



9 PM

Compilation

7th to 12th August, 2023

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General Studies Paper – 1

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General Studies - 1

1. [Is India's sugar surplus leading to a crisis?](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Is India's sugar surplus leading to a crisis?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **7th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Economic geography.

Relevance: Issues related to sugar production

News-India became the world's top sugar producer in 2021-2022, surpassing Brazil with a record of 359 lakh tonnes. However, the extensive use of resources in sugar production is depleting rapidly, leading to a potential crisis in the future.

What are the reasons behind excess sugar production?

The **excess production** is a result of **policies and measures** that encourage farmers to prioritize the cultivation of sugarcane.

To ensure the welfare of sugarcane farmers, the Central government has implemented the **fair and remunerative price scheme**. This scheme establishes a **minimum price** that sugar mills must pay to the farmers.

Moreover, state governments offer **significant subsidies to incentivize** the cultivation of sugarcane. These actions are motivated by **political considerations** to win votes in crucial rural areas.

The surplus sugar production has resulted in a notable increase in exports. A record **110 lakh tonnes** was exported during the 2021-2022 period.

However, India's **aggressive export promotion and domestic support strategies** for farmers have raised concerns among other sugar-producing nations like Brazil, Australia.

They filed a complaint with the World Trade Organization and accused India of **violating international trade rules** by offering excessive **export subsidies and domestic support**. The WTO ruled against India, and India's subsequent appeal was also unsuccessful.

What efforts have been made by the government to address this issue?

The Indian government is diverting it to the **production of ethanol**. In the transport sector, the use of ethanol-blended petrol significantly reduces **harmful emissions** from vehicles.

The government launched the **EBP programme in 2003** to reduce crude oil imports and curtail greenhouse gas emissions from petrol-based vehicles.

It started with the modest goal of achieving a **blending rate of 5%**, but the **target set for 2025 is 20%**.

The government also reduced the **Goods and Services Tax on ethanol from 18% to 5%** in 2021. In the same year, of the 394 lakh tonnes of total sugar produced, about 350 lakh tonnes were diverted to produce ethanol.

How does excessive sugarcane cultivation impact groundwater?

Sugarcane requires a **substantial amount of rainfall**, around 3,000 mm. But, in the top-growing States, the **actual rainfall** received is only 1,000-1,200 mm.

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The cultivation of sugarcane necessitates a **significant amount of irrigation**, with approximately **two lakh litres of groundwater** required for irrigating **100 kg of sugar**.

These States are already prone to drought and face **stress on their groundwater resources**. It is indicated by a 2022 report from the **Central Ground Water Board**.

What should be done?

There is a need for **evaluating incentives** that favour sugarcane cultivation over other crops and lead to a **persistent surplus**.

Introducing **fair and comprehensive subsidy schemes** for various crops can encourage farmers to **diversify their crops**. It can achieve a **more balanced distribution** of cultivation, **prevent monocultures**, and ensure a **fair income**.

In the long term, **environmentally responsible sugarcane cultivation practices** must be adopted, with a focus on groundwater conservation.

Use of drip irrigation must be promoted. It can reduce water consumption by up to 70% compared to conventional flood irrigation methods.

Investments are needed in **water-saving and management systems**, including **rainwater harvesting, wastewater treatment, and canal irrigation networks**.

The Central Ground Water Board conducts valuable research and gathers data. But, there are still gaps in understanding **groundwater availability and distribution**. Therefore, it is crucial to seriously consider **investments in groundwater research**.

General Studies Paper –2

General Studies - 2

1. [Opaque subsidies – Govt control returns to the oil sector](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Opaque subsidies – Govt control returns to the oil sector**” published in **Business Standard** on **7th 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 with state regulating oil prices

News: Previously, the government claimed to deregulate petrol and diesel prices and eliminate indirect fuel subsidies, which were seen as positive reforms.

However, it seems that the government has come up with a system by which it continues to control prices at the pump while concealing the subsidies involved.

What efforts have been taken by the government to control prices?

The Union Budget has allocated approximately 30,000 crore rupees to support three state-controlled oil marketing companies (OMCs) in their climate initiatives.

It is expected to balance out the losses the OMCs have faced because of under-recoveries, caused mostly due to unchanged fuel prices when global oil prices changed due to the Russia-Ukraine war.

However, **this capital infusion might also involve the government once again taking a stake in HPCL and controlling the oil prices.**

Hence, cooperative efforts of the three government-owned enterprises to preserve consumer prices and absorb losses **highlight that political factors influence oil prices rather than the free market.**

What will be the impact of the state again regulating the oil prices?

First, it will not only negatively impact future finances but also hinders India’s environmental transition, which was supposed to be funded by investments from existing oil companies.

Second, this could further convince voters that politicians play a role in determining oil prices, strengthening their lack of trust in the free market.

Hence, transparent subsidies, independent of the price actually paid, are the only way out.

2. [The bureaucracy as prosecutor and judge](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The bureaucracy as prosecutor and judge**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **7th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance: Issues related to separation of power

News– The Jan Vishwas Act, 2022 was recently enacted into law by Parliament. It has decriminalised or made “compoundable” offences across 42 legislations.

What are the issues related to Jan Vishwas Act, 2022?

Legislation has largely replaced **criminal imprisonment with monetary penalties.** But it has also shifted the authority to impose these penalties from the judiciary to the bureaucracy.

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For instance, the Jan Vishwas Act amends the Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986, and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, to **substitute imprisonment with penalties**, up to ₹15 lakh. Penalties can be imposed by **designated bureaucrats for specific offences**.

The crucial question is related to granting bureaucracy authority to decide about disputes and **impose penalties**. It is against the **constitutional principle of the separation of powers**.

What is the status of division of powers between executive and judiciary?

The Constitution does not explicitly provide for **division of powers** between the judiciary and the executive. **Article 50** only **directs the state** to achieve such a separation in due course.

However, this separation was not accomplished until several years after the Constitution came into effect. The **criminal magistracy** was included within the **executive branch** at the time of Independence.

In 1970, some State legislatures enacted laws like **The West Bengal Separation of Judicial and Executive Functions Act, 1970**. It led to establishment of a **separation of powers** at the level of the criminal magistracy under the **Criminal Procedure Code, 1898**.

What are various methods used by bureaucracy to encroach upon judicial power?

Several Ministries have established **judicial tribunals** to assume the **judicial responsibilities** that were previously handled by the judiciary. Many of these tribunals were set up in a way that allowed bureaucrats to be appointed as **“technical members.”**

The Union government has created a fresh category of **statutory regulators**, such as the Securities and Exchange Board of India and the Competition Commission of India. These regulators were granted authority to **impose hefty fines** on the private sector.

The Union government has created the **role of adjudicatory officers** in several legislations such as the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002, the Information Technology Act, 2001 and the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006.

These adjudicatory officers were always bureaucrats. They were given powers to either confirm **“attachment orders” for properties or impose penalties on businesses**.

What Indian law says about “judicial function”?

The Supreme Court has made it explicitly clear that a **“judicial function”** must only be carried out by an **independent judicial authority** that is not under the control of the executive.

As of now, there seems to be **limited legal precedent** on whether the imposition of a penalty qualifies as a **“judicial function.”**

However, any process involving **fact-finding**, application of the law to those facts, and the **determination of punishment or compensation** fundamentally constitutes a **judicial function**.

Therefore, the responsibility should lie with the government to **substantiate** its case before an impartial judge to ensure that citizens receive a **fair trial** before any penalty is imposed. The government cannot simultaneously act as a **prosecutor and a judge** in its own case.

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3. [G-20 negotiators face climate change hurdle](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**G-20 negotiators face climate change hurdle**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **7th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Global groupings and agreements

News– G-20 negotiators are now worried about reaching a consensus over climate change issues ahead of the leaders’ summit in September.

Why are G20 negotiators worried?

The concerns have heightened following **two ministerial meetings of the G-20 focused on energy transitions, the environment, and climate** in July.

These meetings failed to reach a consensus on crucial matters such as **emission targets, reducing reliance on fossil fuels, and climate finance**.

These differences spilled over into virtual Sherpa negotiations, where the initial **version of the Leaders’ Declaration** was being discussed last week.

As a result, the **Chairman’s Summary and Outcome documents** included several sections labeled as “**non-agreed paragraphs**” among G-20 members.

What are the contentious issues between G-20 countries related to climate change?

There is division between **developed countries and the developing world** concerning **climate goals and climate finance**.

A major point of contention is the wording related to “**phasing out**” **fossil fuels**. It faced strong opposition from countries like India and Saudi Arabia. These countries preferred the term “**phasing down**” instead.

There are significant differences among members regarding **global emissions targets**.

There were disagreements on the target of **peaking emissions by 2025 and achieving a 60% reduction in emissions by 2035** in comparison to 2019 levels. Developing countries including India did not commit to these targets.

Another contentious matter was related to the **lack of funding** from developed countries, such as the U.S. and Australia. They had promised to provide **\$100 billion annually** starting from 2020.

The **Chairman’s Summary and Outcome document** released in Chennai revealed further disagreements among G-20 members.

One point of contention was the scope of the **Environment and Climate Sustainability Working Group’s mandate** to discuss energy issues, given the existence of a **separate Energy Transition Working Group**.

Additionally, there were differing views on **energy transitions** and how to incorporate them into the document.

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4. [Expanding powers – The registration Bill is as draconian as the old one](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Expanding powers – The registration Bill is as draconian as the old one**” published in **Business Standard** on **8th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance – Government Policies & Intervention

Relevance: concerns with the Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023.

News: Recently, **the Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, 2023** was passed in the Rajya Sabha. It repeals the Press and Registration of Books, 1867.

What are some of the provisions of the Bill?

The Bill simplifies the registration process, excludes scientific and academic journals from its purview, and decriminalizes the offence of filing improper information.

What are the concerns with the Bill?

First, the legislation grants an excessive amount of authority to the press registrar general, a government-appointed official.

Under Sections 4(1) and 11(4) of the Bill, the registrar general is empowered to deny approval or revoke the registration certificate of any owner or publisher who has been convicted by a court for engaging in “terrorist or unlawful activity” or “having done anything against the security of the State”.

Both Sections specify that the definitions of “terrorist act” and “unlawful activities” are outlined in specific clauses of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (**UAPA**), 1967.

However, these terms are phrased in such a way that they can be interpreted broadly or narrowly at the discretion of the authorities.

This brings a sense of ambiguity and makes it possible for any news publication to have its registration cancelled if the registrar general deems it unfit.

Second, the Bill allows the registrar general to enter premises to verify information.

Third, it also allows the registrar general to appoint other agencies to monitor a publication’s functions.

Fourth, the Bill grants the government the authority to establish regulations governing the practice of news publishing.

This has been done to align with the government’s establishment of a “fact-checking unit” as per the **Information Technology Rules of 2021**, which gives the powers to order content to be taken down.

What can be the way ahead?

The government should refer the Bill to a committee for deeper deliberations before the Lok Sabha passes it because in its current form, it cannot be described as an exemplar of Indian democracy in practice.

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5. [Blessed By Beijing – China’s propaganda war is well funded and waged subtly. Centre and states must coordinate](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Blessed By Beijing – China’s propaganda war is well funded and waged subtly. Centre and states must coordinate**” published in **The Times of India** on **8th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: concerns with Chinese growing influence.

News: An NY Times investigation has exposed a complex network of Chinese influence operations worldwide, raising security concerns for India.

What are the findings of the investigation?

The investigation reveals that American millionaire **Neville Roy Singham** is allegedly linked to the Chinese Communist Party’s propaganda efforts.

Singham’s non-profits have funded various entities, including think tanks, political parties, and media abroad, which promote CCP messaging. **In India**, Singham’s network is believed to have supported a news website.

The goal is to shape a positive image of China by establishing networks for generating news, providing false information, and providing funding for seemingly harmless public initiatives.

For instance, Taiwan has recently begun identifying Chinese-sponsored beautification initiatives in its regions.

While these funds are channeled through a contest organized by China’s Fujian province, **the underlying objective is to exert cultural influence on the Taiwanese population**.

Therefore, given China’s massive resources, similar influence operations might be attempted against India.

What measures can be adopted by India?

India has an administrative structure where different components often lack effective communication. Moreover, a notable portion of the population remains underemployed or receives low wages. These factors create openings for Beijing to exploit India’s weaknesses.

Hence, **the Indian government needs to** be more watchful of China’s secret plans, work closely with state governments, and use this as a reason to boost the economy.

6. [Neither the right to privacy nor the right to information](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Neither the right to privacy nor the right to information**” published in “**The Hindu**” and “**It’s My (Digital) Life**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **8th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance: Important Bills and Acts

News– Recently, Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill 2023 was introduced in Parliament.

What is the interrelationship between right to privacy and right to information?

In 2017, a nine-judge Constitutional bench of the Supreme Court reaffirmed the **right to privacy**. This landmark decision set an **international standard**.

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The recently introduced **DPDP Bill 2023** emerged from the discussions around the **right to privacy**.

The **right to information** ensures **access** to government documents to uphold government **transparency and accountability**. This law has played a pivotal role in strengthening **democratic practices**.

These two rights **mutually complement** each other. However, certain tensions exist between the **right to information and the right to privacy**.

For instance, under the MGNREGA, **mandatory disclosure regulations** ensure that workers can oversee expenditures and facilitate public oversight through social audits.

This implies that data about individuals registered under the Act are **accessible** to everyone.

What are issues with the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill 2023?

Data protection- The Bill's purpose is to **establish protocols** for processing **digital personal data**. It acknowledges both individuals' **right to safeguard their personal data** and the necessity of processing such data for **lawful objectives**.

According to **Section 4(2)**, "**lawful purposes**" is defined in the **broadest sense**. It can be for any purpose which is not **expressly forbidden by the law**.

This means that activities like extracting data on worker's wages or pension payments are permitted since they are "**not expressly forbidden.**"

Section 36 empowers the central government to request information from the **Board, data fiduciaries, or other sources** as needed. **Sections 4(2) and 36** combined make our data accessible to both government and private entities.

Undermining RTI- Section 8(1)(j) allows for exemption from disclosure. It is provided when **personal information** has no relationship to any **public activity or interest**, or it would lead to **unwarranted invasion of the privacy** of the individual.

This standard sets a **high threshold for exemption**. It asserts that information which cannot be **denied to the Parliament or a State Legislature** shall not be **denied to any person**.

The DPDP Bill 2023 proposes substituting **Section 8(1)(j)** with merely "**information which relates to personal information.**"

This modification threatens the **integrity of the RTI 2005**. For instance, the current requirement for public servants to disclose their immovable assets could be impacted. Although this information is personal, it serves a **broader public interest**.

Data Protection Board- It will be effectively controlled by the government. The **chairperson and members** are appointed by the central government.

In Europe, the **General Data Protection Regulation** established a **rigorous standard for data protection**. It creates a **robust oversight body** in a society characterized by **universal literacy and high levels of digital and financial literacy**.

Literacy issues- India has the absence of **widespread literacy** and **inadequate digital and financial literacy**, along with an overwhelmed legal system. The likelihood of citizens being able to seek **legal remedies** in cases of **privacy violations** is minimal.

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What should be done to increase the efficacy of data protection board?

It should demonstrate promptness in addressing instances of **personal data breach** that lead to consumer complaints.

Secondly, it should enact a **fundamental transformation** by eliminating the avenues for **evading responsibility** that were previously available.

It should not get entangled in the **intricacies of data controllers, data processors, and data brokers**. Rather, it should focus on holding the entity that initially receives consumer information **accountable**.

It should act swiftly in **imposing and collecting penalties**, which may include fines that can escalate to ₹250 crore and beyond.

Why has data protection become crucial?

Every day, through our **online activities**, we are **generating data**. This involves tasks ranging from managing our finances and settling utility bills to purchasing groceries, insurance, and even booking appointments with doctors, flights, or hotels.

There is **unrestricted circulation of our data**, as it gets passed along without limitations.

For instance, immediately after visiting a car-related website, we are inundated with phone calls, text messages, and social media intrusions attempting to persuade us to buy cars. This underscores the **deep connection between financial and sovereign identity data**.

7. [Consumers can look forward to an era of data privacy](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Consumers can look forward to an era of data privacy**” published in the “**mint**” on **8th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance: Important Bills and Acts

News– Recently, Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Bill 2023 was introduced in Parliament.

How will draft data protection be beneficial for Indian citizens?

It has the potential to reshape **consumer behaviours and their attitudes** towards the businesses they engage with.

Consumers are likely to become more **cautious and attentive** when it comes to the **collection, processing, and storage** of their personal data by businesses.

The Bill now offers an increased level of control to consumers over their personal data. It enables them to **provide or withdraw consent** for specific purposes of data processing.

This provision ensures that consumers are **fully informed** about the ways in which their data will be utilised. Thus, it enhances **transparency in the data practices of businesses**.

Consumers will have the ability to exercise **various other rights** concerning their **personal data**. These include the **right to know** what data is held by a Data Fiduciary, how it is utilised, and with whom it is shared.

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Consumers can also request corrections to their **stored information** or even request its removal. These rights are not restricted to consumers alone. They can also be exercised by a **designated individual** in the event of the data subject's death or incapacity.

The new privacy framework will also establish provisions for **addressing grievances**. It enables consumers to **seek remedies** in cases of **data breaches or unauthorised data processing**. Consumers can approach the Data Protection Board.

It will bring relief from **unwanted communications** such as **spam emails and telemarketing** calls. The intrusive marketing messages are expected to diminish.

This change is expected to transform the **landscape of direct marketing**. Ultimately, consumers will benefit from a **personalised interaction** with companies that engage in marketing their products and services.

What will be its impact on rural areas ?

Language need not be a barrier for non-English-speaking consumers. The Bill has incorporated a provision for **privacy notices** to be available not only in English but also in other languages mentioned in the **Eighth Schedule of the Constitution**.

The envisaged Data Protection Board will act as a **'digital office' for rural inhabitants**. They often face **limited access to legal remedies** in contrast to urban dwellers.

It has the potential to significantly impact people's lives once they comprehend the importance of **securing their personal data**.

Way forward-

This legislation holds the potential to serve as a **potent tool** for nurturing **digital empowerment and inclusivity** across the entire nation.

Individuals across all age groups, including children, youth, middle-aged individuals, and senior citizens, should be **educated about the key aspects** of the Bill.

Efforts to **raise awareness** must encompass all socio-economic strata in both rural and urban areas of India.

Data Fiduciaries must adhere to their newfound **legal obligations**, especially in **rapidly evolving technological domains**.

8. [Command and control- Changes in the law will affect IMs' autonomy](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Command and control- Changes in the law will affect IMs' autonomy**" published in "Business standard" on 8th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education, Human Resources.

News: The article discusses recent changes in the Indian Institute of Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023, which gives the Indian government more control over the Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs). This raises concerns about the institutes' autonomy and potential interference in their functioning.

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What are the major changes in the Indian Institute of Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023?

Director's Appointment: Earlier, the board of governors (BOG) chose the IIM director based on recommendations. Now, they need approval from the "visitor", the President of India.

Search Committee: A member nominated by the visitor will be part of the director search committee.

Chairperson's Nomination: Previously, the board chose the chairperson. Now, the President will nominate them.

Visitor's Powers: The visitor can initiate inquiries in IIMs and issue binding directives based on findings.

Board Suspension: The government can set conditions for suspending or dissolving an IIM's board.

What are its implications?

Government Influence: The government gains significant control over IIMs, especially in the appointment of key roles like directors and chairpersons.

Potential Interference: While the government claims no intention to interfere, the new powers could allow future intrusions into IIM operations.

Autonomy Concerns: The 2017 law prioritized IIM autonomy, but these changes might reverse that, potentially hindering IIMs' adaptability and efficiency.

What should be done?

Preserve Autonomy: Maintain the operational independence of IIMs, as it allows them to adapt quickly and effectively.

Clear Intent: The government should clearly communicate its intentions, ensuring no undue interference in the IIMs' functioning.

Performance Reviews: Reinforce the need for independent reviews every three years to boost quality and encourage competition among IIMs.

Address Functional Issues: While ensuring autonomy, address issues related to director appointments and other functional areas that weren't handled well previously.

Balance: Establish a balance between autonomy and accountability, making sure IIMs use their independence constructively.

Focus on Excellence: Any change should prioritize IIMs' mission of offering top-tier management education and research.

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9. [Ensuring women's right to the city](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Ensuring women's right to the city**” published in “The Indian express” on 9th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- social empowerment & GS2- social Justice

News: In this article author discusses the challenges women face in Indian cities due to lack of gender-responsive urban planning, emphasizing the need for more inclusive and equitable cities that prioritize women's safety, freedom, and the recognition of unpaid care work.

What challenges do women face in Indian cities?

Women in Indian cities face:

Safety Concerns: 52% of women in a 2021 ORF study avoided education or jobs due to safety issues.

Longer Commutes: Women in Delhi travel 27 extra minutes for safer routes.

Public Transport Issues: Only 9% of women in an Ola study felt public transport was safe.

Higher Transport Costs: Women in Mumbai spend 21% more on transport due to safety and multiple tasks.

Low Employment: Only 20% of women are employed compared to 70% of men.

Unequal Care Burden: Women spend 297 minutes daily on housework; men spend 31.

Unpaid Work: Women contribute 3.26 billion hours of unpaid care work daily.

What should be done about it?

Gender-Responsive Urban Planning: Urban planning often ignores women's economic and social realities, leading to exclusion and fear. Design cities that consider the needs of women, children, and the elderly.

Safety over Technocracy: Go beyond just CCTV and apps; adopt a holistic approach to women's safety and inclusion.

Safer and affordable transportation: Improve public transport safety and affordability, considering that only 9% of women find it safe and women in Mumbai spend 21% more time on transport than men. Adopt successful measures like women-only transport, free buses, and helplines.

Recognize Care Work: Given women spend 297 minutes daily on housework, support and value their contributions.

Facilitate Care Infrastructure: Design urban spaces that prioritize childcare, healthcare, housing, parks, and leisure areas.

Community Involvement: Include diverse voices in policy-making, that echoes Jane Jacobs' idea that cities should be created by everyone.

Cities for Well-being: Prioritize areas beyond production and consumption, focusing on overall well-being, like health and education.

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10. [Five years of Ayushman Bharat: A shield for the vulnerable](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Five years of Ayushman Bharat: A shield for the vulnerable**” published in “The Indian express” on 9th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

News: The author discusses India’s healthcare scheme, Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (AB-PMJAY). This program provides free health coverage to millions, reduces medical costs, and ensures quality care.

What are the important features of AB-PMJAY?

Read – [Features of AB-PMJAY](#)

What are the benefits of AB-PMJAY?

Out of pocket expenditure: It supports over 12 crore families, aiming to cover 50% of India’s population. It reduces out-of-pocket expenditure and enhances healthcare accessibility for all. It has saved over Rs 1 lakh crore in treatment costs.

Gender Equality: 48% of treatments under the scheme have been availed by women, promoting equal healthcare access.

Universal Health Coverage: Takes India closer to Sustainable Development Goal 3.8, ensuring quality healthcare regardless of economic status.

Easy Access: Over 27,000 hospitals accept the Ayushman Card for free treatment. Patients can receive care in any state with AB-PMJAY, benefiting migrants.

Fraud Prevention: Uses National Anti-Fraud Unit (NAFU) and state-level units, Aadhaar-based authentication, AI and ML technologies to detect frauds. Over 210 hospitals de-empaneled for violations.

Feedback System: Calls made to patients’ post-treatment to assess service quality.

11. [Climate events and an umbrella for urban health](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Climate events and an umbrella for urban health**” published in “The Hindu” on 9th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

News: The author discusses the increased vulnerability of urban areas, especially slums, to diseases like malaria and dengue after extreme weather events in India. He is emphasising the need for a resilient urban primary health care system and better coordination for an effective response.

Why is there an increase in health vulnerability in urban areas?

Extreme Weather Events: Cyclones, floods, and heavy rains have caused devastation, leading to conducive conditions for water and vector-borne diseases.

Vector-borne Diseases: Diseases like malaria and dengue diseases are more likely to spread in rain-affected areas.

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Poor Living Conditions: Many live in slums or informal urban settlements, which often lack proper sanitation and waste disposal.

Mobility: Movement of people between states can spread diseases.

Economic Vulnerability: Many slum residents work in the informal sector without social security benefits.

Inadequate Healthcare Infrastructure: Urban areas, especially vulnerable ones, receive a tiny fraction of primary health care funding.

What should be done about it?

Rebuild Health Systems: Focus on urban primary health-care resilience, especially in slums and peri-urban areas.

Increase Public Investment: More funds for vulnerable urban regions; a special fund from institutions like the Finance Commission can help.

Coordinate Efforts: States should work together, especially given the movement of people across borders, to manage and mitigate disease spread. Strengthen systems like the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme, making them more comprehensive.

Streamline Governance: Overcome fragmentation in urban health governance for better coordination.

Leverage Lessons from COVID-19: Ensure data sharing, standardize treatments, and regulate costs during health emergencies.

Integrate Frontline Workers: Create multi-purpose health cadres that are accountable to both communities and health systems.

Plan for Climate Change: Recognize the increasing frequency of extreme events and plan public health responses accordingly.

[12. Talking peace in Jeddah: India offers a new perspective](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Talking peace in Jeddah: India offers a new perspective**” published in “**Business standard**” on 9th 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 a peace summit in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, where countries addressed the Ukrainian crisis. It highlights the growing global influence of non-Western nations, Russia’s isolation, China’s role in a potential solution, and India’s stance on territorial integrity.

What were diplomatic developments at peace summit at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia?

Diplomatic developments at the Jeddah peace summit included:

Hosting by Saudi Arabia: It highlights Saudi Arabia’s growing influence, especially after making peace with Iran through China’s interventions.

US and China Attendance: Both countries, having differing views on the Ukrainian crisis, were present.

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Russia's Isolation: It was depicted in the reduced attendance at the Russia-Africa summit, held last month, compared to previous years.

China's Position: Despite its previous 12-point charter, China signaled its intention to play a key role in a Russia-Ukraine settlement.

What role did India play at this peace summit?

Balanced Approach: India refrained from criticizing Russia in UN resolutions.

Preference for Dialogue: National Security Advisor Ajit Doval emphasized dialogue as a solution to belligerence.

Territorial Integrity: Doval stressed the importance of respecting sovereignty and territorial integrity by all nations.

Implicit Message to China: Doval's emphasis on territorial boundaries was likely directed at China, given their border disputes.

13. [Express View on IIM bill: Mis-management](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Express View on IIM bill: Mis-management**" published in **The Indian Express** on **9th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance – Government Policies & Intervention

Relevance: concerns with the Indian Institute of Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

News: Recently, the Lok Sabha has passed **the Indian Institute of Management (Amendment) Bill, 2023**. The Bill increases the government influence over the appointment and removal of directors at Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs).

What are the concerns with the Bill?

The IIM Act, 2017, aimed to elevate these elite management schools to "institutions of national importance" and empower boards of governors to appoint directors of an IIM on the basis of the recommendations of a search-cum-selection committee.

However, **the new legislation subordinates the boards to the IIMs' Visitor** (the President of India), granting the government substantial veto power in the appointments.

If the Bill is enacted, **the Visitor will nominate the board's chairperson**, a responsibility previously held by its members. The government will also define the terms for the board's suspension or dissolution.

The Visitor's expanded authority compromises the institution's autonomy. For instance, the President can institute inquiries and issue directives which will be binding on the IIM management.

Moreover, despite assurance given by the education minister that the government wouldn't intervene in IIMs' operations, the move raises concerns about government influence on IIMs.

Must Read: [Indian Institute of Management \(Amendment\) Bill, 2023](#)

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What can be the way ahead?

There has been criticism regarding the operations of B-schools in the recent year. **For example**, IIM Calcutta experienced a conflict between its Board and Director, revealing concerns over executive powers and conduct.

This necessitates the importance of checks and balances for IIM functioning. However, excessive government involvement might yield negative consequences.

14. [Falling short – on Digital Data Protection Bill 2023](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Falling short**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **9th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance: Important Bills and Acts

News– Recently, The Digital Data Protection Bill, 2023, was passed in the Lok Sabha on Monday.

What are the major provisions of the Bill?

An entity or individual, referred to as the **data fiduciary**, is allowed to process the personal data of an individual for a lawful purpose. It can be done only after obtaining the **data principal’s consent**. It can be processed for **specific legitimate reasons**.

These legitimate reasons are instances in which the data can be processed without obtaining the **data principal’s consent**. This includes situations where government agencies **process the data** to issue licenses, provide welfare benefits, grants, and services.

The Bill also imposes a **responsibility on the data fiduciary** to inform both the **data principal and the Data Protection Board** to assess compliance with the Bill in case of a **breach of personal data**.

What are the concerns related to the Bill?

The Bill does not contain the provision related to the requirement of **informing data principals** about third parties with whom their data might be shared, or specifying the duration for which the data will be stored.

Too much leeway is provided to agencies of the state in the **form of exemptions**.

The **Srikrishna Committee’s Draft Bill in 2018** allowed for **exemptions** to state institutions from acquiring informed consent in matters related only to the “**security of the state**”.

It also suggested **parliamentary oversight and judicial approval** of non-consensual access to personal data.

In the 2023 version, the state is empowered to process data through **wide-ranging exemptions**. The government is allowed to collect information which could be used for **mass surveillance**.

In providing exemption to the state for obtaining , the Bill also does away with **purpose limitation — using the data only for the specified purpose**.

For further reading-

<https://blog.forumias.com/neither-the-right-to-privacy-nor-the-right-to-information/>

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<https://blog.forumias.com/consumers-can-look-forward-to-an-era-of-data-privacy/>

15. [A Hassle Is Born – on Registration of Births and Deaths \(Amendment\) Bill 2023](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “A Hassle Is Born” published in “The Times of India” on **9th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

News– Recently, Parliament passed the Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill 2023.

What are the major provisions of the Bill?

The Bill provides for the birth certificate to be used as a **required document** for **various purposes** such as admission to educational institutions, inclusion in voter lists, and government employment.

The scope of applications is **extensive, formidable, and unlimited**. Acquiring the birth certificate will necessitate the **use of Aadhaar numbers** belonging to both the “parents and informant.”

What are issues with the Bill?

For economically disadvantaged sections and individuals with **lack access to data resources**, this will lead to **exclusion**.

The objective of establishing a more **comprehensive database** of recorded births and deaths is commendable. But, the Bill imposes **new responsibilities** on citizens.

Why does the civil registration system exhibit variations across different states?

This is primarily due to **differences in governance mechanisms**. Additionally, **economic prosperity** also contributes to **significant disparities** within states.

In Bihar, registrations have been reported to be below **optimal levels** even when births and deaths occur in healthcare facilities. **Corruption** is also prevalent.

In other regions as well, **Civil Registration System (CRS) offices** can be **insufficiently distributed, inadequately staffed, and uncooperative**.

What should be done?

Government should improve the **registration infrastructure** significantly.

The **doctrine of proportionality** should be the guiding force. citizens should not be subjected to unnecessary difficulties and risks.

16. [The grammar of commerce in a new age of geopolitics](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “The grammar of commerce in a new age of geopolitics” published in “The Hindu” on **9th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

News – Since March 2018, 23 advanced and developing countries have agreed for currency swap arrangements with India, extending credits in settling transactions.

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How an unexpected shift in the utilization of the Indian rupee for international transactions occurred after the Ukraine-Russia conflict?

Sanctions on Russia directly targeted the assets of **Russian financial institutions**. This situation posed a significant challenge for both Russia and India.

To address this, an **alternative approach** was adopted for **settling payments** between the two nations. It involves the utilization of the Indian rupee in **trade-related transactions**.

The payments originating from either India or Russia are now directed to **Rupee Vostro accounts** established in Russian banks by **authorized dealer banks in India**. These accounts are responsible for facilitating the **settlement of payments** between the two countries.

How India-Russia alternate payment arrangement is facing challenges?

Russia is continuing with a **trade surplus**. In 2020-21, it amounted to \$3.42 billion, followed by similar surpluses in the following years.

Russia is reluctant to hold more of the Indian rupee as an asset in the **Vostro account**. The rupee has a low rank in the **global currency hierarchy** and may be subject to **depreciation**.

Indian refiners have settled some payments for Russian oil imports using the Chinese yuan. It seems to be acceptable to Russia.

How similar payment arrangements were made in the past?

India established comparable **bilateral trade and clearing agreements** during the 1950s.

India and the Soviet Union engaged in **bilateral trade agreements** that involved the establishment of a **closed rupee-denominated account**. This account was utilized to manage both the **exchange of goods and credit-related transactions** between the two nations.

This initiative was initiated in the 1950s when the Soviet Union established a steel plant in Bhilai, despite opposition from Western nations.

The Soviet Union experienced a **consistent buildup of trade surpluses**. The decision to float the dollar in 1971 resulted in turbulence within the currency market and also affected the Soviet rouble.

The situation became more complicated due to the **fragmentation of the former Soviet Union**, which left Russia as a separate entity.

How is the current situation different from the past?

The **geopolitical situation** is different from the past. Presently, Russia is not averse to obtaining yuan for the **management of its surpluses** within the existing rupee account.

However, historical evidence indicates a **reluctance within the sphere of BRICS** for non-Chinese members to **utilize the Chinese currency**.

This hesitance became apparent during a proposition to create a **clearing system among BRICS** as a response to **China's persistent and sizable surpluses**. Regrettably, this proposal did not come to fruition.

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What are other similar alternate payment settlements systems related to using local currencies?

India and the United Arab Emirates have **rupee-dirham arrangements**.

This arrangement covers various transactions including **trade, remittances, and capital movements**.

It allows India to **circumvent dollar payments** for its imports of crude oil and minerals from the UAE. The agreement outlines provisions for linking their **payment and messaging systems**, enabling **swift and cost-efficient money transfers**.

Efforts are also underway to negotiate a **similar agreement with Indonesia**, utilizing the rupiah for transactions with India.

How a new financial architecture is emerging?

Indian rupee, Russian rouble, Chinese yuan, UAE dirham, and even Indonesia's rupiah are aligned towards the shared objective of **localized currency transactions**.

Southern nations are preparing to engage in **trade and payment settlements** among themselves. They want to move away from the use of **dominant currencies**.

This trend will circumvent the need to rely on **institutions from advanced countries**, such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and private capital, at least for the purpose of settling their bilateral transactions.

There are challenges stemming from **political disparities** and the **differing standing of currencies**. However, **geo-economics** could potentially surpass **geopolitical** obstacles and help bridge these differences.

It signals the **early stages of a novel financial structure**. Currencies of Southern nations are going to replace the longstanding **hegemonic and exploitative system** enjoyed by the currencies of the North.

[17. Stop the fence-sitting in cluster bomb use](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Stop the fence-sitting in cluster bomb use**” published in **The Hindu** on **10th August 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 2 – International Relations – International Treaty and Organization**

Relevance: **International law related to prohibition of cluster bombs**

News: The decision by the United States to provide cluster munitions to Ukraine as part of a military aid package aimed at supporting Ukraine's conflict with Russia has sparked controversy.

What are cluster bombs/munitions?

[Click Here to Read](#)

Human Rights Watch claims that Russia deployed cluster bombs against Ukraine in cities like Kharkiv, causing civilian casualties and damaging homes, hospitals, and schools. Ukraine's adoption of these weapons will exacerbate the situation.

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Which international treaty prevents the use of cluster bombs?

The Convention on Cluster Munitions (CCM), enacted in 2008, prohibits cluster bomb use, production, stockpiling, and transfer **under Article 1**. The convention also requires countries to destroy existing stockpiles of cluster munitions in their possession.

Countries are also legally bound to create victim support programs for cluster bomb survivors within their jurisdiction, ensuring aid and recovery.

However, the treaty isn't universal; 112 nations, including several NATO members like Canada, Germany, France, and the UK, have joined the CCM.

Whereas, **countries like the U.S., Russia, China, Israel, and India, along with Ukraine, have not ratified it.**

Since both Russia and Ukraine are not signatories to CCM, it may be argued that they are not bound by any international law. However, there are other laws that prevent the use of cluster bombs.

Must Read: [Explained: What are cluster bombs and thermobaric weapons, allegedly used by Russia against Ukrainians?](#)

What are other international laws that prevent the use of cluster bombs?

An essential principle of customary international law (CIL) in times of war is the prohibition of indiscriminate attacks. This signifies that the application of force must be selective, targeting distinct military targets rather than civilians.

This CIL norm is codified in Article 51(4) of Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions, which both Russia and Ukraine have ratified.

Another crucial principle of international humanitarian law applicable in this context **is proportionality, which is codified in Article 51(5) of Additional Protocol I to the 1949 Geneva Conventions.**

This rule forbids the disproportionate application of force that results in unintended harm to civilians or civilian structures, in comparison to the expected military advantages.

Is the US violating international law by supplying cluster bombs to Ukraine?

The US, not bound by CCM, doesn't breach international law by providing cluster bombs. Moreover, **the U.S.-made cluster bombs have a low rate of explosion compared to Russians.** However, still, supplying such weapons is an irresponsible act.

What can be the way ahead?

Universal prohibition of cluster bomb usage, possession, transfer, and supply, as outlined in the CCM, **requires global adherence.** This requires all UN member nations to join the CCM and eliminate cluster bombs.

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18. Mediating, Minus Sarkar – on Mediation Bill

Source: The post is based on the article “**Mediating, Minus Sarkar**” published in **Times of India** on 10th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Dispute redressal mechanisms

News: The author discusses the new Mediation Bill passed in India, which formalizes and promotes mediation as a mainstream method for resolving disputes.

What are the main features of the Mediation Bill?

Recognition of Mediation: The bill recognizes mediation as a key method for resolving various disputes, from commercial to personal matters.

Definition: Mediation involves a neutral third person helping parties find an amicable settlement.

Types: Includes conciliation, community, and online mediation.

Mediation Agreement: Given the same status as a court judgment, harder to challenge than an arbitral award.

Online Mediation: Specific rules are provided for Online Mediation.

Mediation Council: Established with experienced members from mediation, law, government, and industry sectors.

Training & Service Providers: The bill acknowledges mediation institutes and service providers.

Community Mediation: Addressing local peace and harmony issues.

What are the benefits of the Mediation Bill?

Speedy Process: Mediation can be done within days to a few months, much faster than litigation.

Cost-Efficient: While now a profession, mediation remains less costly than court proceedings.

Active Participation: Disputants play a central role, unlike in adversarial processes.

Amicable Solutions: Focuses on practical agreements benefiting both parties rather than strictly legal verdicts.

Enforceability: Mediation agreements are easily enforced.

High Success Rate: Often sees success rates above 50%.

Support from Lawyers: Many lawyers appreciate mediation for its advantages and benefits to clients.

What are the limitations of the Mediation Bill?

Exclusions in Schedule: The bill has a lengthy list of cases not suitable for mediation. For instance, many disputes involving the government are excluded, indicating a preference for the state to continue litigations with citizens.

Ambiguous Provisions: Compoundable criminal offences are listed as non-mediatable, but another awkwardly drafted provision makes them mediatable.

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Weak Language: Mandatory mediation before litigation is emphasized in soft terms, which might dilute its impact.

Section 49 Issue: There's a significant loophole in Section 49, making it less stringent.

Absence of Practising Mediators: The Mediation Council lacks representatives from the current practicing mediators, which seems like an oversight.

Non-adherence to Singapore Convention: The bill doesn't incorporate the Singapore Convention, which would have made enforcement of international commercial mediated settlements more accessible globally.

Over-Reliance on Mediators: The success of the bill heavily depends on the continuous efforts of mediators across the country.

19. Judged Half Right- House panel spot on for mandatory asset declaration for judges. Court vacations are a more complex issue

Source: The post is based on the article "**Judged Half Right- House panel spot on for mandatory asset declaration for judges. Court vacations are a more complex issue**" published in **The Times of India** on 10th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Separation of powers between various organs

News: The House panel in India has recommended that Supreme Court and high court judges declare their assets annually. They have suggested replacing collective vacations with individual annual leaves, underlining the importance of quality over speedy justice.

What recommendations has the House panel made for the judiciary of India?

The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law and Justice (House panel) has made the following recommendations for the judiciary of India:

1. Judges of the Supreme Court and high courts should declare their assets annually.
2. Replace the current system of court vacations with individual annual leaves for judges.

What are the main benefits of these recommendations?

Transparency and Accountability:

Mandating asset declaration would promote transparency in the judiciary.

Previous voluntary disclosures were limited, with the court's website showing data only till March 2018 for 55 SC judges.

Efficiency and Speed:

Replacing collective vacations with individual leaves can lead to more working days.

The Supreme Court of India is already in session for 200 days, compared to the US's 79 days, suggesting potential for quicker case disposal.

Quality Justice:

Despite the push for efficiency, there's recognition that judges need breaks for reflection.

Pausing ensures verdicts are well thought out, maintaining the quality of justice.

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20. Steps worth taking- Sound advice from Parliament on judicial reform

Source: The post is based on the article “**Steps worth taking- Sound advice from Parliament on judicial reform**” published in **Business standard** on 10th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Separation of powers between various organs

News: The author discusses a recent parliamentary report suggesting reforms in India's judiciary. It emphasizes raising judges' retirement age, reassessing post-retirement jobs, reducing court holidays, creating regional Supreme Court Benches, and improving diversity in the higher judiciary.

What are the reforms suggested by parliamentary report in India's judiciary?

Suggested Reforms in India's Judiciary:

- **Retirement Age:** Raise the retirement age for judges. This addresses concerns about judges seeking post-retirement jobs funded by the public.
- **Post-retirement Jobs:** Reassess post-retirement public appointments for judges. The current system gives the executive potential influence over judges' futures.
- **Court Holidays:** Reduce the long holidays of superior judiciary benches. Current long breaks limit litigants' access to the higher courts.
- **Regional Supreme Court Benches:** Establish Supreme Court Benches outside New Delhi. This addresses the high travel costs and language barriers for many Indians. **For example,** Travel to New Delhi is costly and arguing in non-local languages can be challenging for some Indians.
- **Diversity in Judiciary:** Address the declining representation of marginalized communities in the higher judiciary. The court needs diversity to maintain public legitimacy.

What are the significance of these recommendations?

Enhanced Judicial Impartiality: Raising the retirement age can reduce judges' dependence on post-retirement jobs. Less chance of executive influence on a judge's decisions.

Increased Public Trust: By reassessing post-retirement jobs, public faith in unbiased judgments grows.

Improved Court Efficiency: Reducing court holidays ensures faster case resolution. Litigants will have better access to the courts.

Greater Access to Justice: Regional Supreme Court benches eliminates travel barriers. Litigants can argue in local languages, reducing linguistic challenges.

Promotion of Practical Federalism: Regional benches help in decentralizing the judicial system. More areas get representation and better judicial access, reflecting federal principles.

Representation and Legitimacy: More diverse judges ensure marginalized communities are represented. A diverse court enhances its legitimacy and reduces executive control in the appointment process.

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21. [Express View on Lancet TB study: Food for cure](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “Express View on Lancet TB study: Food for cure” published in “The Indian Express” on 10th August 2023.

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

Relevance: Issues related to TB

News– Recently, a Lancet study underlines the need to improve nutrition of TB patients.

How undernutrition is the primary risk factor associated with tuberculosis?

The connection between diet and the illness is supported by the **historical public health records** of Europe and North America. The prevalence of TB notably declined when people began to consume **better diets**.

In India, modeling studies have indicated that **addressing undernutrition** can decrease TB cases by more than 70 percent.

A recent study published in the **medical journal Lancet** provides evidence that a **nutritious diet** reduces the **occurrence of tuberculosis** among vulnerable individuals and also diminishes **mortality rates** in TB patients.

This study, conducted in Jharkhand, reveals that early weight gain in individuals impacted by TB reduces the **mortality risk** by 60 percent.

Tuberculosis (TB) and the medications diminish the **appetite of patients**. Fever raises the rate at which calories are burned. In severe cases, the illness leads to **“wasting” or low weight-for-height conditions**.

A patient who has recovered from TB but continues to have a poor diet is at a **significant risk of relapse**.

What are some facts related to Nikshay Poshan Yojana?

The **National Tuberculosis Elimination Programme (NTEP)** has launched the **Nikshay Poshan Yojana**.

It provides Rs **500 per month** to individuals diagnosed with TB. However, this amount is widely **considered insufficient**.

According to **NTEP guidelines**, a tuberculosis patient should ideally consume **2,800 calories daily**.

Experts argue that eradicating TB necessitates **enhancing the living conditions** of patients and their families.

This program has encountered **numerous systemic challenges**.

A **2020 study published in the Indian Journal of Tuberculosis** revealed that healthcare providers faced difficulties due to **inadequate training and complicated reporting formats**. It hinders the **effective implementation** of the scheme.

Moreover, **limited patient awareness** has also restricted the reach of the **nutritional program**.

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22. [Bibek Debroy writes: BIMARU states are breaking poverty's chains](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Bibek Debroy writes: BIMARU states are breaking poverty's chains**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **10th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues related to poverty and hunger

Relevance: Estimation of poverty

News– The article explain the prevalence of poverty rate in India as indicated by UNDP and NITI Aayog reports

What are various methods used in India to define and quantify poverty?

Traditionally, poverty has been identified as a **percentage of the population** living below a **designated poverty line**. It is known as the **head-count ratio**.

The currently recognized poverty line is still based on the **Tendulkar measurement**.

Due to the absence of **National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) surveys on consumption expenditure** beyond 2011-12, **no head-count ratios** are available after that period.

Over time, development economists have contended that poverty is a **multi-faceted concept**. There has been a transition to **multidimensional poverty index (MDPI)**.

What are some facts about Multi-dimensional Poverty Index?

It relies on **three key dimensions of poverty: health, education, and living standards**.

Health metrics encompass aspects like **nutrition, child and adolescent mortality, and maternal health**, while education measures include **years of schooling and school attendance**.

Living standard encompasses factors like cooking fuel, sanitation, access to clean drinking water, electricity, housing, assets, and bank accounts.

What are poverty rates in India as per data provided by UNDP and NITI Aayog?

According to the **UNDP report**, around **415 million individuals** transitioned out of poverty between 2005-06 and 2019-21, resulting in a reduction of poverty incidence **from 55.1 percent to 16.4 percent**.

As per UNDP report, the **steepest declines** in poverty have occurred in **economically disadvantaged states**.

However, it's important to note that the UNDP's report presents a **national aggregate perspective** for India, while the Niti Aayog report delves into **regional and state-specific disparities**.

The Niti Aayog report indicates a decrease in poverty rates from **24.85 percent in 2015-16 to 14.96 percent in 2019-21**.

During this period, an estimated **135.5 million Indians** were lifted out of poverty. Within this group, Uttar Pradesh alone accounted for 34.3 million individuals.

How have BIMARU states performed well in poverty reduction?

Many years ago, **demographer Ashish Bose** introduced the acronym BIMARU to represent the then-undivided states of Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

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BIMARU served as a **symbolic representation** of the various issues that plagued India during that time.

India's overall **development, employment situation, and poverty alleviation efforts** are significantly influenced by the conditions prevailing in these states. This is primarily due to their **substantial populations**, as well as the **extensive poverty levels**.

The **report from Niti Aayog** reveals that the **most rapid declines in poverty rates** were observed in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Rajasthan.

Specifically, **Bihar's poverty rate** has now reached 33.8 percent, Madhya Pradesh at 20.6 percent, Odisha at 15.7 percent, and Rajasthan at 15.3 percent.

Uttar Pradesh's poverty rate stands at 22.9 percent, having started from a baseline of 37.7 percent in 2015-16.

23. Demolitions as state-sanctioned collective punishment

Source: The post is based on the article "**Demolitions as state-sanctioned collective punishment**" published in **The Hindu** on 11th August 2023.

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

Relevance: Issues with state led demolitions drive

News: In Nuh, Haryana, several homes were demolished in neighborhoods by the state government as a form of bulldozer justice following the riots.

The state governments justifies that these demolitions are done to remove "illegal structures" or "encroachments". However, the courts have highlighted specific procedures for conducting demolitions.

What are the observations of the court regarding demolitions?

Courts have acknowledged that "unauthorized structures" frequently serve as homes for economically disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals, who have been failed by the state in its obligation to provide shelter to all its citizens.

Hence, **other than enforcing basic procedural requirements** such as adequate notice, **courts have emphasized that the administration must conduct a survey before demolitions** to assess residents' eligibility for rehabilitation schemes.

If they are eligible, then rehabilitation should be done before any demolitions.

However, state governments frequently disregard these procedures and conduct demolitions at their own convenience.

For example, last year, it was discovered that the administration had changed the date on a demolition notice to make it seem like they were following the rules.

What do states clarify in carrying demolitions?

The states conduct these demolitions as a way to enact punishment against those linked to riots, attempting a form of frontier justice. **They also argue that the courts are slow**, frequently grant bail, and are lenient in granting acquittals.

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Therefore, in order to calm public outrage, the state must take it upon itself to deliver “justice” outside the bounds of law.

However, despite widespread violation of zoning regulations, **it is the vulnerable and marginalized communities that are subjected to demolitions.** Additionally, the demolitions are predominantly concentrated in Muslim neighborhoods.

Hence, **the High Court of Punjab and Haryana noted that the focused targeting of a specific community resembled ethnic cleansing.**

What are the concerns with the state carrying out demolitions?

Bulldozer justice involves collective punishment, penalizing not only the accused before guilt is established but also impacting their innocent family members.

Imposing punishment without establishing guilt, at the discretion of the state, violates the rule of law. The rule of law safeguards individuals from an overreaching state.

Therefore, **abandoning the rule of law for frontier justice is the first step towards an authoritarian society,** where personal safety, property, and even fundamental rights become subject to the arbitrary decisions of state authorities.

Must Read: [Picking Up Peace – on economic costs of riots](#) and [Haryana violence was preventable. Why did it happen?](#)

What can be the way ahead?

The responsibility to uphold the rule of law and the Constitution rests with the courts. However, the courts, including the Supreme Court of India, have remained silent for over a year, even accepting the state’s justification for demolitions.

Hence, **the recent High Court order of Punjab and Haryana recognizes** the unlawful bulldozer justice pattern, potentially initiating the judiciary’s stance against state impunity and upholding fundamental constitutional principles.

24. [India’s Myanmar quandary, its paradoxical policy](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**India’s Myanmar quandary, its paradoxical policy**” published in **The Hindu** on **11th August 2023.**

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: India and Myanmar Relations

News: Myanmar’s President extended the emergency by six months, and the military has decided to release political prisoners. Still, these actions don’t suggest a democratic and peaceful Myanmar.

What are the concerns with these developments in Myanmar?

The emergency extension delays the military’s planned elections, but it’s justified by citing the lack of ‘normalcy’ in various parts of the country.

The push for ‘normality’ has caused great suffering, with Myanmar civilians facing 2.5 times more violence than Afghans.

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The Tatmadaw (Myanmar's military) controls just 30%-40% of the land, making a national election lose credibility if held in only one-third of the nation.

Further, bringing more military by the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) raises concerns about the junta's commitment to democracy.

Even the National League for Democracy not participating in new elections and smaller parties being excluded leaves no strong opposition to the USDP in a parliament where the military holds a veto.

Hence, in such a situation, **junta's (military) decision to reduce Ms. Suu Kyi's sentence and move her to house arrest doesn't indicate a move toward democracy.**

Because, despite being a significant rival to the Tatmadaw, she has demonstrated a willingness to work with the military. However, **she remains a key figure for political transformation in Myanmar.**

Hence, junta's action regarding Ms. Suu Kyi's sentence could lessen protests, help in ending sanctions and improving the economy. It also enables countries like India to engage with the junta more positively.

How has been the bilateral relation between India and Myanmar?

India aided Myanmar during the pandemic and coup, yet Myanmar residents were accused of sparking violence in Manipur. Trafficking and drug concerns led India to stop the [Free Movement Regime](#) in 2022.

India's Foreign Minister discussed projects and border stability with Myanmar during the [Mekong Ganga Cooperation \(MGC\)](#) meeting. India also backs the [ASEAN's](#) 'Five-Point Consensus'.

However, **India's stated dedication to democracy in Myanmar contrasts with its policy as India's policy is affected by northeast security and China relations.**

For example, India's announcement of the Sairang-Hmawngbuchhuah railway project near the Myanmar border, **under India's Act East Policy**, aims to counter China's railway access in Myanmar and the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor.

Moreover, several reports suggest that India has escalated its arms provision to the military post-coup. This not only contradicts India's position on restoring democracy but also intensifies tensions along the border.

Must Read: [India - Myanmar relations | Timeline](#) and [Coup in Myanmar and India-Myanmar bilateral relations](#)

What lies ahead?

The relaxation of Ms. Suu Kyi's prison sentence may provide an opportunity for India to engage with her and pro-democracy actors.

The government and media must avoid labeling incoming refugees as security threats, as many have family ties in India. This is essential to prevent violence escalation and foster a compassionate environment.

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25. A brilliant model of affirmative action – on reservation

Source: The post is based on the article “**A brilliant model of affirmative action**– In light of the recent US Supreme Court decision on race-based admissions, the Indian model of reservations in both jobs and education holds valuable lessons” published in “Business standard” on 11th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Comparison of the Indian constitutional scheme with that of other countries

News: The U.S. Supreme Court ruled against race-based admissions. In this article author compares this to India’s quota system. He also refers Dr. Clark’s view that genes affect social status, raising doubts about affirmative action’s impact on social mobility.

What is affirmative action?

Affirmative action is a policy aimed at increasing opportunities for historically marginalized groups. It involves giving preferential treatment in areas like education and employment. For instance, colleges might consider race as a factor in admissions. In India, reservations in education and government jobs are a form of affirmative action. This approach intends to address past discrimination and create more diverse and inclusive societies.

What is the constitutional difference in affirmative action between India and the USA?

USA’s Constitutional Stance on Affirmative Action:

Basis: The U.S. Supreme Court ruled based on the Equal Protection Clause of the Constitution, which emphasizes equality without race bias.

Implementation: The Court permits considering race in admissions only to encourage a diverse student body. There can’t be fixed racial quotas. Moreover, race-based admissions should not be permanent and must conclude eventually.

Examples: The University of North Carolina and Harvard College seemingly set racial quotas, contradicting the constitutional guidelines.

India’s Constitutional Approach to Affirmative Action:

Basis: The Indian Constitution provides quotas for specific groups like Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, Other Backward Classes, and Economically Weaker Sections.

Implementation: These quotas are applied primarily to government institutions, both in education and employment. The emphasis is on representing these groups at various societal levels.

Distinct Feature: Unlike the U.S., India hasn’t set a definite endpoint for these reservations, understanding that elevating disadvantaged groups might be a prolonged process.

What are the impacts of affirmative action?

Perceived Benefits of Affirmative Action:

Diversity in Education: Affirmative action promotes a racially diverse student body in universities, as seen in the U.S. Supreme Court’s allowance for race-based admissions.

Representation: In India, specific groups like Scheduled Castes and Tribes get representation in government institutions due to quotas.

Challenges and Criticisms:

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Social Mobility: Gregory Clark's book suggests that affirmative action might not significantly improve social mobility. He believes genes play a considerable role in determining social status.

Duration of Impact: Clark's findings indicate that while those lower in the social order may eventually rise, the pace is very slow, taking around 300 years.

Effectiveness: The U.S. model is perceived as weak, especially after the recent ruling, whereas India's robust system seeks representation in education and jobs without setting an end date for reservations.

What should be done?

Re-evaluate Affirmative Action: Considering the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling, there's a need to assess the effectiveness of race-based admissions.

Broaden Approaches: Look at comprehensive models like India's which provides quotas for specific groups in education and jobs.

Focus on Representation: Ensure diverse representation across societal levels, as India's model does without setting an endpoint for reservations.

Alternative Measures: Explore options like redistribution through progressive taxation or higher minimum wages, inspired by Nordic countries.

Private Sector Inclusion: Given the limited scope of affirmative action in government institutions in India, consider extending reservations to the private sector for broader impact.

[26. Not Quite Healthy- PMJAY has design flaws which may limit its potential to lower out-of-pocket expenditure](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Not Quite Healthy- PMJAY has design flaws which may limit its potential to lower out-of-pocket expenditure**" published in "Times of India" on 11th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes;

News: In this article author reviews the five-year performance of Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY), India's health insurance scheme, referencing a CAG report that found database errors. The article also discusses hospital disparities in states and suggests improvements to decrease out-of-pocket costs.

What does the CAG report say about PMJAY?

- Data Issues:** The CAG report revealed several problems with PMJAY's data. Notably, the PMJAY Id, which should be a unique 9-digit alphanumeric code, had duplicates. This means multiple beneficiaries could have the same identification, leading to confusion and potential fraud.
- Age Discrepancies:** There were inaccuracies related to beneficiaries' ages. Some of the records showed beneficiaries born in the 19th century, indicating significant errors in the database.
- Impact on Costs:** GOI data showed that the average hospitalization cost in 2022-23 was ₹13,703, which is less than 3% of the total cover of ₹5 lakh per family. This figure seemed

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inconsistent with the typical rise in medical expenses, making it a potential concern in the CAG report.

6. **Need for Stronger Oversight:** The report suggests that without proper data and process controls, dubious healthcare providers could exploit the system, emphasizing the need for a tighter grip on information and procedures.

What should be done?

Data Integrity: Rectify database issues, ensuring PMJAY Ids are unique and correct age discrepancies, like those born in the 19th century.

Hospital Availability: Increase the number of empaneled hospitals, especially in poorer states like Bihar which, despite having a population exceeding Tamil Nadu by 50 million, has less than half its number of empaneled hospitals.

Protect Patients: Address issues in public hospitals where patients are reportedly defrauded or denied PMJAY benefits.

State Health Authorities Role: SHAs, being the primary administrators, should enhance their oversight and efficiency.

Independent Audit: The government should commission an independent audit to assess PMJAY's impact on out-of-pocket expenses.

[27. Their Bhasha, Their Future- Research has shown teaching in mother tongue leads to better skilling as well as better grasp of English](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Their Bhasha, Their Future- Research has shown teaching in mother tongue leads to better skilling as well as better grasp of English.**

Recent CBSE decision is the right call, argues IMF's executive director" published in "Times of India" on 11th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education.

News: In this article, author emphasizes the importance of teaching children in their mother tongue for better understanding and a connection to their culture. He also cites evidence that this method enhances learning and success and argues against the misconception that English education alone propels progress in India.

What efforts did India make to teach children in their mother tongue?

Historical Efforts:

Gandhiji believed that English as a primary medium created a barrier between educated elites and the masses. He felt it hindered the spread of knowledge to everyone.

Freedom fighters like C Rajagopalachari, Bal Gangadhar Tilak, Gopal Krishna Gokhale, and Annie Besant stressed an education controlled by Indians, valuing the country's ethos.

Unlike Jawaharlal Nehru, who leaned towards Western methods, these leaders saw value in beginning education in the mother tongue, introducing English later.

Annie Besant, in "Principles of Education," suggested schools teach in the local mother tongue, introducing English later.

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Government of India Efforts:

The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) issued an order on July 21 to use the mother tongue for instruction, highlighting its commitment to native language education.

The National Education Policy also encapsulates the intent to promote mother tongue instruction.

What are the UNESCO findings on teaching children in their mother tongue?

UNESCO Findings on Mother Tongue Instruction:

Global Advocacy: Since 1953, UNESCO has consistently promoted mother tongue education through its Global Education Monitoring Reports.

Learning Impact: Being taught in a language other than one's own can have negative effects on learning, especially for children from poor backgrounds.

Duration Recommendation: At least six years of mother tongue instruction is necessary to reduce learning gaps for minority language speakers.

Pedagogical Reasoning: A background study for the 2005 UNESCO report emphasized that mother tongue-based bilingual schooling is rarely challenged based on its educational logic.

Note: Research suggests that starting with the mother tongue and introducing English later makes learning English easier. Skills acquired in the mother tongue during early years assist in mastering a second language later in life.

What should be done?

CBSE Directive: Implement the Central Board of Secondary Education's order to use the mother tongue for instruction.

Adapt Schools: Address challenges in teacher recruitment, curriculum development, and teaching materials to cater to diverse linguistic backgrounds.

Lead by Example: Government's Kendriya Vidyalayas and Navodaya Vidyalayas should pioneer the implementation of mother tongue instruction.

Value Research: Policymakers should prioritize evidence-based benefits of mother tongue education over anecdotal arguments advocating English-only education.

Uphold Rights: Recognize and ensure that education in the mother tongue for every child in India, as it nurtures learning excellence and cultural connection.

[28. S Y Quraishi on the Collegium bill: How to make Election Commission credible](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "**S Y Quraishi on the Collegium bill: How to make Election Commission credible**" published in "**The Indian Express**" on **11th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Appointment to various Constitutional Posts

Relevance: Issues related to agricultural inputs

News- On Thursday, the day before the Monsoon Session is set to end, the government tabled the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointments, Conditions of Service, Term of Office) Bill in the Rajya Sabha.

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What is the context behind the introduction of Bill?

In March, a unanimous decision was given by the Supreme Court.

This verdict stated that a **committee composed of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition, and the Chief Justice of India** would be responsible for appointing the Chief CEC and ECs until the Parliament enacts a law.

The ruling emphasised that the **independence of the Election Commission** necessitates a **collegium**. The court emphasised that safeguarding the **integrity of the electoral process** is crucial to **uphold democracy**.

The involvement of the Chief Justice of India will ensure **fairness** and shield the appointment procedure from any **interference by the Executive branch**.

Why is the ruling by SC significant?

It addresses concerns related to **bias and the autonomy** of institutions.

The existing selection process creates a **notable drawback** for newly appointed Election Commissioners (ECs). Irrespective of their impressive backgrounds, they remain vulnerable to being **perceived as partisan**.

Their actions carried out **dutifully and in good faith**, are frequently interpreted as favouring a specific political party. This underscores the necessity for a **collegial approach** to enhance **public perception** of the Commission's **impartiality and autonomy**.

The Supreme Court verdict emphasised that the involvement of the CJI could **counterbalance** the **unchecked influence** of the executive branch over appointments.

What are some significant provisions of the Bill?

The proposed legislation aims to **replace the Chief Justice of India (CJI) with a cabinet minister** designated by the Prime Minister.

It provides for a **search committee led by the Cabinet Secretary** and consisting of two other members not below the rank of government secretary. This committee's role is to compile a list of **five potential candidates** for the Selection Committee's evaluation.

The Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and other Election Commissioners (ECs) will be chosen from individuals who currently hold or have previously held a **position equivalent to the rank of a government secretary**.

These appointees must possess **integrity**, as well as **knowledge and expertise in the administration and execution of elections**.

The Bill safeguards **the two Election Commissioners against removal** and establish **parity with the Chief Election Commissioner**.

What are issues with the Bill?

The Commissioners were previously placed on the **same level as Supreme Court judges** since the enactment of the 1991 Act. They are now being relegated.

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The Election Commissioner then and now remains **equivalent to that of the Chief Secretary (CS)** and the Supreme Court judge. But their position in the hierarchy of precedence is being diminished.

The provision that permits the Selection Committee to choose someone from outside the shortlist is completely **undesirable and undermines** the purpose of the shortlisting committee.

How the institutional independence of the Election Commission (EC) is a pressing concern at national and global level?

There has been a growing worldwide erosion of **confidence in electoral bodies**. The **Gallup World Poll** indicates that merely 50 percent of voters express trust in the **fairness of elections**. In the USA, this number was at 40% in 2019.

Even within India, the **credibility of the EC** has faced increasing scrutiny in recent years. **Allegations of bias** in election scheduling and the **arbitrary removal of registered voters' names**, and disregard for **blatant violations of the model code**, have cast doubt on the EC's reputation.

Recent **democracy reports from the V-Dem Institute** underline that various democracy indicators, including the **autonomy of the ECI**, have been on a decline in India.

What are issues with the collegium system for appointment of Election Commissioners?

The appointment of CBI directors, for instance, has been conducted through the collegium process. But, some of these appointments have not upheld a **commendable reputation**.

Additionally, there have been concerns about the **inclusion of the Chief Justice of India (CJI)** in the collegium.

CJI may possess **legal expertise** but might not be **well-acquainted** with the candidates. There are concerns regarding **fair adjudication** by CJI if an appointment is challenged in the Supreme Court.

The collegium system would gain **further credibility** if a unanimous decision were made a **prerequisite for appointments**.

29. Jan Vishwas Bill: More trust, less suspicion

Source– The post is based on the article “**Jan Vishwas Bill: More trust, less suspicion**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **11th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance: Important Bill and Acts

News– Recently, Jan Vishwas Act was introduced in Parliament.

How is Jan Vishwas Bill a positive step in the direction of boosting investment and economy?

The investors are concerned that businesses are highly vulnerable to **legal action and imprisonment**. The **Jan Vishwas Bill** aims to alleviate such concerns.

The inclusion of **criminal liability in numerous laws** has fostered suspicion toward private enterprises.

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A total of **183 provisions across 42 Central Acts** will undergo decriminalization. The goal is to ensure that the **severity of punishment** aligns with the **gravity of the offense**.

The elimination of **punitive measures** will be **positively received** by companies. They are fearful of **receiving notices** that could lead to arrests of their **key management personnel** for even the **slightest infractions**.

These notices to directors also impact the **company's public image** on a global scale, particularly considering SEBI's strict disclosure guidelines.

This **legal reform** will also **ease the burden** on the judicial system. These cases congest the court system. Companies enlist **high-profile lawyers** to defend them. Consequently, **more serious offenses** that require thorough examination by the courts get **pushed aside**.

The recent legislation comes at a timely juncture.

Amendments are being made to the **Marine Products Export Development Authority Act, the Farm Produce (Grading and Marking) Act, the Rubber Act, the Tea Act, and the Spices Board Act** to mitigate the severity of consequences for violating **specified regulations**.

Similarly, removing the criminal provision from the **Forest Conservation Act** that allowed for the arrest of grazers whose livestock entered forest areas will align the law with the objectives of the Forest Rights Act.

Way forward-

The amendment within the legal framework is essentially a way to enable **transformative shifts**.

There is a need to **modify the regulations** to align them with the **intended objectives** of the law, while also maintaining a **balance between safeguarding public interests and those of the industry**.

The elimination of **unnecessary provisions** and the initiative to decriminalize are measures that will enhance **people's trust** in the government.

This trust is a **prerequisite for attracting investments** and for halting the **outflow of capital** from the country.

As a nation on the cusp of becoming the **third-largest economy**, it's crucial that laws are continuously **assessed, modified, or even revoked**.

The government should remain **vigilant against violations** that jeopardize lives or harm the environment. However, it's equally vital to honor those who **contribute taxes and generate wealth**.

Business and industry associations should now advocate for the **decriminalization of inappropriate provisions** in **financial and corporate laws**.

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30. [Error On Commission – on appointment of election commissioners](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Error On Commission**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **12th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Appointment to various constitutional posts

Relevance: Issues related to appointment of Election Commissioners

News– Recently, GOI tabled a bill governing the appointment of election commissioners in Rajya Sabha.

Why is the SC ruling on appointment of Election Commissioners significant?

Firstly, there is a **conflict of interest, if the political** executives manage the selection of Election Commissioners. Because, these Commissioners are responsible for **supervising elections**.

Secondly, it's crucial for the Election Commission to maintain an **impartial image** in the eyes of all parties involved. Hence, it's imperative that the procedure for appointing Election Commissioners doesn't undermine the **trustworthiness of the Commission's rulings**.

Way forward

In practical terms, the **significance of the Leader of the Opposition** can be negated. It is undesirable as it can lead to **accusations of favoritism** in appointment process

There is a need to ensure **unanimous decisions** by the selection committee. Providing the LOP with a **substantive role** will ensure that the **Commission's credibility** is upheld.

For more reading- <https://blog.forumias.com/s-y-quraishi-on-the-collegium-bill-how-to-make-election-commission-credible/>

31. [In 'demolition raj', the High Courts as beacons](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**In 'demolition raj', the High Courts as beacons**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **12th August 2023**. **Syllabus:** GS2- Judiciary

Relevance: Issues related functioning of higher courts in protecting the vulnerable sections

News– In the districts of Gurugram and Nuh in Haryana, there have been clashes between Hindu and Muslim communities. The Haryana government has taken to demolishing the houses of persons suspected to be involved in the violence without notice.

What are issues with the demolition drive by the Haryana government?

It's evident that only the homes belonging to a particular section of population are singled out for demolition. This targeting is both **deliberate and exclusive in nature**.

The **principle of rule of law** which guarantees **legal equality and equal protection** has been disregarded.

Why is SC being questioned for its silence on demolition drive?

When the bulldozers were causing destruction in Uttar Pradesh, the matter was brought before the Supreme Court of India. The court's reaction was **lukewarm**.

It heard the government's assertion that these constructions were **unauthorized** and **legal procedures** were being followed. The court's response observed that **proper protocols** must be adhered to.

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Court should have asked stringent questions about targeting a specific community and the reason behind the **swift and abrupt demolitions**.

The Supreme Court could have taken **suo motu action**.

What are criticisms against the working of SC in recent times?

The Supreme Court appears to be **yielding more ground**. This is evident in the **repeated extensions** granted to the Director of the Enforcement Directorate.

The SC has not **established clear boundaries** and **administered consequences** for each violation. The **established boundaries** will be **breached continuously** with impunity without these types of actions.

The examples of **prolonged delays** in hearing cases are the **modification of Article 370, electoral bonds, demonetization, legislative immunity under Article 194, the validity of the Assam Accords, and amendments to the Citizenship Act**.

These situations have led to the emergence of an **adjudication doctrine** where the **alleged illegality** has persisted for such an extensive period.

Furthermore, **notable legal practitioners** have been **nominated by the collegium** for positions as High Court judges. However, the government's inertia in processing these appointments remains. The Court does not **assertively address** this issue.

Why is the Punjab and Haryana High Court ruling being appreciated in this case?

The Punjab and Haryana High Court questioned whether it is an act of **ethnic cleansing**. It is a **scathing indictment** of the prevailing authorities.

The court went beyond mere **inquiry and promptly halted** the demolitions. It confronted the State Home Minister's rationale for the demolitions and promptly reminded him of **Lord Acton's dictum** that **power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely**.

Significantly, this course of action was undertaken **suo motu**, initiated by the court itself. Kudos to the esteemed Justices for their praiseworthy action.

Way forward-

The actions of a former Chief Justice of India have triggered **significant concerns** due to his **newfound uncertainties** about the **basic structure of the Constitution** following his appointment to the Rajya Sabha.

This is a moment for us to revisit the **wisdom of our legal luminaries, internalize their insights, and live by the principles they advocated**.

It's an opportune time for the High Courts to **rise to their vital role**, as conferred by **Article 226 of the Constitution**.

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32. [Think, Then Act – Proposed criminal codes need serious deliberation](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Think, Then Act – Proposed criminal codes need serious deliberation**” published in **The Times of India** on **12th August 2023**.

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

Relevance: **Issues with three bills** that aim to replace IPC, CrPC and the Indian Evidence Act.

News: Recently, three bills, **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Bill, 2023** have been introduced in the Parliament that aim to **replace IPC, CrPC and the Indian Evidence Act.**

What are the concerns with the Bill?

- Despite claims of repeal, offences like sedition still persist under a different chapter.
- The inclusion of a separate provision for mob lynching where the punishment for a mob could involve death, creates a perplex situation.
- Marital rape is still not criminalized.
- Criminal defamation still remains in the Bill.
- Requiring forensic teams to visit crime scenes for serious offenses seems unrealistic due to the existing backlogs even in metropolitan labs.

What can be the way ahead?

No drafts were released in the public domain before the Union home minister introduced the bills in Lok Sabha. The reforms committee which worked on these bills also lacked transparency.

Hence, **instead of rushing there are various shortcomings that need to be addressed.** The parliamentary standing committee, to which the bills have now been sent, must look into these issues.

33. [The rise of bulldozer governance](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Suhas Palshikar writes: The rise of bulldozer governance” published in “The Indian express” on 12th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability.

News: In this article author discusses how India’s democracy is shifting, with governments using more forceful methods like bulldozers and police encounters. These actions often target the poor and marginalized. The government is also bypassing standard democratic procedures in the legislature. The author suggests this trend is worrisome and challenges the true essence of democracy.

How is India’s democracy shifting?

India’s democracy is shifting in the following ways:

Bulldozer Governance: Governments are using force, symbolized by bulldozers, to assert their power. Examples include demolitions in Haryana following communal violence.

Decreased Regulation: Despite the ideal of minimal government intervention, there’s an increased use of physical coercion to maintain law and order.

Surveillance: Governments are using advanced techniques like drone surveillance and facial recognition without much legislative oversight.

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Police Power: States are increasingly giving the police a “free hand,” resulting in encounter killings, like the Telangana police incident in 2019 (killing suspected rapists)

Legislative Functioning: There’s less discussion and vetting of bills, with some being pushed through as Money Bills, limiting proper democratic debate.

Executive Dominance: The executive branch is gaining more control, even intervening in state matters, challenging the federal principle.

This shift, seems to be moving away from democratic ideals.

What are the major concerns of this shift?

Citizen Concerns:

The use of force, like the bulldozer incidents in Haryana, affects the marginalized the most.

Advanced surveillance techniques such as facial recognition threaten citizen privacy.

Governance Concerns:

The government’s assertive actions, like not properly vetting bills, reduce transparency.

Leaders assert dominance, sometimes bypassing federal principles to intervene in state matters.

Judicial Concerns:

The judiciary often remains a silent observer, not intervening in cases of potential overreach.

The direction of governance primarily targets less privileged sections, without adequate checks.

Social Concerns:

Media might not consistently challenge high-handed governance.

Terms like “bulldozer baba” highlight societal acceptance of forceful governance.

Idea of Democracy:

Bypassing democratic procedures in the legislature erodes democratic norms.

The rising belief in a leader’s ultimate wisdom weakens the need for democratic checks and balances.

What should be done about it?

Strengthen Oversight: Enhance judicial involvement to ensure government actions align with democratic principles, as seen with the Punjab and Haryana High Court’s intervention in Nuh.

Legislative Reforms: Encourage thorough vetting of bills and promote discussions to avoid bypassing democratic procedures.

Enhance Accountability: Ensure surveillance techniques, such as facial recognition and drones, are used with proper legislative oversight.

Promote Media Vigilance: Media should consistently highlight and critique instances of high-handed governance.

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Public Awareness: Educate the public about the importance of checks and balances in a democracy.

Emphasize Federalism: Respect the federal principle to maintain the balance of power between the central and state governments.

Restore Democratic Ideals: Prioritize citizens' rights and well-being over forceful measures, ensuring democracy serves all.

34. [India's TB problem and the right to treatment](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "India's TB problem and the right to treatment" published in "The Indian express" on 12th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

News: The author highlights the challenge of drug-resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB) in India. While new diagnostic tools and treatments exist, India often relies on outdated methods. The WHO recommends modern solutions that are more effective and cost-saving. The author urges India to adopt these to prevent DR-TB deaths and suffering.

What are India's achievements in relation to drug-resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB)?

Detection: India identified 64,000 MDR/RR-TB cases in 2022, a significant number though below WHO estimates.

Molecular Tests: Several Indian companies manufacture advanced molecular tests for DR-TB detection.

Investment: India heavily invested in molecular platforms during the Covid-19 pandemic, which can be repurposed for TB.

Cost-effective PCR: Many Indian companies made affordable PCR (polymerase chain reaction) components during the Covid-19 crisis.

Treatment Time: India has treatments that reduce DR-TB treatment duration from 24 months to 6 months.

Drug Supply: India is the global supplier of pretomanid, a crucial drug in the BPaL(Bedaquiline, Pretomanid, and Linezolid) regimen for DR-TB.

What are the challenges of drug-resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB) in India?

High Cases: India accounts for a quarter of the world's DR-TB cases, with 119,000 new cases estimated yearly by WHO.

Underreporting: Only 64,000 MDR/RR-TB cases were reported in 2022, missing a substantial number.

Delayed Diagnosis: Rapid diagnosis of DR-TB is limited, leading to treatment delays.

Old Diagnostic Methods: 77% of suspected TB patients were diagnosed using traditional sputum smear microscopy, an outdated method.

Treatment Adherence: India uses a mix of DR-TB treatments, many of which are hard to follow.

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Reliance on Injectables: Over 22,000 MDR/RR-TB patients in 2021 received treatments with injections, despite WHO's recommendation against it.

Incomplete Treatment: Only 68% of the MDR/RR-TB patients initiated on treatment in 2020 completed it.

Limited Access: Only 53% of MDR/RR-TB patients in 2022 received the WHO-recommended shorter bedaquiline regimen.

What should be done to address these challenges?

Enhance Reporting: Increase efforts to identify and report all MDR/RR-TB cases.

Adopt Rapid Tests: Embrace rapid molecular diagnostics as the initial test for suspected patients.

Increase Molecular Testing: Aim for all suspected TB patients to undergo the recommended molecular tests.

Update Treatment Protocols: Adopt WHO's recommendation of the BPaL regimen for DR-TB.

Phase Out Injectables: Heed WHO's advice to stop using injectable treatments from 2019.

Expand Access: Increase the number of patients receiving the bedaquiline-containing regimen and BPaL regimen.

Utilize Resources: Repurpose molecular platforms from the Covid-19 era for TB testing.

35. On Digital Personal Data Protection Bill

Source: The post is based on the article "**Digital Personal Data Protection Bill: Spectre of a Barbenheimer future**" published in "**The Indian express**" on 12th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

News: In this article author discusses two possible futures for India's digital landscape that is "Barbenheimer" future and an equitable digital future India's current decisions will determine its path.

What are the potential digital futures of India?

Potential Digital Futures of India

The "Barbenheimer" Future:

This is named after an internet phenomenon combining "Barbie" and "Oppenheimer." In this scenario sees India heavily leaning on technology.

In this future, an elite group dominates the tech decisions. Privacy might often be compromised for perceived national benefits.

For escape, citizens could immerse themselves in virtual worlds, like a Barbie-themed metaverse, where tech corporations dictate experiences.

Equitable Digital Future:

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Here, the emphasis is on citizen rights and privacy. Strong data protection laws would be the foundation. Instead of broad exceptions in the name of security, there would be robust checks on surveillance, with judicial oversight ensuring citizen privacy.

This future envisions universal digital access, clear rules for AI, and encrypted data processing. It's a world where digital rights are central, and open engagements prioritize human rights, accountability, and trust.

Why are these futures important?

Decision Making Impact: The choices India makes now in digital governance will shape its digital landscape for the next 25 years. Opting for one future over the other can drastically change societal structures and individual freedoms.

Citizen Rights: The “Barbenheimer” future could see reduced individual rights, with elites and tech giants dictating terms.

National Interests: Balancing privacy with perceived national benefits is critical, especially in a tech-dominated future.

Public Engagement: An equitable digital future emphasizes open engagements, prioritizing human rights and accountability.

Technological Trajectory: These futures determine India's tech direction, impacting areas like AI governance and data protection.

Economic & Social Implications: The direction India takes will influence its global tech position, economic prospects, and the well-being of its citizens. Ensuring an equitable future means prioritizing societal welfare and progress.

General Studies Paper –3

General Studies - 3

1. [Why gig work matters – Its rise can help improve labour force participation](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Why gig work matters – Its rise can help improve labour force participation**” published in **Business Standard** on **7th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Employment

Relevance: benefits of gig work

News: Gig works are often seen as insecure kind of job in India. However, given the number of jobs generated by it in the urban area, it has the potential of reshaping the urban labour market.

According to the NITI Aayog, about 7.7 million workers are engaged as gig workers.

What are the benefits of gig work?

Lack of Salaried Job: Gig work may appear less attractive compared to a regular salaried position. However, the majority of jobs in urban areas tend to be informal and temporary in nature.

Furthermore, out of the total urban workforce of 131 million, merely 52 million hold salaried jobs, making such opportunities challenging to obtain. Hence, **gig work aligns well with the dynamics of the Indian urban labor market.**

Flexibility: Gig works offer flexibility allowing women and disadvantaged groups like the elderly or persons with disabilities to work as per their convenience.

Given the rigidity in salaried jobs, **gig jobs fit well for the needs of these people.** Hence, given the low Labor Force Participation (LFP) rate in India, gig works have the potential to improve LFP rate.

Minimum Wage: Gig economy has proved to be like the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS) in urban areas. Through gig works individual always has an option of doing some labor supply and earning the minimum wage.

Further, it would have been difficult for the government to launch a job guarantee program in urban India due to state capacity constraints. Thus, the gig economy represents a significant improvement for the urban work market.

However, despite its multiple advantages, gig works are not able to reduce the level of urban unemployment.

Why are gig works not able to reduce the level of urban unemployment?

There are many reasons behind this such as – **1)** Traditional social norms hold women at home, **2)** Women hardly get access to mobile phones or scooters, **3)** Rural-to-urban migration is constrained by social factors and various monetary and non-monetary costs.

These factors act as obstacles for the gig works to have an overall impact on the employment levels.

What can be the way ahead?

In a changing economy, companies succeed and fail, and jobs are both created and lost. Hence, criticizing gig work using the benchmark of salaried jobs is misguided as most work in India does not have these perks and security.

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However, **India faces challenges between** treating gig work on a par with the Indian informal labour market, or of bringing the burdens of the formal labour market upon it.

2. [Picking Up Peace – on economic costs of riots](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Picking Up Peace**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **7th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Internal Security. GS1- Communalism

Relevance: Communal violence

News– Communal clashes broke out in Nuh, Haryana, a week ago. Media reports say that migrant workers in Gurgaon have begun to leave due to fear over their safety.

How riots in Haryana are not good for its economic progress?

The occurrence of riots contradicts India’s narrative of **economic progress**. Without **social harmony**, the **economic climate** becomes unfavorable for investments.

An encouraging economic trend is the emergence of **India-based Global Capability Centers (GCC)** that handle multinational firms’ operations.

Gurgaon stands out as a **significant hub for GCCs** and contributes to India’s **services exports**. However, Gurgaon faces tough competition from other Indian cities, particularly those in southern states .

It has impacted Gurgaon’s reputation as a **preferred economic location**.

What should be done?

There is a need for **proactive measures** by the Haryana government.

The state can learn from Tamil Nadu’s response to a similar incident in March. A viral fake news led to fear among Hindi-speaking economic migrants, with reports of attacks on them.

In that case, the state government **collaborated with industry associations** to reassure anxious workers. The political leadership took charge of the effort and even sought support from the Bihar government.

Haryana should adopt a **similar approach**. It cannot be left solely to a few police officers to address the **concerns of workers** who wish to leave Gurgaon.

3. [India’s mining policy shift](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India’s mining policy shift**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **8th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance: Issues related to mining sector

News– Recently, Parliament passed the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023, in a bid to attract private sector investment in the exploration of critical and deep-seated minerals in the country.

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What is the importance of minerals for India?

Various minerals play a pivotal role in a nation's **manufacturing, infrastructure development, and progress.**

The **shift towards clean energy** in countries like India relies heavily on the **accessibility of essential minerals** like lithium, cobalt, graphite, and rare earth elements (REEs).

These minerals are also indispensable for **producing semiconductors** utilized in smart electronic devices, defense and aerospace gear, telecommunications technologies.

How much of India's critical minerals are imported?

The scarcity of such minerals in **specific geographic regions** leads to a need for imports. It creates **vulnerabilities in supply chains** and the **potential for disruptions.**

For Example, China has **substantial ownership** of cobalt mines in the Democratic Republic of Congo, responsible for 70% of global cobalt production.

Prominent economies have recently taken measures to bolster their **supply chain resilience** for such minerals, and decrease their **reliance on countries like China for supplies.**

India's **dependence on imports** for the majority of minerals on this list remains significant. India is entirely reliant on countries such as China, Russia, Australia, South Africa, and the United States for essential minerals like lithium, cobalt, nickel, niobium, beryllium.

Even for **deep-seated minerals** like gold, silver, copper, zinc, lead, nickel, cobalt, platinum group elements, and diamonds, India's dependence on imports remains substantial.

In the fiscal year 2022-23, India imported nearly **1.2 million tonnes of copper** valued at over ₹27,000 crore.

Why is the private sector vital for critical minerals exploration?

Research and the Centre for Social and Economic Progress (CSEP) highlight that India's **distinctive geological and tectonic conditions** offer a favorable environment for **potential mineral resources.**

Only about 10% of India's **Obvious Geological Potential (OGP)** has been explored, and less than 2% of this has been **extracted through mining.**

India has witnessed only a limited number of **significant mineral discoveries** over the past few decades.

Majority of exploration projects are undertaken by the **government entity** Geological Survey of India and other Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) like the Mineral Exploration Corporation Limited.

Private sector involvement remains minimal. **India's mining policy** had previously excluded private-sector explorers from participating in the **initial exploration of minerals** in untapped areas. Moreover, companies did not enjoy **appropriate incentives.**

The exploration process entails methods like **aerial surveys, geological mapping, and geochemical analyses.** So, it is a **specialized, time-intensive, and financial activity.** Less than 1% of examined projects ultimately progress into **economically viable mines.**

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PSUs were better suited for exploring surface and bulk minerals like coal and iron ore. However, they faced difficulties in dealing with **deep-seated and crucial minerals**.

In countries such as Australia, private mining firms referred to as junior explorers take risks by utilizing their expertise and **limited financial resources** to conduct exploration.

Following the identification of these prospects, these private enterprises can sell their discoveries to larger mining corporations.

Is India's mining policy conducive to private participation?

The Mines and Minerals (**Development and Regulation**) Act of 1957, has undergone several revisions since its inception, including recent amendments in 2015, 2020, and 2021.

In 1994, amendments were made to the Act to enable interested parties to apply for **mineral concessions** through a **First Come First Served (FCFS) approach**.

In 2015, amendments were made to the MMDR Act to enable private companies to participate in government auctions for **Mining Leases and Composite Licences (CLs)**.

However, the inclusion of the **Evidence of Mineral content (EMT) rule** meant that only projects explored by the government were subjected to auction. It restricts the involvement of the private sector.

The amendments also allowed private firms to register as **exploration entities**, with funding provided by the **National Mineral Exploration Trust (NMET)** for exploration activities. Despite these changes, private sector engagement remained limited.

How does the Mines and Minerals Bill 2023 aim to encourage private players?

Read – [Critical Minerals in India and Mines and Minerals Amendment Bill, 2023](#)

What are some of the possible issues with the Bill's proposals?

Read – [Critical Minerals in India and Mines and Minerals Amendment Bill, 2023](#)

Companies would be more willing to **invest substantial sums** if they were assured of utilizing any resources they unearth.

The new policy only permits the government to auction what an explorer has discovered. This contrasts with practices in other **global jurisdictions**, where private explorers can sell their findings to mining companies.

4. [15 years after 2008, developed countries still making mistakes](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "Sajjid Z Chinoy writes: **15 years after 2008, developed countries still making mistakes**" published in "The Indian express" on 8th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilisation of resources, growth, development and employment. & Effects of liberalisation on the economy,

News: In this article discusses the aftermath of the 2008 Financial Crisis and how policy responses deepened economic issues. Tight fiscal policy led to loss of monetary policy, causing more problems. Now, there's a trend of countries turning protectionist, potentially harming global growth. The solution isn't protectionism, but a coordinated global response, education, and

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improved domestic policies. The world needs a major conference, like Bretton Woods in 1944, to address these challenges.

What are the implications of the 2008 financial crisis on the world?

Globalization Impact: While globalization in the '90s and 2000s boosted economies, it led to job losses in the West due to the “China shock”.

Fiscal Policy: Western countries tightened fiscal policy significantly after the crisis. This impacted their GDP growth: by 2018, GDP was 13% below pre-crisis trend in France, 17% in the US, and 22% in the UK.

Monetary Policy: Tight fiscal policies led to very loose monetary measures. Central banks increased their balance sheets, pushing long-term low interest rates.

Inequality and Economic Distortion: Loose monetary policy inflated asset prices, increasing inequality. It also kept unproductive “zombie firms” alive, stifling growth and innovation.

Protectionism: Economic challenges led to protectionist policies, like Brexit and the US-China trade war.

De-globalization Risks: Recent policies aim at bringing production back home, but this might reverse the gains from globalization. Such changes risk global economic division and could undo the benefits of globalization.

Bigger Current Threat: Technology and AI advances might replace many jobs, similar to how the “China shock” affected blue-collar jobs.

What should be done?

Coordinated Global Response: Countries should work together to address economic challenges, just as they did in the Bretton Woods Conference in 1944.

Education and Training: Equip workforces with skills to complement, not compete with, technology.

Support Creative Destruction: Encourage innovation and the phasing out of outdated practices, rather than preserving unproductive “zombie firms”.

Robust Safety Nets: Create systems to protect and support those adversely affected by economic changes.

Fair Tax System: Implement taxation that can finance the necessary changes and support the economy.

Avoid Protectionism: Instead of isolating economies, ensure that globalization’s gains are shared fairly.

Recognize AI’s Impact: Address the potential “ChatGPT shock” which might affect white-collar jobs, similar to how the “China shock” impacted blue-collar positions.

The focus should be on collaborative solutions, not counterproductive protectionist measures.

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5. [Experimenting with cheetahs, applying copy-paste as conservation](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Experimenting with cheetahs, applying copy-paste as conservation**” published in “The Indian express” on 8th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Conservation & environmental impact assessment

News: In this article author discusses India’s cheetah reintroduction project led by Dr. Jhala. Originally, the project aimed to establish free-ranging cheetahs in Kuno. Due to changing prey densities and habitat challenges, the plan evolved to shuffle cheetahs between areas. This approach might undermine India’s broader conservation goals by accepting fragmented habitats and “assisted dispersal” instead of natural wildlife movement. The author questions the accuracy of Dr. Jhala’s estimates and the project’s long-term implications.

What are the challenges to India’s cheetah reintroduction project?

1. **Changing Project Goals:** Initially, the project aimed to establish free-ranging cheetahs in Kuno. Now, it leans towards “assisted dispersal”, which means moving cheetahs between areas artificially.
2. **Prey Density Fluctuations:** Cheetal, the primary prey for cheetahs in Kuno, has varied densities over the years:

2006: 5 per sq km

2011: 36 per sq km

2012: 52 per sq km

2013: 69 per sq km

By 2021, Dr. Jhala’s data showed a density of just 38 per sq km.

3. **Habitat Size and Carrying Capacity:** Dr. Jhala initially suggested Kuno sanctuary (347 sq km) could support 27 cheetahs, with the larger Kuno landscape (3,000 sq km) holding up to 100 animals. By 2021, the numbers dropped to 21 cheetahs for a 748 sq km park and 36 for a 3,200 sq km landscape.
4. **Legal Hurdles:** The Supreme Court initially barred the project in 2013 and only allowed it in 2020 on an experimental basis.
5. **Conservation Ethos Mismatch:** The approach of shuffling cheetahs might undermine India’s broader conservation goals. The traditional ethos supports natural wildlife movement and interconnected forests. Assisted dispersal could promote fragmented habitats.
6. **Doubts Over Data Accuracy:** There is inconsistency in Kuno’s cheetal density data provided by Dr. Jhala over the years.

What should be done?

Reevaluate Project Goals: Reconsider the idea of “assisted dispersal” and refocus on establishing free-ranging cheetahs in their natural habitat, as originally intended.

Monitor Prey Density: Given the fluctuations in cheetal density (from 5 to 69 per sq km in seven years), regular monitoring is essential to ensure stable prey availability.

Legal & Ethical Considerations: Ensure that reintroduction aligns with the Supreme Court’s guidelines and India’s broader conservation ethos.

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Maintain Forest Connectivity: Prioritize natural wildlife corridors and interconnected forests to avoid turning habitats into isolated genetic islands.

Transparency in Data: Ensure consistent and transparent data collection and sharing to maintain trust in the project's viability.

6. [Beyond the hype: Independent verification is crucial on claims about material LK-99](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Beyond the hype: Independent verification is crucial on claims about material LK-99**" published in "The Hindu" on 8th August 2023.

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

News: Recently, South Korean scientists revealed their discovery that the substance they termed LK-99 is a superconductor at room temperature and atmospheric pressure in two preprint paper uploaded to the arXiv repository

What is room-temperature superconductor?

A room-temperature superconductor is a material that can carry electric current without any loss or resistance at the temperatures we typically experience in daily life. Scientists have sought this for decades because it can revolutionize energy transmission and various industrial applications.

What is the significance of discovering a room-temperature superconductor?

Energy Efficiency: A large amount of electric current is lost during transmission from power plants to consumption points. A room-temperature superconductor could drastically reduce these losses.

Industrial Applications: Such a material would benefit heavy industrial processes. For instance, it could enhance the design and efficiency of nuclear reactors.

Research: Particle colliders, used in cutting-edge physics research, would see improvements in their design and operation.

Medical Diagnostics: Devices like MRI machines could become more efficient, potentially leading to clearer images and faster diagnostics.

Cooling Costs: Current superconductors need to be cooled to very low temperatures, which can be costly and challenging. For example, some superconductors require cooling with liquid helium, which is harder than using liquid nitrogen. Room-temperature superconductors eliminate this need.

Historical Context: There was a significant jump in superconducting capabilities in the late 1980s with the discovery of copper-oxide superconductors, showing the transformative nature of such breakthroughs.

Economic and Prestige Value: The discovery carries both material benefits and significant scientific honor, making it a sought-after achievement in the physics community.

What are the limitations for discovering a room-temperature superconductor?

Verification Challenges: Verifying superconductivity is complex. It requires sophisticated equipment and knowledge to ensure the material truly exhibits zero resistance.

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Pressure Dependency: Some materials, like LaH10, show superconductivity near room temperature, but only under extreme pressures, making them impractical for most applications.

Scientific Rush: The allure of prestige and potential benefits can cause researchers to hasten publications before thorough verification, risking inaccuracies.

Historical Missteps: Past claims of room-temperature superconductors often faced retractions after independent scrutiny. For instance, the German physicist Jan Hendrik Schön's claims were later retracted, casting doubt on new claims.

Synthesis Complexity: Creating the exact conditions for superconductivity, like with the South Korean LK-99, can be intricate and hard to replicate.

What should be done?

Independent Verification: Any new claim, like the South Korean group's discovery of LK-99, needs thorough independent testing to confirm its properties.

Avoid Rushed Publications: Given past retractions, like that of Ranga P. Dias in 2020, researchers should avoid premature publications before comprehensive data verification.

Maintain Skepticism: Both the scientific community and the public should approach new claims cautiously, awaiting multiple confirmations before acceptance.

Increase Transparency: Open access to research, as seen with the South Korean group's preprint papers, fosters trust and facilitates wider scrutiny.

Collaborative Efforts: Engage multiple labs and experts for a combined effort, ensuring diverse perspectives and minimizing biases or errors.

7. [The green tinge of local manufacturing](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "[The green tinge of local manufacturing](#)" published in "Business standard" on 9th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment (Global warming) & GS3- Effects of liberalisation on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

News: The author discusses global efforts to localize manufacturing to meet decarbonization targets. Countries are investing in local supply chains, especially in clean energy sectors, influenced by national goals to reduce carbon emissions.

How are companies localizing manufacturing?

Schneider Electric has created regional supply chains since 2005, speeding up market entry.

Eel's 3Sun sets up gigawatt-scale solar plants in Europe.

Tata group plans a \$5.2 billion battery plant in the UK for electric vehicles.

ExxonMobil targets 100,000 metric tonnes of lithium extraction yearly.

Despite a drop in Apple's global production sites, China's manufacturing share for Apple increased to 38%.

What incentives are countries offering?

The US's Inflation Reduction Act triggers billions in local manufacturing investments.

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Europe, especially the UK, is offering green subsidies, though not as substantial as the US.

India introduced a production-linked incentive scheme, targeting solar and battery sectors to promote high value-added product exports.

How is investment shaping the landscape?

The US leads, raising \$3.5 billion in climate-tech venture capital.

India follows, with investments of \$1.8 billion, significantly influenced by Avaada Energy's \$1 billion.

What's the future of clean energy manufacturing?

There's a global race to localize mature clean energy production, such as solar and wind.

Emerging technologies like green hydrogen, sustainable aviation fuel, and carbon capture are gaining traction.

The Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory made significant progress in nuclear fusion, although widespread application remains distant.

8. [Learning from the CHIPS Act of the U.S.](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "[Learning from the CHIPS Act of the U.S.](#)" published in **The Hindu** on **9th August 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Science & Technology, Industrial Policy**

Relevance: **comparison between India's and the US semiconductor policy**

News: The United States' Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors and Science Act of 2022 (**CHIPS Act**) has completed one year. The article compares the US semiconductor policy with India's.

What are the differences between the US and India's Semiconductor Policy?

Semiconductor Policy

US: The [CHIPS Act](#) promotes intergovernmental collaboration and creates four funds for execution. The Department of Commerce oversees the \$50 billion CHIPS for America Fund for semiconductor advancement.

Allocations are also designated for specific purposes, such as \$2 billion for defense-unique technologies under the Department of Defense.

India: The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) oversees India's semiconductor policy. Specific segments like manufacturing, assembly, displays, and compound semiconductors are handled by the independent [India Semiconductor Mission \(ISM\)](#) under MeitY.

Chip design policy is managed by [C-DAC](#), an R&D organization under MeitY. However, to ensure that the semiconductor strategy persists beyond government terms, **a whole-of-government approach like to the CHIPS Act is required.**

Collaboration

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US: Firms applying for funding through the CHIPS Act must present workforce development proposals. A nodal agency, known as **the National Semiconductor Technology Center (NSTC)**, has been established to partner with businesses and educational establishments.

India: MeitY has initiated the [Chips2Startup \(C2S\) initiative](#), working with more than 100 universities and colleges. Similar to NSTC, **C2S seeks to enhance workforce growth by endorsing established high-quality training schemes.**

However, in India, many private training centres prepare chip designers outside the conventional university system.

Hence, **it is important for C2S to focus on** certifying good programmes of universities or private training institutes rather than running them.

Feasibility Assessment Guidelines

US: The CHIPS Act has created a **CHIPS Program Office (CPO)** to lay down the guidelines for assessing the financial viability of a project. The CPO is hiring Investment Principals and Financial Structuring Directors to catalyse private sector investments.

India: While India has set up feasibility assessment guidelines, **transparency improvements are necessary.** Regular monthly progress reports on the semiconductor program, published by the government, will enhance confidence and expectation management.

Packaging Research

US: The CHIPS Act allocates \$11 billion for research beyond domestic semiconductor manufacturing, focusing on advanced packaging. The **National Advanced Packaging Manufacturing Program (NAPMP)** is introduced to enhance the U.S.'s strategic position in this area.

India: India's semiconductor approach lacks a strong focus on advanced manufacturing and packaging research. Hence, India should learn a lesson from the CHIPS Act and invest in research on future technologies.

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

What can be the way ahead?

The CHIPS and Science Act offers a valuable blueprint for semiconductor policy. Hence, India's strategists should thoroughly assess its strengths and weaknesses and implement relevant aspects in their semiconductor approach.

9. [It's time to double down on our digital expansion](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“It's time to double down on our digital expansion”** published in the **“mint”** on **9th August 2023.**

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance: Digital economy

News– The article discusses the rapid growth of India's internet economy. It highlights the uneven expansion and the need to broaden the internet base to reach everyone.

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How has India's internet economy been growing at a strong pace?

The expansion of internet access, the affordability of connectivity are significant achievements. There is a rise in monthly Unified Payments Interface transactions. It has exceeded 10 billion with a value surpassing ₹15 trillion.

The Government also supports policies focusing on data security. Privacy regulations are aimed at creating more equitable online markets. Additionally, our export policy aligns with e-commerce.

The number of internet users has surged due to economical data tariffs. It has increased from 462 million in 2018 to 759 million users in 2022. This figure is anticipated to grow to 900 million by 2025.

What are issues related to the internet economy in India?

According to **World Bank data** from 2021, our internet penetration rate lags behind the **world average**.

According to this data, India was positioned at the **120th spot in 2021 in terms of internet penetration**. The internet penetration rate is **standing at 46%**. This is below the **global average of 63%** and lags behind the mean for lower middle-income countries.

In comparison, the UAE led the rankings with 100% penetration, followed by the UK at 97%, and the US at 92%. China, which has a penetration rate of 73%.

The slower data speeds pose a hindrance, especially in case of **new technologies like artificial intelligence**. India's **median fixed broadband speed of 53.2Mbps** is slow in comparison to other places. In Singapore, the UAE, and even Chile, speeds **exceed 200Mbps**.

Most concerning aspect is the **unreliability of internet access**, as indicated by our record of **internet shutdowns**.

In 2022, the country experienced **84 sudden shutdowns**. The rest of the world combined had 99, according to Access Now's count. This accounts for **45% of the total shutdowns globally**.

What should be done?

It is essential to establish **clear protocols** for internet shutdowns based on **thorough cost-benefit analyses**.

The vision of an **internet economy worth \$1 trillion by 2030** is promising. India's strides in this area have indeed been impressive.

However, there is still a need to substantially expand and stabilize our **internet infrastructure**. Taking **prompt action on multiple fronts** is imperative.

Clearly, there's substantial work left to be done: a larger portion of the population needs to be brought online, and fewer individuals should be left dealing with frustrating buffering issues.

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10. [That '70s show – Proposed licensing for computing devices' imports dents India's credibility](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**That '70s show – Proposed licensing for computing devices' imports dents India's credibility**” published in **The Hindu** on **10th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development

Relevance: concerns with import restrictions

News: The Commerce and Industry Ministry of India implemented abrupt restrictions on imports of laptops, PCs, tablets, and servers, necessitating importers to acquire licenses.

This action prompted worries about supply chain disruptions, possible scarcities, and increasing prices.

Why did the government impose restrictions?

The government cited security reasons for the decision as imported devices could be utilized for surveillance, similar to the potential for spyware in mobile phones.

This move will also encourage IT hardware manufacturers to establish production facilities in India through a production-linked incentive scheme.

However, due to the complex nature of PC component value chains, these plans faced criticism and raised fears of impacting India's software and IT-enabled services exports.

Hence, the government postponed the restrictions until November 1, assuring quicker license approvals.

What are the concerns with imposing restrictions?

While the government claims quick license issuance, this situation brings back memories of India's earlier IT industry stages (1970s and 1980s), **causing unease among industry players until the licensing rules clarify**.

If concerns about security are arising due to PC and tablet imports from China, the government could enforce testing requirements to ensure the safety of shipments.

Whereas, **if the goal is to encourage investments**, it becomes challenging to force major global players into making substantial investments when they have more convenient business options elsewhere.

Therefore, **such restrictions might increase costs and limit device choices, impacting Indian consumers and hindering digital access to government services**.

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

What lies ahead?

This situation, along with recent policies like the 28% GST on gaming bets and the freeze on prices of 'deregulated' petroleum products, is worrying for investors.

Hence, India's reform narrative might be derailed by unpredictable policies, exorbitant taxes, and a return to maximum government.

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11. [How sweet is India's spot? – on economic policies of India](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**How sweet is India's spot?** – The economy has a lot going for it, but a closer examination suggests some urgent policy priorities” published in “Business standard” on 10th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian economy

News: In this article, the author discusses India's strong economic recovery and growth prospects. He emphasized the need for fiscal reforms, improved trade policies, better education, and increased private investment. The article also highlights India's geopolitical position, benefiting from US-China tensions, but warns against over-reliance on such advantages.

About India's Economic growth

Recovery Rate: Bounced back from a 6.6% GDP slump in FY21 to 9.1% and 7.2% in the subsequent years.

Exports: Goods exports rose in 2021 and 2022, while service exports remain strong despite recent slowdowns.

Digital Boom: Expanding digital infrastructure facilitates smoother nationwide transactions. It has facilitated low-cost transactions nationwide, which aids in the delivery of expanded government direct benefit programs.

Government Initiatives: Increased spending on roads and infrastructure, aiding growth.

Monetary Policy: RBI's restrictive stance for 15 months has lowered inflation below 6%. Correction in commodity prices (but not tomatoes), also contributed.

Growth projections: The government and RBI project 6.5% growth in FY24.

A recent RBI paper stated India **needs 7.6%-9.1% growth to be considered a developed country by 2047.**

Where does India stand Geopolitically?

India has strengthened ties with the US and its allies, remaining neutral in the Russo-Ukraine war.

India benefits from US-China tensions but should be cautious about relying on it.

How has government spending affected the Indian economy?

Infrastructure Boost: There is a noticeable strengthening of physical infrastructure, especially roads. This has been a result of increased government capex (capital expenditure).

Banking Stability: Banks and companies' balance sheets have improved significantly, permitting more lending and borrowing.

What challenges is the Indian economy facing?

Fiscal Concerns: Fiscal deficits and government debt levels are high. Debt/GDP ratio stands at 80%, surpassing the recommended (by the N K Singh report on fiscal responsibility) 60% target.

Despite resolving the “twin balance sheet problem”, a resurgence in private investment is still awaited.

Export Slump: Despite a surge in 2021 and 2022, goods exports experienced a recent decline.

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International Trade Policies: Recent trade decisions, like increased tariffs since 2016, have been counterproductive. India's late-stage withdrawal from the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in 2019 was a setback.

Resurgence of import licensing restrictions, evident in sectors like laptops are not good for industrial growth.

Social issues: Low learning outcomes in government schools require urgent attention. Improvement needed to cater to a skill-intensive global economy.

Concerning stats like female labor participation rates and youth unemployment compared to East Asian countries.

What actions should be taken to address them?

Fiscal Reforms: Reduce fiscal deficits and target a debt/GDP ratio closer to the recommended 60%.

Trade Policy Revamp: Roll back the recent increase in customs tariffs. Consider re-engaging with at least one of the two Asian mega regional free trade agreements (FTAs). Remove unnecessary import licensing restrictions.

Educational Improvements: Leverage digital infrastructure to boost learning outcomes in government schools.

Boosting Exports: Enhance participation in global value chains by joining regional free trade agreements.

Investment Climate: Ensure policy stability and transparency to attract more domestic and foreign investments.

Social Harmony: Prioritize justice, law and order to encourage a conducive business environment.

12. Gender sensitivity works in favour of economic growth

Source- The post is based on the article "**Gender sensitivity works in favour of economic growth**" published in the "**mint**" on **10th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy. GS1- Social empowerment

Relevance: Issue related to women economic empowerment

News- The article deals with this issue of sexual harassment of women at workplaces

What are some facts and statistics related to the prevalence of sexual harassment at workplaces across the world?

According to a **global survey conducted by ILO** in 2022, over one in five individuals employed have faced various forms of **violence and harassment** at their workplaces.

A study that examined **gender equality laws** across 193 countries discovered that sexual harassment can occur at **any stage of employment** and spans across **different geographical regions and occupations**.

Research further suggests that in the **majority of cases (72%)**, the harassment is done by individuals occupying people in senior positions.

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Instances of harassment do impact men. But, women are more than twice as likely to experience **gender-based harassment and sexual abuse**.

What are the impacts of sexual harassment of women at workplace?

The **#MeToo movement** underscores the **detrimental consequences** of such harassment on women's economic prospects.

The impact of sexual harassment results in a **substantial economic setback**.

75% of approximately 2.7 billion women aged 18 and above, along with an **estimated 600 million men** have fallen victim to this issue.

Research conducted by Chamie in 2018 estimated the overall **financial consequences** of this problem at **approximately \$2.8 billion**.

For individual women affected by this phenomenon, **lifetime financial losses** were projected to **range from \$600,000 to over \$1.3 million**. It is indicated by the **Institute for Women's Policy Research and Time's UP Foundation in 2021**.

Furthermore, the **long-term repercussions** encompass **depressive disorders, reduced engagement, premature departures** from jobs, and **hindrances in career progression**.

What are challenges in dealing with sexual harassment at workplaces?

The instances of workplace sexual harassment are significantly **underreported**. It is primarily due to concerns about **potential reprisals** or a perception that addressing the issue won't yield **positive outcomes**.

The **US Equal Employment Opportunity Commission** noted that a majority of harassed employees from 1995 to 2016 did not report the incidents.

Similarly, a **2017 BBC survey** revealed that over half of the victims chose not to disclose their experiences.

In 2021, the number of countries offering **some level of protection** against retaliation increased to 103.

Despite these advancements, women of working age across the Middle East and North Africa, as well as half in East Asia and the Pacific, and one-third in Latin America and the Caribbean still have no **legal protection**.

What are the steps taken by various countries to address this issue?

Some nations have introduced legislation aimed at limiting the **utilization of confidentiality or non-disclosure agreements**. It can be employed to **suppress victims' voices**.

Certain US states have implemented new **sexual harassment prevention policies**. Hong Kong has recently broadened the **scope of protection** through a **revised code of practice**.

In the UK, there is now a **legal obligation** for employers to prevent harassment. It is backed by a **statutory code of conduct**.

Even major corporations like Microsoft have established **dedicated employee advocacy teams**.

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What is the situation in India?

India has a codified legislation, known as the **PoSH Act**. However, this law has faced criticism for addressing violence against women in a **fragmented manner**.

Moreover, the Act has had limited impact on the **extensive female workforce** in the country's informal sector.

A **recent online survey by BBC** indicated that over 52% of Indian women and girls surveyed had declined **educational and job opportunities** due to feelings of insecurity.

Researchers have previously estimated that **India's GDP** could potentially rise to nearly **\$6 trillion by 2050** if the **existing employment gap** of 58 percentage points between men and women is eliminated (**Bloomberg Economics**).

In 2019, the ILO adopted a **landmark international treaty (C190)** on violence and harassment at work, India voted for it in 2019, but is yet to **ratify** it.

13. [Seeds for growth: How technology can boost Indian agriculture](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Seeds for growth: How technology can boost Indian agriculture**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **10th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Agriculture. GS1-Economic geography

Relevance: Issues related to agricultural inputs

News– The article explains the issues related to the seed industry in India and suggests solutions for development of better seed varieties.

What are the challenges faced by Indian agriculture?

There remains an **unmet demand** for coarse cereals, pulses, oilseeds, and vegetables. These essential food items are **not affordable** for a significant portion of the population. As a result, a substantial proportion of the population is **undernourished**.

Diminishing natural resources, a growing population, severe weather patterns, and climate-related natural calamities present significant obstacles to Indian and regional agriculture.

How has the seed industry evolved in India?

The foundation of the Indian seed industry was solidified during the 1960s with the establishment of the National Seeds Corporation. It gained further momentum through supportive policies and regulations introduced in the late 1980s.

Significant developments such as the enactment of the **Protection of Plant Varieties & Farmers Rights Act in 2001** and the introduction of **Bt cotton hybrids for commercial cultivation** in 2002 has taken place. It has marked the transition to a technology-driven era in the seed sector.

The Indian seed market has expanded to an estimated value of **\$4.0 to \$6.0 billion**.

What is the importance of seeds?

The key factors determining **agricultural profitability includes** input costs like seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, along with expenses related to land, labour, and water.

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Seed costs typically account for around **3 to 6 percent of the total production expenses**. Yet, they can contribute to a **yield advantage of 15-20 percent** beyond the **genetic potential**.

What is the way forward for the seed industry in India?

Crop variety development can be achieved by **leveraging techniques** such as **molecular technologies, speed breeding, and gene-editing tools**. The effective use of applied seed technologies will guarantee **optimal functionality**.

Hence, contemporary seed technology should combine **genetic advancements with applied methodologies** to produce enhanced seed varieties capable of withstanding biological and environmental challenges.

These technologies would comprise: Genetic manipulation in variety development; priming or physiological advancement protocols; film coating, pelleting with or without active formulations; seed treatments with biologicals, or chemical pesticides having contact or systemic mode of action; bio-stimulants and nutrients for higher germination and faster seedling establishment; etc.

Most of these technologies are in **commercial use globally**, and some have been introduced in India.

A **robust regulatory mechanism** that includes quality seedlings and planting materials is needed under the newly proposed “**Clean Green Mission**” by the Government of India.

Supportive regulatory guidelines will play a crucial role in facilitating the adoption of seed technologies.

The **Fertiliser (Inorganic, Organic, or Mixed) (Control Order, 1985)** has been updated to the **Fertiliser (Inorganic, Organic, or Mixed) (Control) Amendment Order, 2021**, which now incorporates **bio-stimulants** as a vital element in seed-enhancement technology.

Furthermore, adjustments are required to include **coated or pelleted seeds within the Certified Seed (CS) category**.

Coated seeds are currently only permitted to be sold as **Truthfully Labelled (TL) seeds**. Film coating is widely recognized for its **farmer-friendly attributes** and has capacity to decrease **pesticide application** by as much as one-tenth,

In the past 10 to 15 years, a positive trend of **public-private collaboration**, facilitated by licensing agreements, has emerged.

This collaboration has effectively promoted various **open-pollinated and hybrid varieties**. As a result, there have been improvements in both **Variety Replacement Rates and Seed Replacement Rates** in field crops and vegetables.

Given this context, **sustainable seed technologies** accessible from the private sector can further enhance the value derived from seed planting.

Therefore, the **research and development efforts** of both public and private sectors can mutually complement each other in crafting **environmentally friendly and high-performing seeds** that remain affordable.

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14. Mangroves offer a vital shield against climate change

Source: The post is based on the article “Mangroves offer a vital shield against climate change” published in “Live Mint” on 11th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment conservation

News: In this article author emphasizes the importance of mangrove forests in India for environmental protection, biodiversity, livelihoods, and climate change mitigation. He also urges for their conservation and responsible management, while highlighting the threats they face and successful restoration efforts.

What is the importance of mangrove forests in India?

7. **Natural Protection:** Mangroves act as barriers against erosion, storms, and cyclones. They provide over \$7.8 billion in flood protection benefits annually.
8. **Biodiversity Hub:** India’s mangroves are home to diverse species. The Sundarbans, the world’s largest mangrove forest, shelters the Bengal tiger and Ganges river dolphin.
9. **Livelihoods:** Mangroves support 900,000 fisher households in India, aiding artisanal fisheries and boosting local incomes. Tourism potential in regions like the Sundarbans is significant.
10. **Environmental Filters:** Mangroves improve water quality by trapping sediments and pollutants, benefiting marine ecosystems.
11. **Climate Change Combatants:** They sequester large amounts of CO₂, with global mangroves storing 22.86 metric gigatonnes, roughly half the yearly CO₂ emissions from various sources.

What threats are mangrove forests facing?

12. **Rapid Disappearance:** Since 1996, global mangrove coverage has declined by 11,700-sq km, equivalent to three times the size of Goa. South and Southeast Asia are witnessing the most significant mangrove loss.
13. **Human Activities:** 62% of mangrove loss is due to farming, aquaculture, and infrastructure development.
14. **Extreme Weather:** Though mangroves can recover from natural events like cyclones, human-induced changes, especially coastal modifications, can cause permanent damage.
15. **Global Warming:** Rising temperatures and other impacts of climate change pose challenges to mangrove ecosystems.
16. **Inappropriate Restoration:** Taking a cue from Sri Lanka’s experience, planting the wrong seedling in unsuitable conditions can reduce plant survival chances by over 50%.
17. **Economic Growth:** India’s push for economic growth sometimes comes at the expense of environmental conservation, potentially threatening mangroves

What should be done?

Protection and Restoration: Safeguard and restore mangroves to combat air pollution and secure coasts.

Community Involvement: Engage local communities for sustainable livelihoods, as seen in the Sundarbans region.

Adopt Successful Models: Emulate states like Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Odisha which have increased mangrove cover. Such as, establish dedicated conservation units similar to Maharashtra’s mangrove and coastal biodiversity conservation unit.

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Government Initiatives: Support efforts like MISHTI (Mangrove Initiative for Shoreline Habitats & Tangible Incomes), aiming to conserve mangroves across 13 states and Union territories.

Collaborative Approach: Foster teamwork among government officials, scientists, and communities.

15. Needed intervention – on Tiger conservation

Source– The post is based on the article “**Needed intervention**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **11th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance: Issues related to conservation of ecosystem

News – The Wildlife Institute of India and the National Tiger Conservation Authority recently released the Tiger Census report.

What are factors behind good performance of Madhya Pradesh in maintaining a healthy tiger population?

Madhya Pradesh, for the second time reported **785 tigers**. It is about a **fifth of the national count**. The State reported a **50% rise** in tigers since the last census.

Madhya Pradesh has developed a strategy over time that actively involves the **relocation of both tigers and their prey** within the state.

The objective of this approach is to **establish a balance** between the numbers of **predators and their prey**.

During the past couple of decades, M.P. has effectively reintroduced species like barasingha into habitats like Satpura and Bandhavgarh, and gaur into the Bandhavgarh and Sanjay-Dubri tiger reserves.

Additionally, they have successfully bolstered the populations of prey species like chital in regions such as Satpura and Sanjay tiger reserves, Nauradehi, Kuno, and Gandhisagar wildlife sanctuaries by transferring them from areas with higher densities.

What are issues with the current approach of the government towards conservation of animal species?

The principles of ecology stress the importance of **relocating species** to environments that are not overly unfamiliar to them, to prevent **unintended adverse consequences**.

However, **recent amendments to the Forest Conservation Act** have introduced **greater flexibility** in diverting significant portions of forest land for industrial use.

It could result in **more fragmentation** within protected areas and an increased reliance on the practice of **relocating prey to sustain predator populations**.

This approach is increasingly at odds with **India’s conservation philosophy**. This conservation philosophy avoids creating isolated and enclosed spaces. It encourages species to inhabit **larger yet well-defined territories**.

Way forward

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Government faces challenges in maintaining connected forest landscapes. Therefore, **relying solely on nature to restore the balance** between predators and prey becomes **unrealistic**.

It's now crucial for more states to adopt **proactive policies** for managing prey populations. It involves leveraging **scientific expertise** and **support from local communities** near reserves.

There is a need to shift from merely focusing on the numbers of carnivores. It is important to constantly **improve the habitat** required to sustain these animals.

16. The Tasks That Will Protect India's Tuskers

Source– The post is based on the article **“The Tasks That Will Protect India's Tuskers”** published in **“The Times of India”** on **12th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance: Conservation of animal biodiversity

News– The article explains the steps taken by Indian government for elephant conservation

What are some facts about elephants in India?

India takes great pride in its **substantial elephant population**. There exist **three distinct species** of elephants.

While elephants inhabit a total of 13 countries, it is noteworthy that India alone hosts over **60% of the worldwide wild elephant population**.

The elephant population within India is **spread across various regions** including the southern, northeastern, east-central, and northern parts of the country.

What are steps taken by the Indian government for conservation of elephants?

India has declared elephants as the **National Heritage Animal**. It grants them protection under **Schedule I of the Indian Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**.

Project Elephant was initiated during 1991-92 as a **centrally funded program**. It aimed to **safeguard and conserve** elephants, their natural habitats and corridors.

The elephant population in India has experienced a substantial increase, reaching approximately **30,000 individuals**.

Protecting corridors-

Elephant habitats and forests are **intersected by roads and railway tracks**. It **forms obstacles** for the movement of elephants and other wildlife. Obstruction caused by railways leads to **habitat fragmentation**.

The government is consistently **collaborating** with state governments to **mitigate the detrimental effects** of existing railway lines on elephants and other wildlife.

Recent developments include the **identification of 110 critical sites** spanning over 1,800 kilometers along existing railway lines.

The Ministry of Railways has adopted measures such as **constructing underpasses, overpasses, enforcing speed limits, establishing level crossings, and building ramps** to facilitate elephant movement.

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The Ministry of Railways is actively engaged in coordination with the MoEF&CC.

For instance, the Southern Railway has implemented **inventive measures** like **constructing underpasses** to reduce elephant fatalities on the **Coimbatore-Palakkad route** connecting Tamil Nadu and Kerala.

Similarly, the **Northeast Frontier Railway** is in the process of building an **elevated corridor** in **Assam's Deepor Beel** to prevent elephant accidents.

In states like West Bengal and Uttarakhand, pilot projects such as the **Intrusion Detection System using optical fiber cables, seismic sensors for animal movement detection, and infrared thermal cameras** have been initiated.

Minimising human-animal conflict-

India has established a formalised process known as **Management Effectiveness Evaluation (MEE)**. It displays **proactive engagement** in evaluating its national parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and tiger reserves.

MEE procedure has been initiated for **elephant reserves** located in various regions: Uttarakhand's Shivalik Elephant Reserve, Tamil Nadu's Nilgiri Elephant Reserve, Odisha's Mayurbhanj Elephant Reserve, and Assam's Kaziranga-Karbi Anglong Elephant Reserve.

The Ministry has enhanced **natural habitats** through activities like augmenting water sources and planting fodder trees, as well as regenerating bamboo growth.

To mitigate conflicts, specific areas of **significant importance** for elephants are designated as **Elephant Reserves**. Presently, a total of 33 ERs have been established across 14 states where elephants reside.

India has initiated the creation of a **genetic database** specifically for captive elephants. This **comprehensive database** encompassing over 326 captive elephants has been developed and documented using the **Gaj Soochna App**.

This DNA profiling initiative aims to counter the **unlawful transfer of elephants** between states or individuals.

A **comprehensive field manual** designed for frontline staff to manage human-elephant conflicts has been introduced in multiple languages.

The Ministry conducts **Land Use Land Cover analysis** of Elephant Reserves in various states.

17. [India needs a new economic policy](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**India needs a new economic policy**" published in **The Hindu** on **12th August 2023**.

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

Relevance: **measures needed to boost GDP growth rate**

News: The National Statistical Office (NSO) has released the fourth-quarter GDP growth rate figures for 2022-23. The current NSO data, when compared to the previous year, present a more pessimistic outlook.

Further, analyzing NSO data since 2014-2015 yields three important conclusions.

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What conclusions can be made after analyzing NSO data since 2014-2015?

First, the GDP growth rate has been decreasing each year since 2015-16, and it has now dropped in the fourth quarter **to a level of 3.5%**.

Second, this growth is similar to the [Hindu Rate of Growth](#) observed during the 1950-77 socialism era.

Third, the economic reforms taken under the **leadership of P.V. Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh** led to increase in GDP growth to 6% to 8% annually, from 1991 to 1996 and 2004 to 2014.

However, recent years have seen a worrying and ongoing drop-in GDP growth rates since 2016.

What measures can be taken to boost the growth rate of GDP?

First, abolishing personal income tax and eliminating the Goods and Services Tax (GST) are crucial steps to encourage investors and earners.

Second, the government should **raise funds through indirect taxes and by printing currency notes**, which can be circulated by paying wages to the employment generated in extensive public works.

Third, the government should **set fixed-term savings interest at around 9% to boost middle-class purchasing power, and limit loan interest rates for small and medium industries to 6%** to increase production and employment.

Fourth, India also requires a comprehensive **new economic policy** with clear objectives, priorities, a strategic approach to achieving goals, and a transparent resource mobilization plan.

Fifth, in India, the market system operates under rules and isn't entirely free. However, **market capitalism thrives on incentives and capital**, driving innovation, factory productivity, and GDP growth. **China also embraced this free market approach**, despite being a totalitarian.

However, it doesn't imply full deregulation. **Government intervention is needed for** safety nets, affirmative action, addressing market failure, and ensuring a level-playing field.

Must Read: [India's GDP Growth for FY2021-22 – Explained](#)

What can be the way ahead?

Balancing public sector and deregulation, along with selling unprofitable units, boosting employment through affirmative action, and ensuring access to social security will help the poor in India.

This will also foster fairness in competition, ensures transparency, accountability, philanthropy, and corporate governance, legitimizing profitable operations that drive the market system.

18. PM Modi reopens security debate

Source: The post is based on the article "PM Modi reopens security debate" published in "Business standard" on 12th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Security challenges and their management in border areas.

News: In this article author discusses the challenges faced by India during the 1960s. He consider 1960s the most tumultuous decade post-independence due to multiple internal

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insurgencies, wars with neighbors, political instability, and economic hardships. He also touch upon the 1980s for comparison.

What challenges did India face from its early post-independence years until the end of the 1960s?

Pakistan as an Adversary (1947-1952): Soon after gaining independence, India confronts Pakistan as a military threat.

Naga Insurgency:

Starts in the late 1940s.

Intensifies by the mid-1950s with China's support.

Military operations and resettlement initiatives like "Protected and Progressive Villages" lead to human rights issues.

Emergence of China as a Threat:

By the mid-1950s, China's looming presence becomes concerning.

The Dalai Lama's escape to India in 1959 strains relations.

Indian and Chinese forces clash in Hot Springs, Eastern Ladakh in 1959.

Liberation of Goa (1961):

India launches a military operation against Portuguese-controlled Goa.

War with China (1962): India faces a major military conflict with China.

Kashmir Tensions (1963): The Hazratbal incident sparks unrest in the region.

Political Transitions:

Nehru's death in 1964 creates a leadership vacuum.

Lal Bahadur Shastri takes over, facing multiple no-confidence motions before his sudden death in 1966.

India-Pakistan War (1965): A significant military conflict between the two nations erupts.

Rise of Mizo Insurgency (1966): Following Shastri's demise, the Mizo National Front proclaims sovereignty, leading to internal strife.

Political and Economic Challenges:

Punjabi Suba movement and Dravidian secessionist impulses emerge.

India grapples with famines, economic downturns, and food aid dependencies.

These challenges highlight India's tumultuous journey from its early post-independence years through the 1960s.

What challenges did India face during 1980s?

Punjab Insurgency:

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Radical insurgency emerges in Punjab.

Operation Blue Star takes place in 1984, targeting Sikh militants inside the Golden Temple complex.

Kashmir Unrest:

Return of terrorism in Kashmir.

Hindus face targeted killings.

Mutinies in the Army: Sikh units in the Indian Army revolt after Operation Blue Star.

Massacres: Mass killings of Sikhs in Delhi and other regions following the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi.

Bhopal Gas Tragedy (1984): A deadly gas leak in Bhopal causes thousands of deaths.

Border Tensions:

Near-war situation with Pakistan over Exercise Brasstacks.

Stand-off with China over the Sumdorong Chu region.

IPKF Operations in Sri Lanka: Indian Peace Keeping Force sent to Sri Lanka faces challenges.

Internal Political Instability:

Turbulence in politics, especially post-Bofors scandal.

These events marked India's challenges and struggles during the 1980s.

What lessons should India learn from these challenges?

Negotiation over Force: Nehru's delay in military intervention, hoping talks would resolve the Naga insurgency, emphasizes the importance of early dialogue and negotiations.

Internal Stability and National Security: The political transitions of the 1960s and the 1980s, like Nehru's death without a clear successor and the challenges faced by Shastri and Indira Gandhi, underscore the interconnectedness of internal politics and national security.

Human Rights Concerns: The "Protected and Progressive Villages" initiative, which led to significant rights abuses, teaches the need for oversight and ethical considerations in security operations.

Vigilance with Neighbors: The Chinese threat in the late 1950s and early 1960s reminds India to maintain vigilance and regular diplomatic engagement with neighboring countries.

Preparedness and Resilience: The sudden Mizo insurgency at a time of national crises emphasizes the importance of always being prepared for unforeseen challenges.

National Unity during Crises: The diverse challenges faced, from the Punjab insurgency to the Kashmir unrest, highlight the need for promoting national unity and harmony.

Incorporating these lessons can provide India a holistic approach to handle current and future national security challenges.

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19. A cycle of Reversal – on India's Protectionist Policies

Source– The post is based on the article “A cycle of Reversal” published in “Business Standard” on 12th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Effects of Liberalization on the Economy

Relevance: Issues related to protectionist policies

News– The article explains the significance of competition for businesses. It also explains the impact of protectionist policies on Indian consumers in the pre-liberalisation era.

What is the impact of competition on businesses?

In the absence of **competition**, businesses tend to become **complacent**. Service providers often **lower their standards**, and manufacturers may **compromise on quality**.

Businesses charge **higher prices** than warranted, and take advantage of **guaranteed markets and the lack of competition**.

How protectionist policies in the pre-liberalisation era impacted Indian consumers?

Between 1947 and 1991, the country's economic policy exhibited a distinct **trend toward isolationism**. The introduction of **red tape through licensing increased, import tariffs rose, and the prohibition of various imported goods** was common practice.

During this period, only a handful of companies held **manufacturing licenses**, and innovation was stifled.

Even **minor inventions**, like a new design for a bicycle lamp, **required licensing**. Additionally, major sectors like banking, aviation, mining, and telecommunications were **nationalized** and transformed into **government monopolies**. This further **restricted competition**.

Indian consumers had just two car models to choose from. Potential car buyers were obliged to **place a deposit** and endure months of waiting for delivery. Obtaining a **new telephone connection** took up to three years to become operational

In case of air travel, Indian Airlines was the sole option. It imposed **higher fares** compared to other prominent global airlines.

The **telephone service** was expensive, was also of poor quality and one of the priciest globally. Almost everything manufactured in India exhibited subpar quality. Plugs wouldn't fit into outlets correctly.

Most **household appliances** were absent. Microwaves, washing machines, dishwashers, high-performance bicycles, fashionable designer attire were non-existent.

Importing goods posed considerable challenges. **Stringent controls** were imposed on **foreign exchange**, and a significant number of items were prohibited. Indians traveling abroad were only allowed an **annual allowance of \$50**.

Even individuals who earned scholarships to pursue education abroad struggled with obtaining foreign exchange for their studies.

How things changed after liberalization?

Remarkably, **quality improvements** were noted in various sectors as competition was permitted. New players differentiated themselves by offering **higher quality products at lower prices**.

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Telecom market, swiftly transformed into the **most affordable**. Consumers gained access to over 100 models from numerous automobile companies.

Students could **secure loans** from private banks to pursue education abroad, even if they didn't come from affluent backgrounds.

