakh crore.

Electricity growth was strongest in four months despite a cyclonic storm that impacted Gujarat and reduced the demand.

Coal output also increased by 9.8% in June. The growth in first-quarter’s production was 8.7%.

What are areas of concern?

The country is still heavily dependent on **crude imports** for its overall fuel needs. The crude oil production contracted by 0.6%.

Crude oil, in addition to refinery products, carries the **most significant weight of 28%** on the index. It experienced a **consecutive decline**. It highlights the ongoing challenges faced by the entire oil sector due to **regulatory inconsistencies**.

12. Climate finance adds another layer of inequity to climate change

Source– The post is based on the article “**Climate finance adds another layer of inequity to climate change**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **2nd August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Environment – Climate Change

News– The article explains the position of various countries on carbon dioxide emissions, investment in climate related activities and climate vulnerability.

What are facts and statistics related to carbon dioxide emissions of various countries?

According to the Institute for **European Environmental Policy**, the target baseline for **carbon dioxide emissions** to restrict global warming to 1.5° Celsius is **2.3 tonnes per capita**.

However, the current **global average emissions per capita** have been twice this target. It has remained above **4.7 tonnes per capita** since 2010. Notably, Africa and India have consistently maintained emissions below this target.

China surpassed the **global average** in 2004 and steadily increased its emissions to 8 tonnes per capita by 2021. It is now **at par with Europe and Oceania**.

The overall **emissions of the UAE and the U.S.** have declined. But these countries still had the **highest emissions per capita**. These are 21.8 tonnes and 14.9 tonnes, respectively.

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What is the position of countries on investment in climate activities?

In 2019 and 2020, Sub-Saharan Africa led in **climate-related investments**. They allocate **1.3% of its GDP** to such activities.

East Asia and the Pacific followed closely with **1% of their GDP**. South Asia allocated 0.9%. The **U.S. and Canada** had the lowest proportionate investment. They dedicate **only 0.3% of their GDP** to climate-related initiatives.

A significant portion of the funds for **climate mitigation and adaptation in the Global South** originates from **international multilateral climate funds**, including the **Green Climate Fund and the Clean Technology Fund**.

These funds mainly come from **economically developed countries**. However, there have been some discrepancies in the disbursement of funds. For instance, since 2003, \$3.3 billion was approved for South Asia, but only \$1.3 billion was disbursed.

What is the position of various countries on climate vulnerability and debt stress?

Climate vulnerability index by country is calculated annually by the **Notre-Dame Global Adaptation Initiative**.

It is calculated by a **country's exposure, sensitivity, and capacity to adapt to climate change**.

The **risk of debt distress** is based on the **International Monetary Fund's Debt Sustainability Framework reports**.

Sub-Saharan Africa has the highest number of countries facing **debt distress**. It is also the region **most vulnerable to climate change**.

Generally, countries categorized as **high risk or in debt distress** are more susceptible to the **impacts of climate change**. In South Asia, three out of the eight countries fall into this category.

13. Forest law amendments: Rich in rhetoric, poor in substance

Source– The post is based on the article “**Forest law amendments: Rich in rhetoric, poor in substance**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **2nd August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environmental Conservation

News – The government is introducing the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill 2023.

What led to the introduction of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980?

It originated in the belief that state governments were very liberal in **diversing forest land for non-forest activities**, particularly for cultivation.

The **42nd constitutional amendment** brought forests into the concurrent list. It enabled the passing of a central Act .

The **Forest Conservation Act, 1980 (FCA)** was introduced due to concerns that state governments were excessively allocating forest land for **non-forest purposes**.

It mandated that states should seek approval from the central government before diverting forests for **non-forest activities**.

What was the effectiveness of FCA in reductions of forest diversion?

In the beginning, there was a notable **decrease in diversions**. However, after 1991, the pressure to permit diversions for **development projects** grew. Only **diversions for agriculture** were restricted.

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Despite this, the **regulatory process** did have some impact in slowing down diversions.

The **compensatory afforestation requirement**, while seeming significant, often resulted in failed plantations.

What was the stand of SC ON forest conservation and its impacts?

In 1996, the Supreme Court, in the **TN Godavarman case**, raised concerns about the consistent application of the **Forest Conservation Act** to all forested areas.

There were regions across the country where land covered by natural forests had not been officially **classified as “forest” under any law**. It led to **unregulated diversion** without FCA oversight.

The Court ruled that the actual vegetation present on the land should determine the **applicability of the FCA**. This decision led to the establishment of a **new legal category known as “deemed forest” land**.

What is the effectiveness of the Forest Rights Act in 2006 in forest conservation?

The Forest Rights Act in 2006 provided **rights over the forests to the local community**. In the **Niyamgiri case** in 2013, the Supreme Court affirmed the local community's right.

However, the **development lobby** has consistently opposed such regulations. Since 2014, there has been a concerted effort to weaken the **Forest Conservation Act (FCA)** and other environmental regulations significantly.

A narrative emphasizing **“delays in clearances”** was constructed to exert pressure. The absence of clear thresholds or criteria in the FCA regarding permissible diversions was exploited opportunistically.

The **Forest Advisory Committee** was openly influenced to prioritize **developmental and national security** concerns above all else. Despite the **Niyamgiri judgment**, consent from local rights-holders was frequently disregarded.

In many instances, district collectors allegedly certified the **absence of community rights**, even when the process of **community rights** recognition under the Forest Rights Act (FRA) had not been initiated.

Moreover, **“linear projects”** like railways and highways were exempted from obtaining community consent by the Environment Ministry.

What are the issues with FCA Amendment Bill 2023?

One amendment restricts the scope once again to land that is officially **“recorded as forest,”** effectively. It nullifies the **impact of the Godavarman order**.

Another amendment grants **complete exemption for “linear projects”** categorized as **“strategic projects of national importance and concerning national security”** within 100 kilometers of the national border.

Almost anything can be labeled as **“strategic” and of “national importance.”**

A third amendment exempts **security camps** in districts affected by Maoist insurgency, despite the **emerging issue of deforestation** caused by such camps in the Bastar region.

A fourth amendment categorizes the **establishment of zoos and safaris** as still falling under a forestry purpose.

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14. What the data hides and shows

Source: The post is based on the article “**Madan Sabnavis writes: What the data hides and shows**” published in **The Indian express** on 2nd August 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning.

News: In this article author discusses the reliability of economic indicators in India. The Purchasing Managers Indices (PMI) and other data often suggest strong economic health, but actual growth rates can be different. Issues arise from limited sample sizes, unaccounted informal sectors, and biases in monthly figures. While data availability has improved, its accuracy for policymaking remains questionable.

How high-frequency economic data add value to economic understanding?

Timely Insights: High-frequency data like PMI is available on the first of every month, offering quick snapshots of the economy compared to other data released with a 40–45-day lag.

Sectoral Performance: PMI informs about the state of industry and services monthly, providing sector-specific insights.

International Comparisons: PMI and similar indices are available for many countries, allowing for international economic comparisons and understanding global trends.

GST Collections: They give insights into tax compliance and the extent of formalization in the economy.

Indication of Demand: While they might have limitations, high-frequency data can still hint at consumption trends and sectoral demand, aiding in economic analysis.

Why do high-frequency economic data tend to be misleading in India?

Limited Sample Sizes: One problem is the limited sample sizes in surveys. For instance, the Purchasing Managers’ Index (PMI) is based on only 400 businesses. Such a small number doesn’t represent India’s diverse and massive economy well. So, while PMI might show strong growth, the real GDP growth can be much lower, as seen last year.

Unaccounted Informal Sector: India’s economy has a big informal sector. However, many economic indicators do not account for this. For example, the National Statistical Office’s data, released 40-45 days later, mainly covers the organized sector, leaving out a large portion of the economy. This omission can lead to inflated growth rates.

Biases in Monthly Figures: Monthly data like export numbers, industrial production, or GST collections can be affected by temporary factors such as commodity prices, compliance changes, or logistical issues. They may not reflect long-term trends, leading to erroneous conclusions if extrapolated.

Over-reliance on Announcements: Investment announcements by companies and Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) signed at summits often don’t materialise. Despite this, they’re taken as positive economic indicators, which can be misleading.

15. Killer On The Train: Why was a railway cop his bosses say was suffering mental health issues, put on armed duty? RPF committee must answer

Source: The post is based on the article “**Killer On The Train: Why was a railway cop his bosses say was suffering mental health issues, put on armed duty? RPF committee must answer**” published in “Times of India” on 2nd August 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate

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News: An RPF jawan assigned to the train shot dead his superior and three others with his assault rifle. The RPF claims the jawan had mental health issues.

What are the reasons for jawans having mental health issues?

The Central Armed Police Forces have reported instances of fratricide linked to personal issues. The job within such forces is acknowledged as stressful.

What are the implications of having jawans on duty with mental issues?

Implications of Having Jawans with Mental Issues on Duty:

Increased Violence Risk: An RPF jawan with mental concerns killed four aboard the Jaipur-Mumbai Express.

Threat to Passengers: The jawan targeted specific community members, causing panic.

Potential Fratricide: GOI stated personal issues often lead to such incidents in Armed Forces.

Public Trust Erosion: Incidents like these can diminish faith in security forces.

What should be done to address this?

Regular Health Checks: Mandatory mental health evaluations for all personnel.

Training Programs: Sensitize forces about mental health issues and their impacts.

Immediate Off-Duty: Temporarily relieve those identified with severe issues.

Support Systems: Establish counseling and therapy facilities.

Review Protocols: Consider private security options in light of the 2015 suggestions of a railway reform commission chaired by Bibek Debroy.

16. Digital public infrastructure ought to girdle the globe

Source: The post is based on the article “**Digital public infrastructure ought to girdle the globe**” published in **Mint** on **2nd August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure

Relevance: About Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

News: Last year, India and the US jointly stated that Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) like UPI could establish a new norm for public-private digital partnerships.

However, during the recent PM’s visit to the US, no discussions were held on this matter.

How is infrastructure usually funded?

Historically, **the public sector has been responsible for funding physical infrastructure** such as road and rail networks. However, **public-private infrastructure partnership has become the new standard.**

For example, in India, the public sector has less than a 10% share in India’s telecom and internet infrastructure.

Similarly, many infra-like elements of online apps necessitate a public-private interface. **It can aid in the establishment of ‘public’ digital infrastructure.**

Moreover, India’s DPI experience is now part of its G20 presidency agenda but doubts about DPI persist among several G20 countries.

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What are the G20 countries' concerns?

These countries have little clarity about India's DPI. Hence, an open discussion is needed about the advantages and possible shortcomings of the DPI with those countries.

What are some of the advantages of the DPI that could be highlighted during the discussion?

First, DPI can reduce market entry barriers and pave the way for the emergence of new industries. PhonePe, Google Pay, and PayTM are three instances that account for more than 95% of all UPI transactions.

These apps have taken use of UPI's open architecture and offered users a service level that ensures high adoption rates.

Second, DPI set-ups are also inclusive by design. **Civil society stakeholders play** a key role in their development.

For instance, the 'Modular Open-Source identification Platform' (**MOSIP**) is an open-source architecture for establishing identification systems

Several countries including Burkina Faso and Madagascar have signed up with MOSIP to design and deploy population-scale identity schemes.

However, new infrastructural paradigms often raise concerns, especially when the public interest is involved.

For this reason, **the Indo-US Joint Statement expresses a bilateral commitment to** "protect privacy, data security, and intellectual property (IP)" in DPI deployment.

Must Read: [India's Digital Public Infrastructure \(DPI\) and associated challenges – Explained](#)

How can privacy and data security concerns with the DPI be addressed?

The model where consent managers, intermediaries who collect approval from website and app users to use and process their personal data can be considered. They also allow users to cancel their consent.

This model empowers users while also holding intermediaries accountable for preventing data leaks and unauthorized third-party surveillance.

Moreover, **India, like the US, has robust IP protections and is a signatory to the World Trade Organization's Trade-Related Aspects of IP Rights.**

Therefore, if a business demonstrates significant skill and creativity in the compilation and organization of a database, it can claim copyright protection of it.

What can be the way ahead?

G20 presidency since 2016 emphasized digital technologies' role in inclusive and sustainable economic development, but adoption has been limited.

Therefore, India's willingness to co-conceptualize the principles that encourage DPI adoption is a positive sign.

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17. [Axe the oil windfall tax: It's outlived its rationale](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Axe the oil windfall tax: It's outlived its rationale**” published in **Live Mint** on **2nd August 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Growth & Development**

Relevance: **concerns with windfall tax**

News: According to a recent government notification, India's windfall tax on petroleum crude has increased significantly to ₹4,250 per tonne from ₹1,600, and diesel now incurs a levy of ₹1 per litre, which was previously nil.

Are these windfall taxes justified?

The windfall tax was first introduced in India's oil sector in mid-2022, shortly after the outbreak of the Russia-Ukraine war. At that time, it was considered justifiable as **it aided in the fiscal recovery of the nation after the pandemic**.

Since the extra profits earned by the oil companies arose from external factors rather than any strategy, **windfall taxes appeared reasonable and beneficial for the government**.

However, despite the economic recovery, these taxes persist, worsening the tax situation in India.

Must Read: [Explained | What is windfall tax and why are countries imposing it on the energy sector?](#)

What are the concerns with these windfall taxes?

First, these taxes are being levied even though price of crude has decreased below early war levels, representing normalcy.

Second, the fortnightly tax review on oil and diesel is perceived as a means to extract revenues from the sector.

This state intervention results in business uncertainty and distorts not only the oil industry's operations but also India's energy outlook.

Third, state intervention also raises concerns about attracting investments for the green transition in India, given the lack of policy stability.

Hence, the state intervention to control retail fuel prices has failed to allow market forces to reshape the sector. Any such reform becomes more complex due to the frequent changes in windfall taxes.

What can be the way ahead?

First, taxes tend to become permanent. Therefore, it has been more than a year since the windfall taxes, and it requires them to be rolled out.

Second, the hydrocarbon sector should be protected from other taxes and integrated into the GST regime.

Third, a system of carbon pricing should be implemented in the oil sector. However, before implementing such a system, there is a need to address the current complex tax liabilities in the sector.

18. [Electricity: Getting the timing right](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Electricity: Getting the timing right**” published in “**Business standard**” on 3rd August 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- infrastructure (energy)

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News: In this article author is discussing a new electricity pricing system in India called Time-of-Day (ToD) tariff. This system changes prices based on demand, encouraging less use during peak hours. Smart meters are needed for this and could help manage renewable energy sources better.

What is Time-of-Day (ToD) tariff?

Time-of-Day (ToD) tariff is a system that changes electricity prices based on demand throughout the day.

During peak usage hours, electricity costs more. During off-peak hours, it's cheaper.

The aim is to encourage consumers to use less electricity when demand is high.

This system is being introduced in India in 2024 for commercial and industrial users and in 2025 for other users.

ToD tariffs are already used in many countries, including the US, UK, and Japan.

For this system to work, smart meters are needed to track electricity use every 15 minutes.

What are the benefits of Time-of-Day (ToD) tariff?

Shifts Demand: ToD tariff incentivizes consumers to use electricity during off-peak hours, reducing strain during high-demand periods.

Improves Grid Management: Helps in managing fluctuations in renewable energy sources like solar and wind.

Saves Money for Consumers: Those who adjust their usage to off-peak times can save money.

Supports Renewable Energy: India's shift towards renewables benefits from ToD. For instance, using electricity during "solar hours" will be cheaper.

Helps Climate Goals: By optimizing renewable energy usage, India moves closer to its target of 65% energy capacity from non-fossil fuels by 2030.

Consumer Empowerment: Allows consumers to actively participate in energy decisions, rewarding those who adjust their consumption based on varying rates.

Boosts Renewable Integration: Encourages using more renewable energy when it's abundantly available, aiding in grid integration.

What are the limitations of Time-of-Day (ToD) tariff?

Increased Complexity: ToD pricing makes billing more complicated. Consumers need to track their usage across different times.

Behavioural Changes Needed: Consumers must adjust habits, like when they charge vehicles or use appliances.

Higher Costs at Peak Times: If users can't change their habits, they'll pay more during peak hours.

Depends on Smart Meters: ToD's success relies on the widespread installation of smart meters. India has a target of 250 million smart meters by 2026.

Possible Resistance: Not all consumers may be willing or able to adjust their usage patterns.

Storage Challenges: Renewable energy has storage issues, making constant supply hard, despite ToD incentives.

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19. [The trajectory of progress must change](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The trajectory of progress must change**” published in the “**The Hindu**” on **3rd August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance: Issues related to global economic development

News– The article explains the challenges faced by the global community and potential solutions to these challenges.

What are the challenges faced by the global community?

The state of **global governance** is concerning. The world is experiencing **divisions and conflicts** among nations, leading to wars. There are issues of **rising inequalities**. Migrants are risking their lives in search of safety and improved living conditions.

The current path humanity is on is **unsustainable**. Economists often use **statistical data** to argue that poverty is decreasing and incomes are rising for everyone. However, it is essential for them to observe the **ground realities**.

Earth is experiencing **continuous warming**. The current **consumptive model of economic growth** is unsustainable.

Employment instability is on the rise, even in wealthy nations.

In 2015, the world community adopted the 17 UN **Sustainable Development Goals**.

Not all 17 issues are prevalent in every country. For instance, **island nations** face immediate life-threatening problems related to the oceans, while **landlocked countries** may not experience the same issues.

What are the potential solutions to challenges faced by the global community?

More economic growth will not solve the **global issues**. Economic growth must transform into a **sustainable and equitable approach**.

As per Einstein, persisting to address systemic issues with the same flawed methods that caused them is **irrational**. He advocated for a **new paradigm in global governance**.

It is evident that a single global solution for **environmental, societal, or economic challenges** cannot be **universally applied**. Instead, **tailored and localised solutions** are necessary. **One-size-fits-all approaches** cannot adequately address the diverse array of challenges we encounter.

These solutions should encompass a **combination of approaches** to tackle **economic, environmental, and social challenges** collaboratively.

The McKinsey Global Institute recently published a comprehensive report titled “**Pixels of Progress: A granular look at human development around the world**”.

It delves into the actual progress experienced on the ground. It goes beyond the **conventional statistical methods and GDP**.

The report focuses on **life expectancy and incomes**, to assess the **well-being of individuals**. Surprisingly, the findings reveal that only 20% of the progress observed can be attributed to the country-level GDP growth.

The vast majority, **80% of the progress**, is intricately tied to **local factors and specific conditions**.

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What is the approach of India for resolving the challenges faced by the global community?

As the chair of the G-20, India has put forward a vision of **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**. It aims to foster **global unity** and improve conditions for all individuals worldwide.

India has also introduced an approach known as **LiFE to the G-20**. It advocates for **synchronised efforts** among **various stakeholders** at all levels, underpinned by **collective actions** across society.

Principle 7 of LiFE emphasises the importance of acknowledging and enhancing the contributions of local communities, local and regional governments, and **traditional knowledge** in promoting **sustainable ways of living**.

20. Deep tech startups taking brave risks

Source– The post is based on the article “**Deep tech startups taking brave risks**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **3rd August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance: Issues related to manufacturing sector

News– The article explains the progress on startups and deep tech startups in India.

What is the progress of India in the area of startups?

In the past decade, the Great Indian Startup Boom has generated a **thriving entrepreneurial ecosystem** in India. It is led by **young entrepreneurs** and supported by the government’s Startup India initiative.

This phenomenon extends beyond **metropolitan cities**. **Entrepreneurs from suburban and rural areas** are adopting it.

Presently, the government recognizes **over one lakh startups**. Nearly half of them are originating from **Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities**.

How deep tech startups are making significant progress in India?

The Startup movement has evolved beyond **consumer Internet and e-commerce**. It has now expanded to **deep technology domains** like space and remote sensing, artificial intelligence, robotics, biotechnology, drones, defense, telecommunications, semiconductors.

IIT Madras’s Research Park, has incubated over **200 deep tech companies** valued at more than ₹50,000 crore. It includes those in space and aviation; C-CAMP, and the National Chemical Laboratory’s Venture Centre.

It demonstrates how science from **publicly-funded institutions** can be made accessible to citizens and consumers through startups.

The industry has shown a clear inclination towards investing in **deep-tech startups** and acquiring well-established scaled technologies.

This trend is supported by the acquisition of **deep tech startups** by prominent **Indian legacy corporations**. For instance, the Tatas acquired Saankhya and Tejas Networks, Reliance acquired Faradion, and Hero Motors purchased equity in Ather Motors.

Way forward

The government should support the **second phase of entrepreneurship, a Startup India 2.0**. This support must come through two routes-

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- There should be a significant increase in the **availability of risk capital** for deep tech startups. The government should prioritize these sectors and allocate more resources to the existing **SIDBI Fund of Funds**.

The industry should redirect and enhance their **research funds** to support the financing of deep tech startups.

- There is a need to facilitate the widespread adoption of **domestically developed technologies** through **mass procurement**. More **coordinated efforts** across the entire government are required.

Industry players and industry bodies can contribute by promoting the **adoption of locally-made technologies**.

This can be achieved through **collaborative efforts** in incubators to co-create products and solutions, conducting **rapid testing and certification processes**, and providing support for **large-scale procurement of innovative goods**.

21. [The contours of India's 'formal jobs' crisis](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“The contours of India’s ‘formal jobs’ crisis”** published in the **“The Hindu”** on **3rd August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and employment

Relevance: Statistics on employment

News– The article explains the EPF numbers on employment in India. It also explains the issues related to employment and employment statistics in India.

What is the employment scenario in India as revealed by EPFO data?

The **monthly enrolment data of the Employees’ Provident Fund (EPF)** typically indicates a rise in contributors.

EPFO annual reports talk about the regular contributors. **Regular contributors** refer to employees who are enrolled in the EPF scheme and consistently make PF contributions throughout the year.

EPF Organization’s annual reports indicate that the number of **regular contributors** to the scheme has shown little to no growth. It has even declined in recent years in some stances.

Between 2012 and 2022, the count of **regular contributors** witnessed a **substantial increase from 30.9 million to 46.3 million**.

However, the growth in the number of regular contributors has **significantly slowed down** over the past five years. From 2017 to 2022, the count of regular contributors only **marginally increased from 45.11 million to 46.33 million**.

This growth occurred during a period when **overall EPF enrolments** escalated from 210.8 million to 277.4 million.

What can be inferred from EPFO data on employment?

The number of individuals enrolled in the EPF is generally expected to be higher than the count of regular contributors due to issues like **duplication and outdated membership data**.

However, it is concerning that in recent times, the gap between these two figures has been widening.

EPF data suggests that over the past five years, there has been a mere **net creation of 1.2 million formal jobs**.

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The **divergence between EPF enrolments and regular contributors** implies that a significant portion of EPF enrolments is associated with jobs of a **temporary, subcontracted, or casual nature**.

What are challenges related to employment in India?

India is witnessing a growth in **employment opportunities**, but most of these jobs are not **formal, stable, or well-paid**.

Numerous highly qualified young individuals compete for a limited number of **public or private sector job openings**.

The stagnation in formal employment can partly be attributed to the impact of the pandemic. The **COVID-19 crisis** led to a decline in the number of EPF contributors,

What are issues related to employment statistics in India?

Earlier, the EPFO used to release **monthly reports on regular contributors**. However, when the media highlighted the decline in EPF contributors, the EPFO disputed its own data and ceased to publish the **monthly data series**.

The Indian government has shown neglect towards other potential sources of formal employment and labor data.

For instance, the **Directorate General of Employment and Training (DGET)** used to collect employment market information, but it hasn't been published since 2013.

Historically, DGET data served as the original source of **formal sector payroll employment data** in India since the 1950s. The Reserve Bank of India relied on it for **formal sector employment numbers and related calculations**.

22. Forest law amendments: Rich in rhetoric, poor in substance

Source– The post is based on the article “**Forest law amendments: Rich in rhetoric, poor in substance**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **2nd August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment. GS3- Science and Technology

News– A new genetically modified (GMO) corn varietal called ‘smart corn’ has been introduced by Bayer. This is designed to withstand the increasingly costly pressures of climate change.

What are some facts related to GMO corn developed by Bayer?

Bayer genetically engineered the corn plant by introducing a **foreign gene** that **suppresses the production of gibberellic acid, a plant growth hormone**. As a result, the corn can now produce the same quantity of fruit on significantly **shorter and stronger stalks**.

Purpose– It is specifically developed to combat **environmental challenges**.

Climate change has led to more **severe and costly damage** to corn and soy crops due to **intensifying high-wind storms**. In the United States, these storms are known as **derechos**. They have caused **immense devastation** to farms in the Midwest.

In 2020 alone, with winds reaching 160 kmph, they caused billions of dollars worth of destruction across millions of acres of crops.

As a result, there is a growing demand for a crop variety characterized by **shorter and thicker stalks**, providing **better resistance** against these high-wind storms.

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What are other recent notable crop varieties designed for climate adaptation?

Last year, the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) granted approval for HB4. It is a **novel wheat variety** developed to **withstand drought conditions**.

It was achieved through the incorporation of a **gene sourced from a sunflower**. This wheat variety is pioneered by the **Argentine company Bioceres**.

In a recent development, **Nutrien**, a prominent fertilizer company, revealed its intentions to distribute a new **genetically modified soybean created by the startup ZeaKal Inc.**

This genetically modified soybean includes a **foreign gene that enhances photosynthesis**. It enables the crop to capture more carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

What are issues related to newly developed GM crops like smart corn?

This **innovative adaptation** allows policymakers, investors, and voters to **evade the core issue of climate change**. While new approaches to adapt to the climate crisis are appreciated, they should **tackle the problem at its source**.

These innovations cannot completely solve all climate-related challenges faced by farmers.

Bayer's smart corn may not be sufficient to overcome problems caused by derechos, which can bring **heavy rains** leading to machinery sinking in the fields.

Additionally, excessive rainfall can **saturate plant roots**. It will cause them to **rot and perish**, regardless of the **corn's height**.

Moreover, there is the issue of **rising temperatures**. Future agriculture will require plants engineered not only for **wind resistance** but also for **resilience to drought, heat, and floods**.

Way forward-

These plants must be capable of **enduring changing seasons, temperature fluctuations, and invasive pests**. The crops of tomorrow won't rely on just **one foreign gene**. But, they will need a **multitude of genetic modifications**.

23. Haryana violence was preventable. Why did it happen?

Source: The post is based on the article "**Monu Questions – Haryana violence was preventable. Why did it happen? What do such incidents around business hubs cost?**" published in **The Times of India** on 3rd August 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Internal Security

Relevance: About communal clashes in Haryana

News: Recently, communal clashes took place in Nuh, Haryana which raised various concerns over the state administration.

What are the different issues arising out of the clashes?

The clashes that erupted in the Nuh spread to Gurugram where many big companies are situated. **This raises concerns about the lack of preventive measures by the state administration.**

The Chief Minister referred to a "conspiracy," as explanation for the violence **but the state failed to prevent the "conspiracy"**.

Both sides had access to weapons, raising questions about the police's knowledge and action. The police's lack of knowledge about the video's origin and failure to remove it in time also raises questions.

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Despite the Supreme Court's directive to prevent hate speech and violence, VHP and Bajrang Dal conducted more assemblies in Delhi-NCR.

These organizations, including individuals like Monu Manesar, appear to act without facing consequences, as the state machinery seemingly ignores their actions.

Must Read: [Killer On The Train: Why was a railway cop his bosses say was suffering mental health issues, put on armed duty? RPF committee must answer](#)

What can be done to prevent such incidents?

This lawlessness has severe consequences for India, as it disrupts businesses and deters new investments, impacting the country's economic growth and social harmony.

In order to seize the China+1 opportunity and promote prosperity, **India must tackle the issue and take measures to prevent the recurrence of such incidents.**

The government should also recognize the importance of maintaining peace and stability for the nation's progress.

24. [How a nuclear 'chain reaction' and neighbourhood challenges led to India acquiring its n-weapons](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "How a nuclear 'chain reaction' and neighbourhood challenges led to India acquiring its n-weapons" published in "The Indian express" on 4th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Security challenges

News: In this article author discusses J. Robert Oppenheimer's regret over creating the atomic bomb. The article traces India's nuclear journey, from Nehru's early decisions to Vajpayee's nuclear tests in 1998. Current global tensions around nuclear weapons are highlighted, with India's role in promoting disarmament emphasized.

How did India evolve its nuclear power?

India's Evolution of Nuclear Power:

Initial Approach:

Prime Minister Nehru was against atomic bombs but wanted nuclear power.

Dr. Homi J Bhabha was chosen to lead India's nuclear program.

Reason for Development:

After China's nuclear test in 1964, India felt the need for its own nuclear capabilities.

Early Testing:

India conducted its first nuclear test in 1974 under Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

External Influences:

In 1985, US President Reagan informed Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi about Pakistan's nuclear capabilities.

Rajiv Gandhi then began considering developing India's own bomb.

Further Testing and Evolution:

Prime Minister Vajpayee oversaw nuclear tests in 1998.

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These tests were a response to perceived threats from China.

Diplomatic Moves Post-Testing:

India engaged with the US, resulting in a strategic partnership involving technology cooperation.

What is India's current stance on nuclear power?

India's Current Stance on Nuclear Power:

Political Utility Emphasized:

After the 1998 tests, India highlighted the political benefits of its nuclear actions.

Despite international criticism, these tests boosted India's strategic autonomy in decision-making.

Strategic Partnerships Formed:

Talks between Jaswant Singh and Strobe Talbott solidified the India-US relationship.

This led to the Indo-US nuclear deal, promoting cooperation in defense and technology sectors.

Promotion of Peace and Deterrence:

India's nuclear weapons are primarily for deterrence.

In the 2019 Balakot surgical strike, even though India had nuclear capabilities, it opted for conventional warfare, ensuring peace.

Global Leadership in Disarmament:

Ahead of the G7 summit in Hiroshima, Japan emphasized a nuclear-free world.

As the G20 chair, India has the moral authority and opportunity to spearhead efforts in nuclear disarmament.

Overall, India maintains a careful balance between demonstrating its nuclear capabilities and promoting global peace.

What's the Global Perspective on Nuclear Weapons?

Oppenheimer's Remorse:

Oppenheimer regretted his role in creating the atomic bomb.

He believed it would end wars, but it started a US-USSR nuclear arms race.

Cold War Impact:

After the bombings in Japan, a nuclear race began, defining the Cold War era.

Current Tensions:

President Putin uses strong nuclear rhetoric regarding the Ukraine conflict.

India has voiced concerns over such aggressive postures.

Push for Disarmament:

Japan's Prime Minister, Fumio Kishida, seeks a world without nuclear weapons.

India, being the G20 chair, can lead global disarmament initiatives.

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25. Lessons from a load carrier

Source: The post is based on the article “Lessons from a load carrier” published in “Business standard” on 4th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Security challenges and their management in border areas;

News: The author highlights the Indian Army’s use of Stallion vehicles and their costs. He suggests standardizing military gear for easier logistics. The article promotes involving civilian networks in military logistics and using retired military staff for maintenance. The aim is efficient logistics management.

How would the Indian army be able to standardize a load carrier?

The Indian Army can standardize a load carrier as follows:

Single Vehicle Type: Choose mainly one type of vehicle, like the Stallion by Ashok Leyland, which is already heavily used by the army. For example, the army operates about 50,000 Stallions today.

Commonalities: Even if different vehicles are used, ensure they have basic similarities with the primary chosen type. Like, base vehicle types should have common spare parts with marginally different types.

Reduce Spare Parts Inventory: By standardizing, the army can reduce the number of spare parts needed. For instances, the Soviets simplified logistics by using standard parts across different vehicles.

Involve Civil-Retail Network: Use Ashok Leyland’s wide truck network to simplify delivery and maintenance processes. Like, the Vehicle Factory Jabalpur can anticipate and cater to vehicle service needs through local retailers.

What are the benefits of standardizing a load carrier?

Cost Efficiency: Reduced need for various spare parts. For example, each Stallion costs 230 lakh, with a yearly fleet renewal of about 21,500 crore.

Simplified Logistics: Easier inventory management and reduced complexities. Like, Soviet Union simplified their military logistics by using standardized parts across different equipment.

Maintenance Predictability: Easier to anticipate servicing needs and spare parts consumption. Such as, Vehicle Factory Jabalpur can pre-ship components based on anticipated consumption.

Civil-Retail Involvement: Opportunity to involve local retail networks for better delivery and maintenance. For example, Ashok Leyland’s network can be used for transporting Stallions directly to military units.

Re-employment: Retired military personnel can maintain equipment they are familiar with. Like, Ex-servicemen can service equipment they used during service.

26. Six years of GST: Compensation cess still needs to be sorted out

Source– The post is based on the article “**Six years of GST: Compensation cess still needs to be sorted out**” published in the “**mint**” on **4th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Government budgeting

Relevance: Issues related to GST

News– The article explains the issues related to GST compensation cess.

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What are some facts related to GST compensation cess?

The **funding for GST compensation** was sourced from a cess imposed on **specific goods listed in a schedule to the 2017 Act**. These mainly include tobacco, coal-based solid fuels, and fossil-fuelled motor vehicles.

The schedule was also **open-ended**, allowing for the inclusion of any other supplies. This approach represented an **exceptional statutory commitment** to provide additional revenue.

What are facts and statistics related to shortage in cess collection?

Pandemic led to a significant increase in the required compensation while the **collections from the cess** declined. To address this discrepancy, the Centre resorted to **special borrowing** to cover the deficit in GST compensation.

During the 49th meeting of the GST Council in February 2023, the **outstanding payments** for June 2022 amounting to ₹0.16 trillion, were announced.

During the five-year statutory period, states received a total of ₹5.89 trillion in **GST compensation**, averaging ₹1.18 trillion per year.

However, the **average annual revenue** from the cess was only ₹0.96 trillion. It is falling below the **average annual compensation** required.

The **cess collection** for the entire financial year 2022-23 is totaling ₹5.76 trillion. It is still lower than the ₹5.89 trillion payout.

The **shortage in cess collection** was not evenly distributed across all years. There was a surplus in the pre-pandemic year 2018-19. Yet, ₹0.15 trillion of arrears remained unpaid until the beginning of 2022-23.

The likely reason for this delay is the late supply of **audited figures of state revenues**.

What is the government's future plan for cess?

In September 2021, during the 45th meeting of the GST Council, it was proposed to extend the cess until March 2026 to cover the **repayment of the Centre's special borrowing** used to compensate for the pandemic years.

In the most recent meeting, the GST Council recommended **amending the Compensation Act rules** to broaden the **definition of taxable vehicles** under the cess.

Way forward-

GST Compensation Act does allow for a **surplus in the compensation fund** to be divided between the Centre and states in a specified manner. But, once its **statutory function** is fulfilled, it should be **reclassified separately from the Compensation Act**.

There is a need to consider **repurposing and renaming the compensation cess** on items like tobacco, coal, and fossil-fuelled transportation as a **Pigouvian levy** on goods with negative health or climate impacts.

However, the **utilization of the proceeds** from such a climate cess should be guided by experts working in India on climate action. Additionally, the process to **track the effectiveness** of these critical expenditures needs to be carefully designed.

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27. Why is the Biological Diversity Bill facing opposition?

Source– The post is based on the article “**Why is the Biological Diversity Bill facing opposition?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **4th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance: Issues related to global economic development

News– Recently Parliament passed the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2021.

Why are there issues with the Bill?

The Bill provides exemptions for “**codified traditional knowledge**” and the AYUSH industry concerning benefit sharing. It deprives local communities of the advantages related to **accessing biological resources**.

The lack of a precise definition for “**codified traditional knowledge**” opens the door to potential exploitation.

This exemption is regressive because the legislation was initially enacted to guarantee “**fair and equitable sharing of benefits.**”

The Bill replaces criminal offences with **monetary penalties**. It raises concerns about **potential resource exploitation**.

To what extent has the Act been implemented?

According to a 2022 **investigation conducted by the Centre for Science and Environment**, many States lack **data on the funds** received from companies and traders for **access and benefit sharing**.

In cases where money was collected, it was not **shared with local communities**.

A 2016 study conducted by legal researchers revealed **numerous challenges** in various States regarding the **implementation of provisions of the Act**, particularly those related to **access and benefit sharing**.

What is viewpoint of industry about the Act?

The industry has expressed **dissatisfaction with the regulations** and has resorted to **legal action** seeking relaxation.

For instance, in 2016, the **Uttarakhand Biodiversity Board** issued a notice to Divya Pharmacy for violating the Act by using **biological resources** without **prior notification** to the Board.

The company challenged the notice in the Uttarakhand high court, but the court ruled against them.

In 2015, representatives from Gujarat’s Ayurveda industry requested the central government to postpone the **implementation of access and benefit sharing provisions**, seeking relief for the sector.

However, the then Environment Minister stated that the industry had to deposit an amount towards these provisions and **no exemptions** could be granted.

The Bill explicitly mentions that **stakeholders** from various sectors, including the Indian system of medicine, seed, industry, and research sectors, expressed concerns about the need to **simplify, streamline, and reduce compliance burden**.

The objective of the Bill is to create a **favourable environment for collaborative research and investments**.

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28. India needs evidence-based, ethics-driven medicine

Source– The post is based on the article “**India needs evidence-based, ethics-driven medicine**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **4th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and Technology

Relevance: Issues related to traditional system of medicine

News– Supporters of Homeopathy have argued in *The Lancet Regional Health – Southeast Asia* recently for expanding its use by citing demand and decolonisation, disregarding its flaws.

What are issues related to safety and efficacy of Homeopathy?

The **evidence supporting the efficacy** of homeopathy is lacking in strength.

The initial **double-blind randomized controlled trial (RCT)**, conducted and well-documented is known as the **Nuremberg Salt Test (1835)**.

It concluded that the symptoms or changes attributed to the effects of homeopathic medicines were merely **products of imagination and preconceived notions**.

Multiple systematic reviews have consistently found that homeopathic treatments lack **clinically significant effects** across different ailments, population groups, study types.

Recently, researchers discovered that over half of the **193 homeopathic trials** conducted in the last two decades were not registered.

Unregistered trials displayed some **evidence of efficacy**, but registered trials did not. It cast doubt on the **validity and reliability** of the evidence.

The World Health Organization has issued warnings against **homeopathic treatments** for HIV, tuberculosis, malaria, flu, and infant diarrhea. It has asserted that it has no place in their treatment protocols.

There is a growing body of evidence suggesting that homeopathy does not **effectively treat cancers**.

On the contrary, homeopathic treatments have been linked to both **non-fatal and fatal adverse events**, and exacerbation of existing conditions.

What are issues related to standards used in evidence-based medicine for judging the effects of homeopathy?

Supporters of homeopathy argue that the **standards** commonly used in **evidence-based medicine** are not appropriate for evaluating its “**holistic effects**.” However, this claim can be refuted for several reasons.

- The standards used in **evidence-based medicine** are not **arbitrary choices** made by allopathic practitioners for their own benefit.

They are established through **collaboration among a global community** that includes epidemiologists, biostatisticians, quality improvement researchers, implementation managers, and others.

Various disciplines outside of medicine, such as psychology, economics, community health, implementation science, and public policy, have successfully adapted **evidence synthesis methods** to support their claims.

On the other hand, proponents of homeopathy have not been able to develop **valid alternative evidence synthesis frameworks** to test its **efficacy and safety**.

- The argument that **evidence-based medicine** is “**reductionist**” and cannot accommodate holistic approaches is not entirely accurate.

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- **Evidence-based medicine** does not solely focus on establishing **empirical evidence**. It also seeks to explain the **underlying mechanisms** that support the evidence.

However, over the past century, there has been no **substantial evidence** to explain the **proposed mechanisms of action** for homoeopathy.

There is an argument that a **pluralistic approach** in medicine can help to **decolonize medicine**.

However, homoeopathy's introduction in India was during the colonial period. It raises questions about its **traditional tag**, as it was brought in during colonial times for colonial benefits.

Some homoeopathy supporters offer **testimonials from prominent figures** like **Gandhi and Tagore**. However, there is **limited mention** of homoeopathy in Gandhi's writings. There is no evidence that Tagore favoured it.

29. Chawal Is The New Oil

Source: The post is based on the article "**Chawal Is The New Oil**" published in **The Times of India** on **4th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy –Growth & Development

Relevance: About ban on the export of rice

News: Russia's decision to abandon the **Black Sea grain deal** is contributing to the global food price volatility. Further, India's ban on exporting certain varieties of rice is further exacerbating the situation as India has a 40% share of world rice exports.

What are the reasons for imposing a ban on the export of rice?

Political Reasons: There are **political reasons like the upcoming election** which has made the government control the rising prices domestically.

Strategic Reasons: The government is using export restrictions not only for managing domestic inflation but also as a leverage tool.

In 2022, despite the wheat ban, India made exceptions for discretionary export approvals to support neighboring and vulnerable countries.

As a result, Egypt, which imported 80% of its wheat requirements from Russia and Ukraine, became the largest recipients of Indian wheat.

This support from India in the midst of the crisis helped in improving the **bilateral relations** between the two countries.

Hence, India strategically utilized a commodity to safeguard its political interests and it is likely to adopt a similar approach for the recent rice export ban.

Read More: [India's rice export curbs could prove too myopic for its good](#)

What may be the impact of ban on farmers?

The ban may upset those farmers who benefit from high-priced exports.

However, **the government has taken this political risk because the** number of large farmers with surplus for export or to sell under the MSP is relatively small compared to the majority of Indian subsistence farmers.

Moreover, while the MSP offers protection to farmers during periods of low global cereal prices, export curbs serve as a trade-off during years of high global prices.

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What lies ahead?

Using essential commodities, including food for securing geo-political interest is not a new concept. Oil has been often used to secure geo-political interest by the OPEC countries in the response of geopolitical events.

Even the American President Eisenhower used food to support newly independent developing countries and gain their allegiance against communism.

Hence, prioritizing critical international relationships through a focused export program offers India greater benefits than a free market approach in cereals trade.

30. [Cheetah deaths are a setback for the reintroduction project but they do not signal a failure](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Cheetah deaths are a setback for the reintroduction project but they do not signal a failure**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **5th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance: Issues related to Wildlife conservation.

News– The cheetah was reintroduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in September 2022, reinforcing the government’s commitment to conserving our natural heritage.

Which factors led to the reintroduction of cheetahs in India?

Unlike tigers, leopards and lions, the cheetah hunts by **chasing its prey**. Therefore, it removes the sick, old, as well as young from the population. It ensures the **survival of the fittest** and keeps the **prey population healthy**.

Several ecosystems in India do not have tigers. Cheetahs could serve as a **flagship for conservation** there.

What is the way forward for successful reintroduction of locally extinct species like Cheetahs?

There is a need to incentivize **voluntary relocation of communities**, similar to practices observed in tiger reserves.

These efforts require a **sustained allocation of resources** to at least three to five sites over the long term, spanning 25 to 30 years.

Most forest communities prefer to **integrate into mainstream society**, as it grants them access to various amenities and opportunities.

By implementing schemes prudently, the local people can benefit from **community-based ecotourism**, and an increase in real estate activities. These direct economic benefits can significantly contribute to the **well-being of the local communities**.

A scheme is needed which can **compensate for livestock predation** and is transparent. If people benefit economically from having cheetahs in their neighborhood, they will be more tolerant towards the animals. Example is Saurashtra.

India has approximately **one lakh square kilometers of protected areas** within the historic range of the cheetah.

However, individual protected areas alone are insufficient to support a **viable cheetah population** in the long run. There is a need to adopt **innovative approaches** and manage cheetah populations from these sites as a metapopulation.

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This involves artificially moving animals between sites, ensuring **demographic and genetic viability**.

Once the cheetah population reaches a **sustainable level**, they will **naturally disperse and expand** into larger landscapes dominated by human presence.

This **natural dispersal** may lead to the exchange of individuals between various conservation sites. However, each of these sites would require significant investment, ranging from Rs 250 to 500 crore, for restoration as **functional ecosystems**.

Why is there reason for some hope regarding reintroduction of cheetahs?

Critics pointed out that Cheetahs will have difficulty in killing deer, they will be trapped by poachers, killed by leopards and village dogs. **Cheetah mortality** was anticipated. But, no cheetah has died of any of these causes.

Some deaths were **management related** within **enclosed protected bomas**.

Some cheetahs died due to **septicemia caused by skin lesions** that got infected by **maggots**. Southern Africa currently has a cold dry winter. Their **physiological cycle** is still tuned to the **photoperiod of Southern latitudes**.

In Kuno, they experienced a **hot and humid climate**. Their winter fur **accumulated moisture** and the radio collars aggravated the condition making their skin itchy and delicate. **Scratching** resulted in wounds that were infected by maggots.

31. [Incremental injustice – on Places of Worship Act, 1991](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Incremental injustice**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **5th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Polity

Relevance: Issues related to disputed religious structures

News– Recently, the Varanasi District Court ordered the ASI survey of Gyanvapi mosque.

What is the stand of High Court and Varanasi district court on right to worship certain Hindu deities inside Gyanvapi mosque?

Both the High Court and the Varanasi District Court had ruled that the lawsuit filed by certain Hindu devotees to assert their **right to worship** within the mosque precincts was not prohibited by the **Places of Worship Act, 1991**.

The courts justified their decision by stating that the lawsuit solely sought the **right to worship** and did not aim to declare the **building as a temple**.

What are the issues related to the Varanasi District court decision for ordering the ASI survey of Gyanvapi mosque?

The worshippers have filed applications requesting a **scientific survey** by archaeologists to determine whether the Gyanvapi mosque was constructed on the site of a demolished Hindu temple.

Both courts have endorsed the approach of **acquiring official evidence** through the Archaeological Survey of India.

The High Court has rejected all objections regarding the court’s ability to seek **expert evidence** before **framing the issues for trial** and its ability to collect evidence.

However, the courts have not addressed why it is necessary to establish the **date of the structure** when the main claim in the suit pertains to the **right to worship deities**.

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The **request for a survey** and the intention to bring up the question of an earlier structure under the mosque suggest a plan to create circumstances that would enable a **change in its status**.

It is regrettable that the courts are facilitating **motivated litigation** specifically targeting **Muslim places of worship**.

32. Menaka Guruswamy writes on GST on online gaming: Taxing luck, not skill

Source: The post is based on the article “**Menaka Guruswamy writes on GST on online gaming: Taxing luck, not skill**” published in **The Indian express** on 5th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy (taxation)

News: The article discusses a court case where Gameskraft, an online gaming company, challenges a large tax demand. The main issue is whether online games like rummy are based on skill (and not taxable) or chance (taxable). The Karnataka High Court sided with Gameskraft, but the decision will be reviewed by the Supreme Court.

About Karnataka High Court’s decision in Gameskraft

Case Background: Gameskraft, an online gaming company, challenged a GST notice of Rs 21,000 crore.

Main Argument: Gameskraft stated they merely provide an online gaming platform. Prize money is held in a trust and not owned by them.

Key Distinction: The court differentiated between games of skill and games of chance.

Decision: Online games like rummy, which are based on skill, aren’t taxable like gambling activities.

How are games taxed in India?

Basic Principle: Games of skill aren’t taxed, while games of chance are taxable.

Relevant Law: The CGST Act lists lottery, betting, and gambling as taxable under Entry 6, Schedule III.

Finance Act Definition: Section 65B(15) of the Finance Act, 1994 defines “betting or gambling” as staking something of value, especially money, aware of the risk and hope of gain, based on game outcomes or chances of events occurring.

Court Interpretation: Supreme Court judgments have differentiated between gambling activities and games of skill.

For examples:

Rummy: Viewed as a skill game due to memorizing card sequences, so not taxable.

Horse Racing: Seen as a skill game because of trained horses and jockeys; betting is based on assessment.

General Studies Paper – 4

General Studies - 4

1. [A crisis of academic ethics in India](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “A crisis of academic ethics in India” published in “The Hindu” on 31st July 2023.

Syllabus: GS4- Codes of Ethics, Codes of Conduct, Work culture

News: In this article author discusses India’s potential in academic and scientific research but highlights prevalent unethical practices like data manipulation and plagiarism. Many Indian institutions lack ethical codes, and unethical behavior often goes unchecked. This harms India’s global academic reputation. Leadership must address and prioritize ethical conduct for India to truly excel in the global research arena.

What are the reasons for the prevalence of unethical practices in academic and scientific research?

Absence of Ethical Code: Many institutions lack guidelines to handle misconduct.

Easy Data Manipulation: Software makes data manipulation and plagiarism simpler.

Authoritarian Behavior: Those in power can misuse authority, discouraging genuine complaints.

Defensive Academics: Instead of investigating, academics often defend accused colleagues.

Cultural Perspective: Some students see cheating as “helping” rather than dishonesty.

Fear of Losing Control: Leaders see roles as power sources, not responsibilities. Leaders fear getting exposed for misconduct.

Mishandling Opinions: Leaders punish faculty for expressing opinions, curbing independent thinking.

What are the implications of the prevalence of unethical practices in academic and scientific research?

Untrustworthy Research: Manipulated data can’t be trusted, risking technologies and medicines.

Global Perception: India’s academic culture is seen as dishonest internationally.

Student Opportunities: Dishonest image affects students’ global competitiveness.

Leadership Quality: Ethical issues might come from top leadership’s approach.

Suppressing Voices: Faculty face consequences for sharing opinions, limiting free thought.

Emigration of Talent: Unethical environment may push researchers to work abroad.

Compromised Future: India’s potential as a global research leader is at risk if ethics aren’t prioritized.

What should be done?

Implement Ethical Code: Institutions should adopt clear ethical guidelines.

Ethical Training: Provide modules for students and faculty on ethics.

Transparent Investigations: Address misconduct allegations impartially.

Encourage Reporting: Ensure students and faculty can report unethical behavior without fear.

Change Leadership Perception: Promote leaders as responsible guides, not power sources.

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Prioritize Ethics: Institutions should communicate expected ethical standards clearly.

Protect Expression: Safeguard faculty's rights to express opinions without retaliation.

