



9 PM

Compilation

14th to 19th August, 2023

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General Studies Paper – 1

General Studies - 1

1. Dalit Christians — exclusion by society, church, state

Source: The post is based on the article “Dalit Christians — exclusion by society, church, state” published in “The Hindu” on 14th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India. & GS2- Mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections

News: In this article author discusses the challenges faced by Dalit Christians in India, highlighting their struggle for equality and identity. He also argues for amending the 1950 Presidential (SC) order to include them in the Scheduled Caste (SC) list.

What challenges do Dalit Christians face in India?

1. **Lack of Scheduled Caste Status:** Dalit Christians are not recognized as Scheduled Castes (SC) despite commissions, such as the Justice Ranganath Misra Commission in 2007, recommending their inclusion. This deprives them of certain reservation benefits.
2. **Discrimination in Christianity:** Though many Dalits converted to Christianity to escape caste-based discrimination, they still face prejudices. Non-Dalit Christian converts continue to practice age-old untouchability, bringing these practices into churches.
3. **Intersectional Discrimination:** Using the ‘Theory of Intersectionality’, Dalit Christians face unique discrimination due to their dual identity as Dalits and a religious minority. They experience exclusion by society, church, and the state.
4. **Identity Struggles:** Despite converting, Dalit Christians haven’t fully realized the expected social upliftment. This leads to ambiguity in their identity, as they’re caught between being ‘Dalits’ and ‘Christians’. The state sees them only as “Christians”, pushing them into “intersectional invisibility”.
5. **Inadequate Legal Protection:** The single-axis framework of Indian law doesn’t provide ample protection for groups with overlapping identities like Dalit Christians. In the Soosai vs Union Of India case (1985), a Dalit Christian’s plea was dismissed, indicating the state’s narrow viewpoint.
6. **Assumptions and Prejudices:** Some argue that the Constitution sees Christianity as a “foreign import”, questioning the legitimacy of Dalit Christian citizenship. This perception further excludes them from certain benefits and protections.

What steps should be taken to address these issues?

7. **Amend the 1950 SC Order:** The government should modify the 1950 Presidential (SC) order, as suggested by the Tamil Nadu Assembly, to include Dalit Christians in the Scheduled Caste list.
8. **Church Reforms:** Churches should actively work against caste-based discrimination, ensuring equality among all members.
9. **Intersectional Recognition:** Understanding the unique ‘Dalit Christian’ identity is crucial. The state should consider their dual discrimination as both Dalits and a religious minority.
10. **Legal Framework Revision:** India’s legal system should move beyond the ‘single-axis framework’, which further marginalizes overlapping identities, to recognize the intersectionality of identities.
11. **Promote Inclusivity:** Public awareness campaigns can educate society about Dalit Christians’ struggles, fostering greater acceptance and inclusion.

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12. **Strengthen Evidence:** Collect and present compelling evidence to show that discrimination continues post conversion, urging for policy changes.

2. A scientific survey at Gyanvapi, its limits”

Source: The post is based on the article “A scientific survey at Gyanvapi, its limits” published in “The Hindu” on 14th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- The salient aspects of Art Forms, Literature and Architecture from ancient to modern times.

News: The article discusses the Supreme Court of India’s order for a non-invasive survey of the Gyanvapi mosque to check if it’s built over a temple. It explains the science behind the methods used, their accuracy, and potential errors, emphasizing the sensitivity and significance of the findings due to the emotional and political implications involved.

What scientific methods are employed for a non-invasive survey of the Gyanvapi mosque?

Geophysical Mapping for Archaeological Prospecting: Techniques are adapted from geophysical mapping, which can be either:

Active Methods: Inject energy into the ground and measure the response. Examples include seismic and electromagnetic techniques.

Passive Methods: Measure existing physical properties like magnetometry and gravity surveying.

Ground-Penetrating Radar (GPR): ASI plans to use GPR to create a 3-D model of buried structures. It sends a radar impulse and records return signals from subsoil contrasts.

Data Analysis: Acquired data is processed to determine physical parameters. This requires a strong understanding of physical processes and advanced software.

Modeling: The archaeological object is simplified into a representative model with defined parameters for analysis.

What limitations exist in the scientific methods used for a non-invasive survey of the Gyanvapi mosque?

Ambiguity in Interpretation: Different earth materials can have similar physical properties, leading to uncertain results.

False Imaging with GPR: As the radar beam spreads in a cone shape, objects can reflect parts of the beam prematurely, creating incorrect images.

Data Limitations: Ideal methods expect infinite, error-free data. However, real data is limited and contains measurement errors.

Reconstruction Difficulties: Geophysical tools might not always perfectly reconstruct target images.

Contradictory Interpretations: Even sophisticated systems can have different interpretations, as seen with lunar penetrating radar systems.

Reliance on Supplementary Info: Due to data limitations, extra information is often added, which might lead to inaccurate results.

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3. Our millennial attitudes are in uneven transition

Source: The post is based on the article “**Our millennial attitudes are in uneven transition**” published in “Live Mint” on 16th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- Society (social changes)

News: In this article author discusses findings from a survey on Indian millennials’ views on population growth, family values, and social biases. It highlights their mixed feelings about India’s demographic changes and persistent prejudices, especially towards the LGBTIQ+ community.

What are the major findings of the latest Mint YouGov-CPR biannual millennial survey?

Views on population:

33% see India’s large population as a problem.

26% believe in India’s demographic advantage; 40% are neutral.

Only 31% are proud of India being the world’s most populous nation; 26% are embarrassed.

Economic Growth and Comparison to China:

49% of urban Indians believe India’s population can be an asset with the right investments.

Better education and factory jobs are viewed as essential for growth like China.

China is seen as having done better in population control, job creation, and poverty reduction.

Marriage and Family Values:

35% of millennials and 38% of post-millennials view marriage as important, compared to 55% of pre-millennials.

49% believe in children living with and caring for elderly parents.

28% want parents to be independent; 23% believe parents need support but shouldn’t live with children.

Social Biases:

55% of parents want their children to marry the opposite gender.

50% prefer marital partners without disabilities; 42% want marriages within their religion.

21% are uncomfortable with an LGBTIQ+ neighbor.

People from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, unmarried men, physically disabled, and other faiths are also subjects of bias.

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4. Reclaiming India's past- Greater focus and investment are required to understand the evolution of India's diverse and inclusive cultural heritage

Source: The post is based on the article “Reclaiming India's past- Greater focus and investment are required to understand the evolution of India's diverse and inclusive cultural heritage” published in “Business standard” on 16th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India.

News: In this article, the author emphasizes India's rich and diverse cultural heritage, which has been influenced by various global interactions throughout history. The author also stresses the importance of recognizing and preserving this multifaceted legacy for a better understanding of the Indian identity.

What have shaped the India's Cultural Tapestry?

Geographical Advantage: India's strategic location at trade intersections enabled interactions with different countries. For example, its coastline connected it with the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal.

Cross-cultural Interactions: India witnessed a flow of traders, pilgrims, and invaders, leading to a fusion of cultures. This brought in influences from Central Asia, Iran, and beyond.

Linguistic Blends: Languages like Hindi and Urdu integrated foreign words. For instance, “akhbaar” in Hindi, meaning newspaper, is from Arabic.

Religious Diversity: India's acceptance of varied spiritual paths, such as Sufism alongside traditional beliefs, added depth to its cultural tapestry.

Culinary and Material Exchanges: Elements seen as inherently Indian, like tea or potatoes, are in fact foreign introductions, highlighting the interweaving of diverse influences in India's cultural fabric.

Why is it important to recognize and preserve the rich and diverse cultural heritage of India?

Identity and Unity: Recognizing India's diverse heritage helps understand its unique identity. The integration of words like “akhbaar” from Arabic into Hindi showcases this blend.

Valuing Global Bonds: Appreciating India's past interactions, like its maritime connections to the Arabian Sea and Bay of Bengal, underscores its longstanding global relations.

Promote Inclusivity: Celebrating India's varied influences, such as the acceptance of both Sufism and traditional beliefs, encourages mutual respect and unity among its diverse population.

Preservation of Knowledge: Retrieving and studying lost Indian texts, preserved in places like Tibet, helps in conserving ancient wisdom, as seen with the Samhita project's endeavors.

Understanding Reciprocal Influences: Recognizing how India has impacted countries like Indonesia and China deepens appreciation for its cultural exports.

Encouraging Research: Acknowledging this rich tapestry can inspire further research, shedding light on India's multifaceted history and its global interactions.

General Studies Paper –2

General Studies - 2

1. Arun Prakash writes: Delhi and Taipei, just friends – on India Taiwan relations

Source: The post is based on the article “Arun Prakash writes: Delhi and Taipei, just friends” published in “The Indian express” on 14th August 2023.

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

News: In this article author discusses the recent visit of retired Indian military chiefs to Taiwan, and its implications for Sino-Indian relations. The history of Taiwan (RoC) and its strained relationship with China (PRC) is explored. The author highlights mutual interests between India and Taiwan, especially given China’s aggressive stance, but advises caution for India in deepening ties due to Taiwan’s historical stances on territorial issues.

What is the background of Taiwan (RoC) and China (PRC)?

Formation of Taiwan (RoC) and China (PRC):

The Republic of China (RoC) was established in 1912 after the fall of the Qing Dynasty.

In 1927, a civil war began between the Kuomintang (KMT) party of RoC and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

The Japanese invasion in 1937 led to a truce, with both parties joining forces against Japan.

The civil war resumed post-WW II, concluding in 1949 with the CCP’s victory.

Relocation to Taiwan:

After their defeat, the RoC government under Chiang Kai-shek retreated to Taiwan.

International Recognition:

Originally, RoC had a seat on the UN Security Council.

In 1971, the UN replaced RoC with PRC as the recognized China.

Today, only 13 countries, including small Pacific islands and the Vatican, officially recognize Taiwan.

How has the US responded to Taiwan and China?

“One China” Policy:

Following their 1972 meeting, Nixon and Mao issued the “Shanghai Communique”, which acknowledged Taiwan as a part of “one China”.

Defense Support for Taiwan:

In 1979, the US passed the Taiwan Relations Act, committing to supply Taiwan with “defensive weapons”.

US’s Ambiguous Stance:

Despite the “one China” policy, the US has maintained relations with both PRC and Taiwan. Through diplomacy and military postures, the US deters China without a clear commitment to defend Taiwan militarily.

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How has the relationship between Taiwan and India changed over time?

Before Independence:

During WW II, the Chinese Expeditionary Force was deployed for Burma's defense and retreated to India after facing defeat by the Japanese.

In 1942, Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek of the RoC visited India. During his visit, Chiang expressed solidarity with India against Japanese aggression and supported India's freedom struggle.

After Independence:

India recognized the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1950 and initially maintained a "one China" policy, recognizing PRC over Taiwan.

Fall in Relationship:

For years, India's recognition of the PRC wasn't reciprocated by China when it came to territories like J&K and Arunachal Pradesh.

Due to concerns about China's reaction, India kept its relations with Taiwan under the radar for many decades.

Rise in Relationship:

In 1995, despite the overarching "one China" policy, India and Taiwan initiated trade and cultural ties.

Both nations posted diplomatic representatives in New Delhi and Taipei, marking an unofficial yet significant recognition of each other.

Post the 2020 Galwan incident, with a drop in India-China relations, the bond between India and Taiwan has seen a renewed interest, especially in light of mutual security concerns and Taiwan's leadership in semiconductors.

What caution should India exercise with RoC?

India should approach its relationship with the Republic of China (RoC) or Taiwan with caution due to past territorial disputes. Historically, Taiwan introduced the contentious 9-Dash Line in the South China Sea.

Moreover, the RoC has not recognized the McMahon line and claims "Southern Tibet" as part of China, which could be a concern for India.

2. Personal data protection – A thinking person's guide

Source: The post is based on the article "**Personal data protection – A thinking person's guide**" published in **Business Standard** on **14th August 2023**.

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

Relevance: **About** Digital Personal Data Protection law

News: Recently, the Parliament passed the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023.

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What is the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023?

Read Here: [Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023: Explained](#)

Why was the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023 needed?

Previously, privacy meant personal matters like income, caste, and health issues and the debate on data protection law usually revolved around these problems.

However, the negative uses of digital data went unquestioned for years until the **Cambridge Analytica Scandal in 2018**.

This scandal revealed that the British company had gathered data from 87 million Facebook users for aiding Donald Trump's 2016 election campaign.

Hence, government around the world expressed worries about the potential misuse of the digital data. This made India to enact Digital Personal Data Protection law.

What are the issues being faced by the government worldwide in implementing Digital Personal Data Protection Law?

First, governments face challenge with balancing the interests of businesses and citizens regarding personal data usage.

Second, governments find themselves competing with other nations in leveraging their citizens' data for national defense and geopolitical objectives.

What lies ahead?

With the enactment of Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2023, India has taken a great step. Other countries should also consider taking similar steps while considering the concerns of all stakeholders.

3. Curing Medicine – On new rules by the National Medical Commission

Source– The post is based on the article **“Curing Medicine”** published in **“The Times of India”** on **14th August 2023**.

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

Relevance: Issues related to regulation of healthcare sector

News– The National Medical Commission's new rules on registered medical practitioners have tackled doctors' irresponsible use of social media for the first time.

What are the new rules by the National Medical Commission on registered medical practitioners?

On Twitter, doctors share detailed accounts of their **patients' conditions, treatments, and results**. However, this practice has been **prohibited**.

NMC has introduced a requirement for ongoing **“continuous professional development”** throughout a doctor's career.

Conferences or workshops eligible for CPD cannot receive **sponsorship from pharmaceutical companies**.

New regulations reiterate that doctors must **prescribe generic medicines**.

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What are issues with the implementation of these rules?

The Indian government needs to confront the **concerns related to generic medications** available in the public market. In situations where a recommended generic drug is unavailable, the substitution is frequently proposed by the pharmacist.

The **Jan Aushadhi stores** under the **government's supervision** often have inadequate supplies. Therefore, the success of the regulations introduced will depend on the **formulation of appropriate penalties**.

Pharmaceutical firms and diagnostic chains have nurtured a **strong connection** with hospitals and medical professionals.

Historically, pharmaceutical companies have been instrumental in supporting the **professional growth** of doctors. As these companies withdraw their **financial support** for workshops, there are questions regarding fulfilment of this role by someone else.

The success of **overseeing medical engagements** on Twitter by regulatory bodies is still something that needs to be witnessed.

4. Glaring omission – on appointment of Election Commissioners

Source– The post is based on the article “**Glaring omission**” published in “**The Hindu**” and “**Let us retain structural neutrality on EC chiefs**” published in the “**mint**” on **14th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Appointment to various constitutional posts

Relevance: Issues related to appointment of Election Commissioners

News– The Union government has proposed a three-member selection panel consisting of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and a Union Cabinet Minister.

This runs counter to a recent judgment of a Constitution Bench that envisaged an independent selection committee that included the Chief Justice of India.

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

The verdict also aligned with the suggestions of the **Dinesh Goswami Committee in 1990** and **the Justice Tarkunde Committee in 1975**. Government **dominant role in the selection process** will contradict the **essence of the Court's suggestions**.

Maintaining a **balance of power** in the appointment process would ensure that process remains **impartial to political ties**. It will be important for **upholding democracy**, which places the equality of every citizen as a **fundamental principle**.

Why is it important to have an independent Election Commissioner?

The Election Commission of India is a **constitutional entity** with responsibilities for organizing elections. It performs **quasi-judicial functions** as well. Therefore, it's reasonable that the selection process safeguards against **excessive executive influence**.

The Election Commission of India has played a crucial role in **facilitating periodic elections**.

Nonetheless, concerns have arisen.

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For instance, prior to the 2019 general election, there was a one-month delay in **announcing elections** between February and March. The government **inaugurated multiple projects** during that time.

The application of the **Model Code of Conduct** was uneven. It favored the ruling party, which led to dissent by one of the commissioners.

The independent **V-Dem Institute in Sweden** downgraded India to an **“electoral autocracy”** due to the perceived decrease in the **ECI’s autonomy**.

To preserve the **stability of our constitutional framework**, it is necessary that citizens perceive electoral procedures as **independent, impartial, and beyond partisan influences**.

Indian voters are not concerned about **manipulated elections**. It’s imperative that we fortify this track record.

What are issues with the Bill?

The legislation permits the appointment committee to **“govern its own process with transparency.”** So, the methods employed by this committee are likely to **remain undisclosed**. The Selection Committee also retains the option to evaluate individuals beyond those **initially listed by the Search Committee**. This would grant the Selection Committee **complete authority** in determining the Election Commissioners.

5. The 2047 Dream- Developed country? Provided India undertakes a tough but doable set of internal reforms

Source: The post is based on the article **“The 2047 Dream- Developed country? Provided India undertakes a tough but doable set of internal reforms”** published in “Times of India” on 16th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources. & GS3- growth, development and employment; Inclusive growth

News: In this article author discusses India’s potential to become a developed nation by 2047. For this, he emphasizes the need for economic reforms, better opportunities for the young population, increased women’s workforce participation, improved global trade, and enhancing the overall quality of life.

What are the potential factors that could help India become a developed nation by 2047?

Young Population: India has the world’s largest population below 30, providing a large workforce.

Educated Women: More girls than boys are studying in STEM fields.

Global South Voice: India’s position allows it to represent developing nations after the pandemic.

Global Influence: As G20 president, India addressed issues like the Global South’s debt crisis.

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What does India need to become a developed nation by 2047?

Reevaluate Economic Classifications: India is currently a lower middle-income country as per World Bank. Relying solely on per capita gross national income might be misleading; Bermuda ranks higher than the U.S.

Address Underemployment: There's a slow transition of youth from farms to industries. Focusing on productive sectors can create more opportunities for the young population.

Boost Women's Workforce Participation: Women's participation rate was only 24% in 2022, compared to the global average of 47%. Improved public safety and transport can enable more women to work.

Redefine Trade Policy: India is 18th in global merchandise export rankings. A shift from protectionist policies can promote cross-border trade.

Implement Internal Reforms: Embrace reforms to unshackle the economy's potential. Improve human capital quality to support growth.

6. So Much Data But Not Much Protection

Source: The post is based on the article “**So Much Data But Not Much Protection**” published in “Times of India” on 16th 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, the author criticizes India's new Digital Personal Data Protection Law. He believes that this law will weaken user data protection, favor data collection without proper consent, and provide the government with too much power and control, potentially compromising citizens' privacy.

What are the limitations of India's new Digital Personal Data Protection law?

Limitations of India's new Digital Personal Data Protection law:

Weak Notice Provision:

Clause 5: Data collecting companies (data fiduciaries) don't need to inform users (data principals) about sharing their data with third parties.

They aren't required to specify how long the data will be stored. No information on data transfers to other countries.

Consent Issues:

While the 'deemed consent' was replaced, the new law still has issues.

Clause 7: Lists 'legitimate uses' of data, but they are vaguely defined.

Clause 4: Many uses don't require user consent, including state functions and medical reasons, potentially undermining privacy.

Government Immunity:

The law allows the government vast powers to gather and process citizens' data.

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Clause 17: Expands exemptions for the government. Data shared with certain government bodies remains exempt from the law, even if shared with non-exempt bodies.

Compromised Independence:

The Data Protection Board lacks independence as its members are appointed by the government.

Undefined Data Fiduciary Category:

Some entities, based on “**volume and nature of personal data processed**”, **might get exemptions.**

These “super significant data fiduciaries” won’t have to notify users about data collection, storage, or sharing.

The criteria for these exemptions are unclear, giving the government full discretion.

Overall Theme:

The law leans towards data collection and commercialization, rather than robustly protecting citizens’ rights and data privacy.

7. Consumption-based poverty estimates have relevance

Source– The post is based on the article “**Consumption-based poverty estimates have relevance**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **16th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues related to Poverty

Relevance: Measurement of poverty

News– A recent report by NITI Aayog on multidimensional poverty shows that the percentage of the poor has gone down from 25% in 2015-16 to 15% in 2019-21 and around 135 million people were lifted out of poverty during this period.

What is the comparison of poverty estimation of Multidimensional Poverty Index and survey based on consumption expenditure?

As per the report of the **Global Multidimensional Poverty Index 2018**, India has made **significant progress** in reducing multidimensional poverty.

The prevalence of multidimensional poverty witnessed a **reduction of nearly 50% between 2005-06 and 2015-16**. It dropped to **27.5%**. In the last decade, the count of poor individuals in India decreased by over **271 million**.

The calculations of poverty based on methodology recommended by the **Tendulkar committee** reveal that the number of individuals living in poverty decreased by **137 million between 2004-05 and 2011-12**.

According to the approach suggested by the **Rangarajan Committee**, the reduction between 2009-10 and 2011-12 amounts to **92 million**. It means an **annual reduction of 46 million**. Over a decade, this reduction surpasses the global Multidimensional Poverty Index.

In terms of **absolute figures**, the poverty rates calculated using the **Tendulkar and Rangarajan Committee** methods are lower than those estimated by the global MPI.

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What are issues with the multidimensional poverty index?

As per **Expert Group to review the Methodology for Measuring Poverty (2014)**, there are issues regarding the **use of multiple indicators**.

It is due to the various complexities like **measurement challenges, the need for aggregation across indicators, and the availability of suitable data** at reasonably frequent intervals.

These matters should be scrutinized and evaluated. For example, the **child mortality indicator** is calculated for a **population group rather than individual households**. So, **aggregation of the 2 types of data is difficult**.

Ideally, these indicators should remain distinct. For instance, an indicator like access to safe drinking water shouldn't be combined with an indicator like child mortality.

It's entirely possible to analyse the **non-income indicators** like education, health, sanitation, alongside income or consumption poverty. But transforming all these indicators into a **single index** presents numerous challenges.

For most individuals, wealth or poverty is associated with **income levels**. The various **non-income poverty indicators** fundamentally reflect **insufficient income**.

Defining poverty in **terms of income** or, when income data is unavailable, in **terms of expenditure**, appears most suitable. This is the method followed by most **countries**.

Official data on **consumer expenditure** beyond 2011-12 is lacking. It makes it difficult to compare trends with the **multidimensional poverty index**. The **consumption expenditure survey** conducted in 2017-18 has not been officially released.

In the absence of such data, several studies have been conducted on poverty using **indirect methods and data sources** like the **CMIE and PLFS**. It results in varying conclusions.

What should be done?

Past surveys have clearly demonstrated a **substantial decrease in the poverty ratio** during periods of robust economic growth. However, in recent years, including the period affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the **growth rate** has diminished.

It's reasonable to suspect that the rate at which the **poverty ratio** is decreasing may have slowed down.

The current **consumption expenditure survey** is going on. To ensure consistency for comparison purposes, it's advisable to adopt a **single methodology**. Hence, awaiting the publication of the survey results is the most **prudent course** of action.

It is crucial to complement the **outcomes of consumption surveys** with an examination of the **influence of public expenditure** on health and education.

The **disparity in aggregated consumption** estimates between the **National Accounts Statistics (NAS) and the NSS data**. Such disparities are not unique to India.

This **discrepancy in India** has been widening over time. It has escalated to 53.1% in 2011-12.

The National Statistical Office should investigate this issue and propose **potential measures** to enhance **data collection** through both avenues.

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8. Why is the Cauvery water sharing issue flaring up again?

Source– The post is based on the article “**Why is the Cauvery water sharing issue flaring up again?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **16th August 2023**.

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

Relevance: Issues related to river water disputes between states

News– Recently, the Tamil Nadu government approached the Supreme Court to make Karnataka immediately release 24,000 cusecs water from its reservoirs and ensure the availability of the specified quantity at Biligundlu on the inter-State border for the remainder of the month.

How is the water being shared?

As per monthly schedule, Karnataka is obligated to provide Tamil Nadu with a **total volume of 177.25 TMC** during a standard water year spanning from June to May.

Out of this quantity, **123.14 TMC** is slated to be transferred from June to September.

The **Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) and Cauvery Water Regulation Committee (CWRC)** has been established to ensure the **enforcement** of the court’s decision.

Why has T.N. approached the SC?

During its session on August 11, the CWMA expressed the need for Karnataka to release **10,000 cusecs of water** at Biligundlu for the next 15 days.

Karnataka would be required to provide **0.86 TMC of water daily or a total of 12.9 TMC over the 15-day period**.

Tamil Nadu was upset over Karnataka’s rejection of its commitment during the CWRC meeting, which was set at **15,000 cusecs for a 15-day duration**.

Karnataka stated its intention to release **only 8,000 cusecs**.

How has Karnataka responded?

Karnataka has argued that **decreased rainfall** in the **Cauvery catchment area** has resulted in **insufficient inflow** into its reservoirs.

As per data from the Meteorological Department Kodagu district is experiencing **rainfall deficit**. It is the source of the Cauvery river.

What lies next?

The people of Tamil Nadu are eagerly anticipating Karnataka ‘**s stand**’ over the decision made by the Authority.

The **current storage level** of Tamil Nadu’s Mettur reservoir is **critically low**. This amount would only be **sufficient for around 10 days**. However, water will be required for at least one more month to sustain the ongoing **short-term crop, kuruvai**.

The **perspective of the Supreme Court** on this matter is yet to be determined. It remains uncertain how the Supreme Court will perceive the situation.

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9. An Act to cement digital authoritarianism

Source: The post is based on the article “An Act to cement digital authoritarianism” published in “The Hindu” on 17th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Indian Polity – Government Policies for various sectors

Relevance: Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.

News: The Digital Personal Data Protection Act, also known as the Data Act, was enacted recently.

Why are critics concerned about the law?

Critics are concerned that this law **undermines transparency and accountability** instead of protecting citizens’ data.

They say that the law seems to **facilitate data collection** by the government and private entities rather than safeguarding personal information.

They argue that the law was shaped by the government’s desire for **more control**, influenced by the belief that **technology can solve all problems**. But this ideology gives rise to increased surveillance and control.

The state views data protection as being a nuisance to its digital programmes which is inherent in their architectural design.

Examples like the **Aarogya Setu app and the Smart Cities Mission** show how data privacy is overlooked in favor of technological expansion.

There are also more direct measures for surveillance, such as the plan for a **“social media communications hub” and a facial recognition system**. These projects can be given legal sanctity through exceptions in the Data Act.

Rather than protecting the ordinary citizen, the Act imposes **finances on marginalized groups** that might provide incomplete or incorrect information for their personal safety.

Will the Act improve over time?

It has been argued that with experience, the Data Act will improve over time. But this argument ignores the **decline in democratic qualities in a digital India**.

Recent laws in India have led to the creation of databases that have **authoritarian undertones**, storing personal and family information of citizens.

The **Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022, and the Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Act, 2023**, both contribute to these databases.

All these legislative actions seem to align with a **broader pattern** that culminates in the Data Act, suggesting a move towards **greater state control over citizens’ data and lives**.

Is the Data Act a “light touch regulation”?

Labeling the Data Act as “light touch regulation” would be inaccurate because it provides for **vast and vague ministerial discretion**.

The Union Government holds the power to exempt specific companies or even entire classes of companies from adhering to regulations.

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Additionally, the government can initiate complaints against these companies on its own to the Data Protection Board of India, a body it both forms and oversees.

What will be the impact of the Data Act on the private sector?

The inspiration for the Data Act seems to be the **National Intelligence Law of China**, where the government can now demand any “such information as it may call for”.

This could lead to a scenario where **private companies consistently seek favor from government officials** for ambiguous compliance requirements.

This system may allow the **government to decide winners and losers** in India’s digital market. This aligns with a trend of centralized state control.

These developments coincide with a **decline in global rankings for economic freedom** according to organizations like the Cato Institute’s Human Freedom Index, the Heritage Foundation, and the Hudson Institute.

What should be the way forward?

The concerns raised echo a warning from the Supreme Court about the need for a strong data protection framework to ensure citizens’ liberty and dignity.

India needs a more comprehensive solution to this digital authoritarianism, as the Data Act is just a symptom of a bigger problem.

10. Our criminal laws must Uphold gender justice

Source– The post is based on the article “**Our criminal laws must Uphold gender justice**” published in the “**mint**” on **17th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Indian Polity, GS1- Social empowerment

News– Recently, Parliament introduced three Bills transforming India’s criminal laws — the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita to replace the Indian Penal Code; the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita to replace the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Bharatiya Sakshya Bill to replace the Indian Evidence Act.

What are some positive aspects of these laws?

The government’s intention to modernize our criminal justice system is **understandable and commendable**.

The proposed revisions aim to bring key aspects of the system into the **digital age**, streamline the process of **filing complaints, expedite legal proceedings**, and introduce **community service as a penalty** for minor offenses.

The **foundational framework** of our existing penal code is over a century old. There is a need for **legal revisions**.

What are some women-centric concerns related to these Bills?

The consideration of women’s safety is of utmost importance. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) introduces more **stringent and comprehensive provisions** for offenses against women and children. It dedicates an entire chapter to these matters.

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In contrast, under the Indian Penal Code (IPC), such crimes are part of a **broader chapter on offenses “affecting the human body.”**

The **choice of words** and the tone adopted in the proposed changes within the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) exhibit a clear **dichotomy in their view of gender**. It upholds the idea of **preserving women’s honor** rather than **treating women as equals**.

Marital rape would only be considered a **criminal offense** if the wife is below the age of 18.

This outdated assumption that a married woman is the possession of her husband limits **women’s control** over their **sexual and reproductive rights**.

This is the case despite India’s efforts to strengthen laws against violence towards women and the Supreme Court’s engagement with petitions seeking to **criminalize marital rape**.

In specific instances, the language used in the text provides **insightful viewpoints**. For example, **Section 73 of the BNS** characterizes acts of assault as intending to “outrage her modesty.

These words reflect outdated ideas about **women’s behavior, morality, and transgression**. It lacks an emphasis on women’s rights.

The Bills also do not provide **sufficient remedies** for men or non-binary individuals encountering similar violations.

Ambiguities in certain other sections require careful reevaluation. For instance, the inclusion of “deceitful means” in relation to marriage could introduce new uncertainties when determining culpability.

11. Why is Bihar’s caste-based survey facing legal challenges?

Source– The post is based on the article “**Why is Bihar’s caste-based survey facing legal challenges?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **17th August 2023**.

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

Relevance: Issues related to river water disputes between states

News– The Supreme Court is set to hear on August 18, petitions challenging the Patna High Court’s verdict upholding the Bihar government’s ongoing caste survey.

What is the ‘caste-based survey’?

The State government has launched a **two-phase caste survey** in Bihar. It has stated that detailed information on **socio-economic conditions** would help create better government policies for disadvantaged groups.

The survey is estimated to collect socio-economic **data** for the population of Bihar. The first phase of the survey involves a **house listing exercise**.

In the second phase, data related to **castes, sub-castes, and religions** of all people is to be collected.

Why the need for a caste census?

The Census, conducted at the beginning of each decade, only captures **caste data** for those classified as Scheduled Castes.

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Due to this limitation, there is no **accurate population estimate** available for Other Backward Classes (OBCs), various subgroups within the OBCs, and other castes.

Despite this lack of clarity, the central government has definitively rejected the idea of conducting a **socio-economic caste census**. It cites it as **impractical, administratively complex, and burdensome**.

In 2011, the Union government initiated a caste survey through the **Socio-Economic and Caste Census of 2011**. However, the raw data collected from around 1.3 billion Indians was never disclosed publicly due to **data inaccuracies**.

Political analysts view the recent step taken by the Bihar government as an effort by coalition parties to counter the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)'s **Hindutva-oriented politics** with a resurgence of **Mandal politics**.

On August 13, 1990, the V.P. Singh government declared its intention to implement the recommendations of the **Mandal Commission report**, which proposed a 27% reservation for Other Backward Classes.

The Mandal Commission had estimated the **OBC population at 52%**. Nevertheless, there is ongoing debate regarding the **accuracy of this estimate** in the present day.

Why is it being challenged?

As per petitions in the Supreme Court, the State's order announcing the survey is **unconstitutional**. It is due to the fact that the **exclusive authority** to conduct a census lies with the Centre as specified in the Constitution.

The State Government lacks the **independent jurisdiction** to appoint District Magistrates and local authorities for collecting data **without a notification** issued by the Centre under **Section 3 of the Census Act, 1948**.

The High Court's decision is flawed on the grounds that it contravenes the **Puttaswamy judgment**. It permits the State to gather **personal information through an executive order**.

12. Unhealthy prescription – On National Medical Commission's regulations

Source– The post is based on the article “**Unhealthy prescription**” published in “**The Business Standard**” on **17th August 2023**.

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

Relevance: Regulatory issues in healthcare sector

News– The National Medical Commission's regulation has stipulated that doctors can prescribe only generic drugs, failing which they would be liable to be penalised.

What are the issues related to the National Medical Commission's regulation on generic drugs?

The exclusive reliance on generic drugs will contribute to **weakening the nexus** between doctors and pharmaceutical companies. But, the new policy **alters the dynamics** by shifting power to chemists and pharmacies

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Even with the new regulations in place, pharmacists could easily offer pricier **branded versions of prescribed drugs**. It can undermine the **intended goal of the policy**. This situation might strengthen the **existing ties** between pharmaceutical firms and pharmacy networks.

The **subpar monitoring standards** in the pharma sector have contributed to the proliferation of **sub-standard or counterfeit medicines**.

The **Indian Medical Association** asserts that only **0.1 percent of medicines** undergo **quality checks**. The recent scandal involving **contaminated children's cough syrups** supplied to Africa exemplifies the **lax enforcement of good manufacturing practices**.

Experts within the pharmaceutical sector acknowledge that there are **generic drugs** available on the market that have not undergone **proper bioequivalence studies** to assess their **effectiveness**.

Physicians are apprehensive that the **variable quality of generic medications** might compromise the **effectiveness** of their treatments. It could lead to **reputational damage**.

In medical institutions like hospitals and clinics, the risks could multiply if **subpar generic drugs** lead to **suboptimal outcomes**. In such situations, doctors may face **physical assault** from relatives of patients.

13. New Bills and a principled course for criminal law reforms

Source– The post is based on the article “**New Bills and a principled course for criminal law reforms**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **17th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Functioning of Judiciary

News– Recently, Parliament introduced three Bills transforming India's criminal laws — the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita to replace the Indian Penal Code; the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita to replace the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Bharatiya Sakshya Bill to replace the Indian Evidence Act.

What are the challenges in reformation of criminal laws?

Incorporating the **collective aspirations** of the public into criminal law reforms poses a significant challenge. **Balancing the divergent views** prevalent in society with the perspective of the state is necessary.

Criminal law functions as a mechanism for **upholding societal stability**. The deeply rooted **perceptions of individuals** involved in the criminal justice system, add complexity in reforming criminal laws.

The success or failure of criminal law reforms depends on their **inception, formulation, resilience, and foresightedness**.

The political leadership has consistently aimed to utilise criminal law as a **preemptive instrument**. Criminal law continues to be a **crucial strategic resource** for the state.

Which points must be considered while reforming the criminal laws?

The discourse surrounding the Bills should extend beyond **evaluating favourable or unfavourable results**. The core emphasis should be on emphasising that **fundamental principles of criminal jurisprudence** are maintained,

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There is a need to assess the degree to which reforms cater to the **requirements and apprehensions** of those impacted by the criminal justice system.

The revised laws must achieve a **careful equilibrium** between **state security and the individual freedoms**

The **effectiveness of reforms** depends on their capacity to prevent **potential misuse** by those in **positions of authority**.

Adhering to **principles of criminalization** when introducing new offences is equally important. The underlying basis for the harm or legal offence caused by the **criminalised behaviour** requires thorough examination.

Criminal laws in India perpetuate **class divisions**. They favour the **wealthy and privilege** in accessing justice over **marginalised and vulnerable individuals**. Therefore, ensuring **principles of equality and fairness** is crucial in evaluating criminal law reform.

It is not appropriate to assume that the general population opposes **stringent measures** against terrorists or organised criminals. However, enhancing the **severity of laws** does not automatically restore **public confidence** in the criminal justice system.

The **effectiveness of reforms** depends on the criminal justice system's capability to **implement them efficiently**.

The impact of the reforms on the vulnerable, victims, and the underprivileged will also determine their **effectiveness**.

14. Housing for all – Addressing housing shortage in urban areas requires urgent, concerted efforts

Source: The post is based on the article “**Housing for all – Addressing housing shortage in urban areas requires urgent, concerted efforts**” published in **The Hindu** on **17th August 2023**.

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

Relevance: About the proposed housing scheme

News: The PM recently introduced a scheme for urban poor housing while PMAY-U was extended until December 2024. This raises concerns about PMAY-U's goal achievement.

What are the concerns with Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U)?

In the last eight years since the launch of PMAY-U, only two-thirds of the sanctioned houses were either completed or handed over.

Central assistance has been limited to 24.4%, with 16% from States and urban local bodies; the remaining 60% is to be borne by beneficiaries.

Out of the initially projected ₹8.31 lakh crore investment for 1.23 crore houses, the burden of ₹4.95 lakh crore falls on the beneficiaries, who are primarily the urban poor.

Hence, in such a situation a new scheme should include provisions that benefit the beneficiaries and are better than PMAY-U.

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Read More: PM announces new housing scheme for urban poor; low interest rate loans on offer and Cabinet approves continuation of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U) – “Housing for All” Mission up to 31st December 2024

What provisions can be included in the proposed new housing scheme?

In the suggested plan, the beneficiaries' portion would be reduced to around 40%, due to their limited income.

Moreover, the Parliamentary Committee's recommendations for PMAY-U should guide the new housing scheme's design.

The Committee proposed moving away from uniform and fixed assistance and adopting flexibility based on factors like topography. Investigating causes behind poor housing quality and unoccupancy is also advised.

What is the way ahead?

Expensive land, restricted floor space, and numerous certifications from various agencies impact urban housing success.

Hence, to address this, the central government should facilitate discussions involving State governments, local bodies, urban planners, professionals, financial institutions, and activists.

15. Illegal, irrational, unconstitutional: The problem with recent suspensions of MPs

Source: The post is based on the article “Illegal, irrational, unconstitutional: The problem with recent suspensions of MPs” published in “The Indian Express” on 18th August 2023.

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

News: In this article author discusses the rules for suspending members from India's Parliament if they disrupt its proceedings. Recently, suspensions, including key leaders, have been longer than usual, going against traditional norms and rules. These extended suspensions are controversial and might be unconstitutional. The author suggests finding better solutions to manage disagreements in Parliament.

What are the methods of suspending members from India's Parliament?

Process of Suspending in Lok Sabha:

In the Lok Sabha, members causing disruptions can be suspended under Rule 374. When a member consistently obstructs business or shows disregard to the Chair's authority, the Chair has the right to name them.

Once the member is named, the government introduces a motion for their suspension. If the motion passes, the member gets suspended.

For example, Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, the leader of the Congress party, was recently suspended using this method.

Process of Suspending in Rajya Sabha:

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In the Rajya Sabha, a similar procedure is followed under Rule 256. The Chair identifies any member causing undue disruptions. Following this, a motion is presented to the House for their suspension. If the House approves the motion, the member is suspended.

Recent instances include the suspensions of members like Sanjay Singh and Raghav Chadha.

Rule Used for Suspending:

Rules of the Houses of Parliament are framed under Article 118 of the Constitution and these can operate only subject to the provisions of the Constitution.

The standard procedure under both rules (374 and 256) dictates that suspension should typically last until the end of the ongoing session.

What are the implications of suspending members from India's Parliament?

Disruption to Proceedings: Members can't participate, potentially hindering legislative work.

Legal Implications: In 2022, the Supreme Court, in the Ashish Shelar vs Maharashtra Legislative Assembly case, declared suspensions beyond rule-prescribed periods unconstitutional. The plea of procedural irregularities under Article 122 was rejected. It was seen as substantial illegality, not just procedural error.

Deviation from Rules: Recent cases like those of Sanjay Singh, Raghav Chadha, and Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury show suspensions extending beyond typical limits or pending investigations, against traditional norms.

Challenge to Democracy: Over-reliance on suspensions might stifle opposition voices, affecting democratic discussions.

Need for Conflict Resolution: Such suspensions highlight the need for better methods to handle disagreements in Parliament.

What actions should be taken?

Adhere to Established Rules: Parliament should strictly follow Rules 374 (Lok Sabha) and 256 (Rajya Sabha) when suspending members.

Avoid Extended Suspensions: Suspensions should not exceed the ongoing session's duration. Cases like Sanjay Singh's extended suspension go against this principle.

Review Recent Changes: The recent indefinite suspensions, like that of Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury, should be revisited to ensure they align with constitutional norms.

Seek Judicial Guidance: Referring to the Ashish Shelar vs Maharashtra Legislative Assembly (2022) decision can help clarify suspension durations' legality.

Promote Dialogue: Political leaders should prioritize dialogue over suspensions to address disagreements in Parliament.

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16. Forest Rights Act in Jammu and Kashmir: A transformation in the making

Source: The post is based on the article “Forest Rights Act in Jammu and Kashmir: A transformation in the making” published in “The Indian Express” on 18th August 2023.

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

News: In this article author discusses the Forest Rights Act (FRA) in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) and its importance for tribal communities. J&K took longer to implement FRA, which recognizes tribal rights over forests. Since 2021, efforts have been made to grant these rights, but challenges remain.

About India's tribal population

2011 Census:

India's tribal population estimated at 104.5 million.

Tribals constitute 8.6% of the country's total population.

Jammu and Kashmir Tribes:

Tribes make up about 12% of J&K's population.

Ethnic migratory pastoral population stands at 612,000.

Major tribes: Gujjars, Bakerwals, Gaddi, Sippi, Dard-Shin, and Bot.

These communities rely on livestock husbandry and biannual migration.

About Forest Rights Act (FRA)

Forest Rights Act (FRA) recognizes tribal rights over forests.

Originally enacted in 2006, implemented in 2008.

Jammu & Kashmir began FRA implementation in 2021.

Since September 2021 to May 2023, 4,500 titles issued in J&K.

60,000 families in J&K benefited.

What are the benefits of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K) for tribal communities?

- **Land and Resource Rights:**

Acknowledges tribal communities' rights over forests.

Over 4,500 titles issued from September 2021 to May 2023.

60,000 families in J&K have accessed forest land/resources.

44.59% of the 9,423 claimants given titles for community forest resources.

December 2022 policy allows tribes to use non-timber forest produce.

- **Access to Services and Infrastructure:**

FRA facilitates services like healthcare, education, energy, and connectivity.

Tribes can avail essential services improving overall well-being.

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- **Community Empowerment and Participation:**

Stresses on a community-led approach.

Only 7.43% of claims declined at higher administrative levels.

Acts against historic deprivation and exclusion faced by tribal communities.

- **Addressing Unique Tribal Challenges:**

Safeguards interests and seasonal migrations of J&K's large migratory pastoral population.

Efforts in place to support tribes with low literacy rates and socio-cultural challenges.

What challenges exist in implementing the Forest Rights Act (FRA) in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K)?

- **Documentation Difficulties:**

Low disposal rate of individual rights shows many can't prove eligibility.

More than 92.57% of rejected claims declined by the Gram Sabha.

Tribes face challenges in producing required records.

- **Geographic and Lifestyle Barriers:**

The unique migratory pattern of tribes complicates FRA implementation.

Difficult terrains and geographical barriers in J&K pose challenges.

- **Literacy and Socio-Cultural Issues:**

Low literacy rates hinder understanding and use of FRA: less than 50% among the tribal population, and just 16.74% among migratory tribes.

Local socio-cultural nuances can complicate the act's adoption.

- **Community Participation:**

Absence of strong leadership from within the community.

Gram Sabha, with tribal members, declined a significant number of claims, pointing to potential internal community disagreements or lack of understanding.

- **Outsider Perception:**

Many who overlooked the deprivation of rights in J&K questioned the delay in rights conferment after the FRA rollout, showing a lack of long-term engagement.

What steps should be taken?

Empower from Within: Promote community-led FRA implementation to ensure tribal engagement.

Education and Awareness: Address low literacy rates (less than 50% among tribes, 16.74% among migratory tribes) with literacy and FRA-awareness programs.

Streamlined Documentation: Simplify the process for tribes to prove eligibility and claim rights.

Capacity Building: Strengthen the Gram Sabha's understanding of FRA, given 92.57% of rejected claims happened at this level.

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Robust Outreach: The Tribal Affairs Department, NGOs, and youth groups should intensify efforts, ensuring tribes understand and utilize their rights.

Address Socio-Cultural Barriers: Recognize and accommodate unique migratory patterns and socio-cultural challenges of tribes.

17. Faizan Mustafa writes: New penal code falls short of its laudable objectives

Source: The post is based on the article “Faizan Mustafa writes: New penal code falls short of its laudable objectives” published in “The Indian Express” on 18th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Parliament (Law and Justice)

News: In this article author discusses recent changes in the Indian Penal Code, highlighting the updated definitions, the removal of some terms, and the introduction of new provisions. They critique some revisions, emphasizing the need for clearer definitions and alignment with modern legal standards and constitutional values.

What is the importance of criminal law?

Importance of Criminal Law:

- **Instrument of Safety:** Criminal law ensures the safety and well-being of citizens by deterring and penalizing harmful actions.
- **Reflection of State-Citizen Relationship:** It is a direct representation of how the state interacts with its citizens, indicating the nature and priorities of governance.
- **Community Impact:** Beyond individual consequences, criminal law affects the entire community's harmony and order.
- **Constitutional Vision:** Ideally, criminal law should align with a nation's constitutional principles, upholding rights and ensuring justice for all.

What recent updates have been made in the Indian Penal Code of 1860?

- **Revised Definitions:** The new code has revised some definitions. For instance, it has broadened definitions in cases like rape.
- **Sedition:** The term “sedition” is removed, but its scope has broadened through terms like “subversive activities”. No definition of subversive activities given in the code.
- **Death Penalty:** The death penalty remains, with added provisions for cases like the rape of a minor.
- **Adultery Modifications:** The offense of adultery has been reframed to address cases where sex occurs on the false promise of marriage or other deceitful assurances.
- **Mob Lynching:** There's a new provision to punish mob lynching by groups of five or more, though the term “mob lynching” isn't used.
- **New Penalties:** For specific crimes, community service has been introduced as a potential punishment, especially for first-time offenders in minor offenses.
- **Forensic Emphasis:** The code now includes provisions emphasizing the importance of forensic investigations in major crimes.

What are the issues with these new updates?

- **Ambiguous Definitions:** Despite revisions, some terms remain unclear. The distinction between “culpable homicide” and “murder” is still not well-defined.
- **Sedition Ambiguity:** While the term “sedition” was removed, introducing terms like “subversive activities” without clear definitions can lead to misuse.

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- **Controversial Death Penalty:** The retention of the death penalty, especially for the rape of a minor, reflects a belief in dated ideas of retribution and deterrence.
- **Gender Neutrality Absent:** Despite aims for gender-neutrality, the crime of cruelty remains gender-specific. The new code also fails to recognize marital rape as an offense.
- **Incomplete Hate Speech Provisions:** Sections 153A and 153B, dealing with hate speech, saw no substantial improvements, leaving gaps in addressing this crucial issue.
- **Conspiracy Concerns:** The current provision on criminal conspiracy can penalize individuals merely for agreeing to commit an offense, even if no action follows. This approach, inherited from colonial times, can potentially punish mere intentions, raising concerns about its misuse against political or social activists.
- **Blasphemy:** Retaining the blasphemy law places India alongside countries with restrictive views on freedom of expression.
- **Adultery Reappearance:** The revised code brings back the offense of adultery in a new form, potentially infringing on personal liberties.

18. Licence To Skill – GOI’s scheme for craftspeople is a good idea but its success critically depends on finding markets

Source: The post is based on the article “Licence To Skill – GOI’s scheme for craftspeople is a good idea but its success critically depends on finding markets” published in **The Times of India** on 18th August 2023.

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

Relevance: concerns with the PM Vishwakarma Scheme.

News: Recently, the government came up with the PM Vishwakarma Scheme.

What is the PM Vishwakarma Scheme?

Read Here: ‘Vishwakarma scheme will aid 30 lakh artisan families

It provides ₹13,000 crore over 5 years as concessional loans, mainly benefiting OBCs. Craftspeople with the relevant documents will be eligible for a loan of up to Rs 3 lakh.

What are the challenges with the scheme?

Market Access: The scheme focuses on preserving family-based traditional skills. However, **the main obstacle is accessing markets because** traditional practices often can’t match modern costs.

Hence, to be economically effective, the scheme needs to connect these skills to market value chains.

Modern Job Skills: The scheme’s soft loan approach will benefit many involved in traditional jobs, but India’s economic progress requires modern job skills.

Modern sectors align with the aspirations of young individuals from families with traditional occupations. However, **Vishwakarma’s approach isn’t sufficient** to create a workforce for a modern economy.

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What can be the way ahead?

Preserving traditional skills is important for India's cultural heritage. Hence, **India could learn from Japan's way of** using fiscal resources and laws to keep their traditional skills alive while becoming a developed country.

Vishwakarma can support traditional craftspeople, but its success in the long run will depend on making a market where they don't have to compete solely based on lower costs.

19. Poverty declines, but battle not over

Source– The post is based on the article **“Poverty declines, but battle not over”** published in **“The Business Standard”** on **18th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues related to poverty

Relevance: Measurement of poverty

News– The latest poverty numbers from the multidimensional poverty index (MDPI) for India for showed that about 415 million people have come out of poverty between 2005-06 and 2019-21.

What are some facts about MDPI?

The MDPI encompasses **health, education, and standard of living**. It utilizes the Alkire-Foster methodology for measurement.

The **standard of living** aspect considers factors such as housing, cooking fuel, sanitation, drinking water, and assets, excluding income. Therefore, it doesn't rely on data from the National Sample Survey.

In India, maternal health and access to banking have been incorporated as **additional indicators** in the MDPI.

MDPI provides a comprehensive understanding of the nature of poverty, especially in a diverse country like India. Relying solely on **measures of income poverty** can be problematic.

What are some significant revelation from the survey?

The outcomes of the MDPI reveal **significant progress** in poverty reduction, particularly in rural regions.

During the period between 2005-06 and 2015-16, around **280 million individuals** emerged from poverty. 135 million people escaped poverty from 2015-16 to 2019-21.

There has been a **more rapid reduction** in poverty within **economically disadvantaged states**

There has also been a **marked decrease in poverty** in Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh.

The situation varies significantly across different parts of the country. Rajasthan demonstrated notable progress in terms of **years of schooling and school attendance**, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana did not fare as well.

Rajasthan faced challenges in terms of **access to cooking fuel**, along with several other states like MP, Bihar, UP, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Assam, Odisha, and Haryana.

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Sanitation improvements played a significant role in poverty reduction in economically disadvantaged states like Bihar, UP, MP, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh.

States like UP, Bihar, Jharkhand, and Assam showed improvements in **electricity connections**, with Meghalaya lagging behind in this aspect.

Access to proper housing exhibited **minimal improvements** across most states in the country, indicating that a review of the PM Awas Yojana might be necessary.

Nutrition remains a significant issue in India, with insufficient progress seen in most states.

Significant disparities also exist among districts in addressing poverty. For instance, in Bihar, some districts have shown **substantial improvements**. However, districts continue to struggle in their anti-poverty endeavors.

Among the districts that witnessed the largest decline in poverty between 2015-16 and 2019-21 are Kalahandi (Odisha), Alirajpur and Barwani (MP), Udaipur and Barmer (Rajasthan), Maharajganj and Gonda (UP), and Dang (Gujarat).

The sole district where poverty increased was **Bijapur (Chhattisgarh)**.

Way forward-

There is need to **implement national programs** effectively at the district and municipal levels.

India still has the largest number of impoverished individuals globally, around 230 million in 2019-21. There is need to **enhance their nutrition** through improved **meal programs** in Anganwadis and schools.

The COVID-19 pandemic might have further **increased poverty**. It has pushed **300 million people in poverty**.

The **MDPI indicators** provide valuable insights on where to intensify the battle against poverty. The struggle against poverty cannot be won solely through a **top-down approach**. It demands a **concerted bottom-up endeavor**.

20. Is there a need to replace the IPC, the CrPC and the Evidence Act?

Source– The post is based on the article “**Is there a need to replace the IPC, the CrPC and the Evidence Act?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **18th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity.

Relevance: Important Bills and Acts

News– Recently, three Bills were introduced in the Lok Sabha- the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill to replace the Indian Penal Code, 1860, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita Bill to replace the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 and the Bharatiya Sakshya Bill to replace the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.

Why is there a need for change in criminal laws?

Indian Penal Code (IPC), the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and the Indian Evidence Act were fully utilised in the **criminal justice system**. But, they did not reflect the **changing values and the democratic aspirations of the people**.

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The entire **socio-economic scenario and political system** ever since the IPC was enacted in 1860 have changed.

In the IPC, 175 sections have been amended, **eight new sections** have been added and **22 sections** have been repealed to generate the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill.

What are issues with the Bill?

Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita Bill– There are issues in the bill regarding the time duration to keep someone in detention without being charged.

Earlier the **detention time** in India was 60 days. The new Bill proposes 90 days.

The new CrPC also seems to give a lot of **discretionary powers** to the police, like the **‘right to handcuff’**.

There is to arrest women after sunset in **exceptional circumstances**, and to use any force and means necessary when arresting a person. That could **legitimise encounters** and all kinds of violence.

As per Supreme Court in the **D.K. Basu vs State of West Bengal (1996) case**, people should not be handcuffed.

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill– There is substantial **alteration in the numbering of several critical sections**. For instance, **Section 302** of the IPC is set to become **Section 101**, and **Section 420** will be renumbered as **Section 316**.

These sections have been deeply ingrained in the **public consciousness** for the past 164 years of the IPC’s existence.

The modification in these **numerical designations** will lead to significant challenges in maintaining **accurate documentation** within the National Crime Records Bureau and the Crime and Criminal Tracking Network and Systems.

A **separate chapter** is dedicated to **sexual offenses**. But, it is limited to those committed against women. The government seems to have overlooked sexual offenses involving men against men or women against women.

What are some significant provisions of the Bills?

Instances of violence and detentions without charges persist as before. The Bills endorse, **legitimize, and formalize** these practices.

Key sections have been reorganized, resulting in increased ambiguity and confusion. For instance, the Bill replaces sedition with the term **subversive activities**. It introduces significant vagueness.

The new Bills provide their own definitions of terrorist acts, despite the presence of **specialized legislation** such as the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA).

Furthermore, causing damage to property is now included within the scope of a **terrorist act**. Another section addresses the **provocation and intimidation** of the government. Practically anything could be perceived as provocation and classified as a terrorist act.

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Mob lynching is now classified as an offense. More **stringent penalties** have been suggested for crimes against women.

The **concept of Love Jihad**, defined as ‘concealing one’s identity before marriage’ in the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita Bill, has been established as a **separate offense**.

21. Gaps in Births and Deaths Registration (Amendment) Act

Source– The post is based on the article “**Gaps in Births and Deaths Registration (Amendment) Act**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **18th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance: Important Bills and Acts

News– Registration of Births and Deaths (Amendment) Bill, 2023 has been passed by Parliament and has got the assent of the President of India.

What are significant provisions of the Bill?

The Bill makes it compulsory that the Registrar General of India maintains a **national level database of births and deaths**.

The **Chief Registrar of births and deaths** in every State is required to maintain a **State-level database** of registered births and deaths ‘using the **portal approved by the Registrar General of India**’.

These databases will provide **information to update** the National Population Register, the Aadhaar database, electoral rolls, ration card, passport, and other databases at the national level, as may be notified.

In the case of birth, the amendments provide for collecting the **Aadhaar number** of the parents. Nothing is mentioned about the Aadhaar number of the deceased.

The amendments mandate that for all deaths within medical institutions, a **cause of death certificate** must be forwarded to the Registrar of Births and Deaths. A copy should be provided to the closest relative.

In cases of deaths that transpire outside of hospitals, the medical practitioner who attended to the deceased during their recent illness is responsible for **issuing this certificate**.

What are some facts about central and State databases of births and deaths?

The responsibility of **managing the registration** lies with State governments. The Registrar General of India’s role is to **coordinate and unify** the registration system.

The Registrar General of India will now also oversee the **maintenance of the central database, alongside the existing functions**.

The Chief Registrars in the States are tasked with maintaining **efficient databases** to facilitate the issuance of **birth and death certificates**.

The national-level database will primarily consist of **State-level databases**, with the possibility of slight deviations to **accommodate additional data elements** that certain States may incorporate.

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What are issues relating to the creation of a national-level database?

The proposal suggests that the central-level database should be **accessible to authorities** managing databases for population registers, electoral rolls, Aadhaar numbers, ration cards, passports, driving licences, property registrations, as notified.

If these entities need to **access information** from the registered births and deaths database, they would be required to make **modifications to the laws or executive orders** that oversee their **respective databases**.

The **Registration of Births and Deaths (RBD) Act** only requires a provision enabling the **sharing of information** from the database.

Introducing a specific collection of databases for **parliamentary evaluation**, while also permitting potential future incorporations by the government, could be perceived as undermining the **supremacy of Parliament**.

The **subsequent inclusions** to this list might raise more **significant concerns** than those originally approved by the legislative body.

What are the issues with the provision related to medical practitioners issuing death certificates?

Firstly, the attending medical practitioner might not always have arrived at a **definite diagnosis** before the person's passing.

Secondly, the forms used for recording the cause of death adhere to **World Health Organization guidelines**.

If the deceased was under the care of a practitioner from the **AYUSH systems** of medicine, the recorded cause of death might not be applicable for **cause of death statistics** due to **non-classifiable under the International Classification of Diseases**.

Thirdly, a person undergoing treatment for a particular ailment could die from an entirely **different cause** outside of a medical facility, where the attending medical practitioner wasn't available for consultation.

In such cases, expecting the practitioner to issue a cause of death certificate becomes **problematic**.

Fourthly, while **Section 17 of the Act** prohibits the **inclusion of the cause of death** in any certificate issued under the Act, it now stipulates that the cause of death certificate should be furnished to the deceased's relative.

These provisions appear **contradictory**, as the cause of death entered in the death register is derived from the very **cause of death certificate** issued by the medical practitioner.

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22. Word choice in data protection law, a dilution of rights

Source– The post is based on the article “**Word choice in data protection law, a dilution of rights**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **18th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance: Important Bills and Acts

News– India finally has a data protection law, called the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023.

What are provision in data protection law related to consent for providing their data?

The enduring dilemma in data protection lies in establishing the **criteria for consent**. There are concerns related to individuals providing a **genuine choice** when their data is utilized.

The legislation includes two relevant clauses.

As per one provision, individual must be **properly informed** about the details of your consent. Only **clear positive signal** from the individual part will be **interpreted as consent**.

However, this provision is counterbalanced by a second one. It allows **data usage** if you have “**voluntarily provided**” the data and have not **indicated non-consent**.

If you have “not indicated” refusal, governmental bodies and corporations might presume your consent for **diverse uses** without formally notifying you.

This **lack of clarity** will **create confusion** in legal proceedings as well as uncertainty in business circles regarding the correct benchmark for obtaining consent.

What are issues related to consent provision in new data protection law?

Obtaining consent may not always be feasible for the **utilization of personal data**.

For example, an individual’s decisions regarding their data could hinder various **public operations** like identity verification, targeting welfare benefits, and enforcing laws.

In previous versions of law, personal data can be used without consent only if it was “**essential**” for a specific purpose related to **legitimate state functions, fulfilling legal obligations, and addressing emergencies**.

The data custodian had to establish that there were **no viable alternatives** to collecting and utilizing the information in the **specified manner**.

The 2023 legislation allows for **data processing** without consent when it is “**for**” rather than “**necessary for**” **certain legitimate purposes**.

This slight alteration in wording can have a substantial effect on the **actual level of protection offered**. **Privacy issues** will be there.

When the data undergoes processing without your consent, individual will not receive any **notification** of this occurrence. He will not have the opportunity to **rectify incorrect data or remove unnecessary information** afterward.

Data collected for one **non-consensual purpose** can be freely utilized for other purposes. This is in contrast to the stance of the Supreme Court of India. It has recognized principles like **necessity and purpose limitation** as integral to the **right to informational privacy**.

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23. The power of an acronym

Source: The post is based on the article “The power of an acronym” published in “Business standard” on 19th August 2023.

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

News: In this article author discusses the evolution and relevance of the BRICS group, highlighting its inconsistencies and China’s increasing influence, and questions India’s position given its differing interests and relationships compared to other BRICS nations.

About evolution of BRICS.

Origin: Coined by Goldman Sachs, representing Brazil, Russia, India, and China as future dominant economies.

Performance: China and India thrived, entering top five economies. Russia and Brazil lagged; Russia isn’t in the top 10 anymore.

Addition of South Africa: Diluted the initial economic focus, as its economy is much smaller.

Initiatives by BRICS:

BRICS nations hold regular summits to discuss collaboration.

One significant achievement is the “BRICS bank”, established to support development projects, though its impact has been limited.

Proposals were made for a dedicated data cable to ensure secure communication, but progress has been slow.

New currency arrangements were discussed to challenge the dominance of the dollar, but haven’t been implemented.

What is the relevance of BRICS in today’s world?

Economic Clout: China and India are now among the top five economies, highlighting BRICS’ economic significance.

Alternative Voice: BRICS is seen as a potential counter to Western-dominated global structures.

Developmental Initiatives: The establishment of the “BRICS bank” aims to support developmental projects.

Diplomatic Platform: Over 40 developing countries have shown interest in joining, suggesting its growing diplomatic importance.

How is China influencing BRICS?

Push for Expansion: China is advocating for an increase in BRICS membership. They’re keen to have more countries join, extending the group’s reach.

Diplomatic Strategy: With limited regional allies like North Korea, Cambodia, and Myanmar, China sees BRICS as a way to gain broader diplomatic support.

Countering Western Influence: China aims to use BRICS as a platform to challenge and break Western dominance in global affairs.

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Engagement with Other Groups: BRICS has initiated talks with the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, a China-dominated group, furthering China's influence within BRICS.

Potential Data Control: China's involvement in the proposed BRICS data cable raises concerns about its ability to access and control communication, given its technological prowess.

Where does India stand?

Economic Performance: India has prospered, now ranking among the top five global economies.

Relationship with China: India has an adversarial relationship with China, blocking imports, investments, and market access for Chinese technologies.

Diplomatic Challenges: Many countries seeking BRICS membership, like Indonesia, Saudi Arabia, and UAE, pose diplomatic issues for India. Blocking them could strain relations.

Membership Criteria: India advocates for clear criteria for new BRICS members, highlighting the existing inconsistencies within the group.

Alignment with Western Nations: India is increasingly aligned with Europe and the US in defense, technology, and people movement, contrasting with China and Russia's stances.

Political System: India's political system is more open than China's or Russia's, potentially leading to differences in governance perspectives within BRICS.

24. The custody question

Source– The post is based on the article “**The custody question**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **19th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity.

Relevance: Important Bills and Acts

News– The central government has introduced **three Bills in the Lok Sabha to reform criminal law:** The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 to replace the Indian Penal Code, 1860, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 to replace the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 and the Bharatiya Sakshya Bill, 2023 to replace the Indian Evidence Act, 1872.

What are some positive changes introduced by Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023?

The **entire lifecycle** of a new case, starting from the first information report will now be **documented online** using **digital recordkeeping**.

This transition will greatly enhance the security of case records and enable faster access when needed.

When searches are conducted in our residences and items are seized, these actions must be accompanied by **mandatory video recording**. It safeguards against the **planting of evidence** and can be utilised by the defence to contest alleged seizures.

The Protection Code also includes the **concept of a “zero FIR.”** This type of FIR is filed when a police station receives a complaint about an alleged offence that falls under the jurisdiction of another police station.

In this scenario, the original police station initiates the FIR and subsequently transfers it to the **appropriate police station** for further investigation.

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What are the concerning aspects of the bill?

Protection Code allows **trials in absentia** under **specific circumstances**. This occurs when the judge is convinced that the **physical presence** of the accused in court is unnecessary or when the accused persistently disrupts the court proceedings.

The broad discretion granted to judges in determining the presence of the accused opens the door to **potential misuse** of this provision.

Protection Code authorises magistrates to approve **extended periods of detention** in police custody. It surpasses the current 15-day limit and extends up to 90 days.

This **prolonged detention** up to 90 days is applicable to **offenses punishable by death, life imprisonment, or imprisonment for a minimum of 10 years**.

The Protection Code allows individuals to be held in police custody for a maximum of 60 days. It is for **“other offences”** that carry **shorter prison sentences** than those outlined for the 90-day detainment offences.

Prolonged detention is detrimental to **fundamental rights** such as the **right to life, health and a fair trial**.

Ninety days of **uninterrupted police custody** would make any accused highly susceptible to **coercion and intimidation**.

25. Mediation Bill: An incomplete settlement

Source– The post is based on the article **“Mediation Bill: An incomplete settlement”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **18th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity.

Relevance: Important Bills and Acts

News– On August 1, the Mediation Bill, 2021 was passed by the Rajya Sabha.

What are some positive aspects of the Bill?

The Bill has reduced the **mediation period from 180 to 90 days**. It has transformed the **pre-litigation mediation** from **obligatory to voluntary**. It was also highly necessary, considering that **voluntariness** constitutes an **essential principle of mediation**.

The support for the **validation and implementation** of settlement agreements stemming from mediation is the right step. It aligns seamlessly with the **United Nations Convention on International Settlement Agreements Resulting from Mediation**.

What are the concerning aspects of the Bill?

There are limited grounds listed in the Bill to challenge the **enforcement of a settlement agreement** and a **period of 90 days** is given to raise the challenge. It needs a relook.

A settlement agreement is essentially a contract between the parties. Sometimes, **grounds for challenging** are detected at a later stage.

There are also some **technical flaws**. **Clause 8 of the Bill** entitles a party to move the Court, before the commencement or during mediation, for interim relief, only in **“exceptional circumstances”**.

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The phrase “**exceptional circumstances**” is **lacking in definition** within the Bill. It also deviates from the established norms of seeking **interim relief in civil courts**.

Moreover, there is no **remedy of appeal** available against an order passed under this proposed section. Even our **arbitration regime** provides an **appellate recourse**.

The Bill introduces the concepts of “**online**” and “**community**” mediation. A recent **Niti Aayog report** reveals that only 55% of India have **access to the internet** and only 27% possess compatible devices.

As for **community mediation**, the Bill makes it mandatory to have a **panel of three mediators**. This requirement is **unnecessary** and impacts the **flexibility** that mediation brings.

Government is the **biggest litigant** in the country. Limiting the government’s willingness to engage in mediation processes solely to “**commercial disputes**” contradicts the intent behind the legislation.

Way forward-

The standing committee has recommended that government-related disputes be included in the Bill. The Bill provided a golden opportunity to the government to change that perception.

This will inspire **confidence amongst all stakeholders** and help in reducing the **pendency of backlog**.

Mediation should be promoted as a **preferred and voluntary mode** of securing justice. The Bill is **prescriptive**. The regular individual will now need **additional guidance and support** to attain justice.

For online mediation, there is a need to scale the **bandwidth accessibility** to remote parts of the country. Setting up **legal aid or access to justice clinics** with adequate IT infrastructure could address this issue.

26. A ‘fab’ way to conduct India-Japan tech diplomacy

Source: The post is based on the article “**A ‘fab’ way to conduct India-Japan tech diplomacy**” published in **The Hindu** on **19th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: India and Japan agreement on semiconductor technology

News: In July 2023, India and Japan reached an agreement to cooperate on semiconductor technology.

What is the agreement about?

The collaboration aims to establish a stronger supply chain for semiconductors and jointly develop the semiconductor ecosystem.

The partnership will focus on five areas: **1)** semiconductor design, **2)** manufacturing, **3)** equipment research, **4)** establishing resilience in the semiconductor supply chain, and **5)** talent development.

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The partnership encourages sharing technical knowledge, research, and innovation between Indian and Japanese semiconductor industries, keeping Japan and India at the forefront of semiconductor progress.

The partnership aims for technology transfer, semiconductor research collaboration, and reciprocal trade. **It also prioritizes human resource development through** skill exchange programs, workshops, and training.

What measures have been taken by both countries in promoting semiconductor technology?

Both countries support semiconductor manufacturing and research through their policies. **India's "Make in India" and Japan's "Society 5.0" share self-reliance and innovation-driven growth goals.**

Both countries value semiconductors for innovation, growth, and security.

Japan leads in chip production, while India's IT sector is growing with increasing demand for semiconductors. This provides a solid foundation for their partnership.

Must Read: [On the India and Japan relationship and challenges from geopolitical issues](#)

What is the significance of this partnership?

Tackling Technological Challenges: India-Japan partnership holds a key role in shaping the global semiconductor landscape. Their collaboration addresses evolving tech challenges like miniaturization, AI, and quantum computing.

Diversification: In January 2023, Japan and the Netherlands joined the U.S. to restrict chip material exports to China, affecting Japanese chip firms. Thus, the India collaboration becomes vital for Japan in diversifying the semiconductor industry.

Supply Chain Challenges: Geopolitical tensions and supply chain issues underscore the need for diverse semiconductor supply chains and global cooperation.

Hence, collaborative research efforts help in pooling resources to tackle complex semiconductor challenges, driving innovation and solutions.

Unity Among Indo-Pacific Partners: This partnership comes after a recent US-India technological alliance which supports the development of interconnected semiconductor ecosystems.

Hence, **bilateral agreements with India by the US and Japan showcase unity among Indo-Pacific partners in critical technology**, reflecting shared geostrategic and security interests.

What can be the way ahead?

The agreements demonstrate Quad countries' trust in India, highlighting India's semiconductor growth.

Hence, **agreement between India and Japan holds significance as it would combine** Japan's tech skill and India's innovation, fostering advanced electronics, connectivity, and shared technology progress.

General Studies Paper –3

General Studies - 3

1. How to make Urea more efficient as a fertiliser, and why that's needed

Source: The post is based on the article "How to make Urea more efficient as a fertiliser, and why that's needed" published in "The Indian express" on 14th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies

News: This article discusses the introduction of 'Urea Gold' in India, a fertilizer fortified with sulphur. This new fertilizer improves nutrient efficiency and reduces the need for frequent applications. Despite the benefits of such fortified fertilizers, pricing and government subsidies remain challenges, preventing widespread adoption.

What is 'Urea Gold'?

Introduction of 'Urea Gold':

'Urea Gold' is a new fertilizer launched by Indian Prime Minister and developed by Rashtriya Chemicals and Fertilizers Ltd.

Composition and Benefits:

It's made up of 37% Nitrogen and 17% sulphur.

This combination addresses the sulphur deficiency in Indian soils, particularly beneficial for oilseeds and pulses.

It offers a more gradual release of Nitrogen, ensuring plants remain green longer. This means farmers might need fewer applications, possibly using two bags instead of three for crops like paddy or wheat.

Why is Urea consumption a concern in India?

Rising Urea Consumption Trends:

Urea consumption in India has increased from 26.7 million tonnes in 2009-10 to 35.7 million tonnes in 2022-23. Despite measures like mandatory neem coating and reduced bag sizes, there's been a noticeable uptrend in consumption since 2017-18.

Dependency on Imports:

Out of the 35.7 million tonnes consumed last fiscal year, 7.6 million tonnes were imported.

Even domestically-produced urea relies heavily on imported natural gas as its primary feedstock.

To highlight the magnitude, India's annual urea consumption is second only to China, which consumes 51 million tonnes, primarily coal-based.

Efficiency Concerns:

The Nitrogen Use Efficiency (NUE) of urea in India is worrying. Only 35% of the Nitrogen applied through urea is actually used by crops. The remaining 65% is lost, either released as ammonia gas or leached into the ground as nitrate.

This efficiency has decreased from an estimated 48% in the 1960s. As a result, farmers apply more fertilizer for the same yield, leading to increased costs and potential environmental issues.

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What should be done?

Adopt Fortification Solutions:

Instead of plain fertilizers, India should use those coated with secondary and micronutrients. This enhances nutrient efficiency and delivers crucial nutrients to crops.

Yara International's 'Procote Zn', which coats urea with zinc oxide, is a prime example. It's more effective than conventional methods. In Yara's trials, paddy yields using 'Procote Zn' exceeded those with traditional zinc sulphate.

Address the Pricing Challenges:

The current government subsidies for fortified fertilizers aren't incentivizing companies. They can charge only an additional Rs 24 for a 45-kg bag of zinc-coated urea.

Yara International, for instance, sells urea and 'Procote Zn' separately. Farmers pay Rs 254 for a 45-kg bag of urea and an extra Rs 530-550 for 'Procote Zn'. This combined price is slightly more than using traditional zinc sulphate.

Streamline Production and Pricing:

To ensure even nutrient distribution, coating should occur at factories. This will also ease the farmers' work, eliminating the need for them to mix nutrients.

The government might consider revising the pricing structure. This could involve deregulating prices for fortified fertilizers while ensuring base products remain affordable.

2. China's economic slump may yet wash up on foreign shores

Source: The post is based on the article "China's economic slump may yet wash up on foreign shores" published in **Live Mint** on 14th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Economy – Growth & Development

Relevance: About the global economic scenario

News: The current situation raises concerns over global imbalances arising out of China's declining economy.

What are the concerns with the Chinese economy?

China is facing multiple challenges. Recent reports indicate setbacks in its economic recovery, with notable declines in exports and imports, and even consumer prices falling in July, raising concerns over deflation.

There is also a lack of demand in China which raises worries about the overall health of global economic conditions. **The real estate sector is also a significant cause for concern**, with Country Garden, once a major sales leader, now facing instability.

The solution to this involves enhancements in fiscal measures and a reduction in interest rates. Meanwhile, the global economy relies on the US to sustain growth.

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How is the US economy performing?

There are very less chances of recession or economic slowdown in the US. The job market in the US is doing well, and while prices are still higher than the goal set by the government, they might not go up much more.

Recently, JPMorgan also said that a big economic decline is unlikely. People are less worried about smaller banks now.

However, according to the chief US economist, the risk of the economy getting worse is still quite high. Hence, it would be a mistake if the current positive situation in the US led to overconfidence.

For instance, in the late 1990s the US experienced a technology-driven economic boom, low unemployment, and mild inflation. During that time, Japan, once seen as a major economic competitor to the US, was struggling, along with many East Asian countries.

This situation made people confident over the US economy. **However, in 2001, the US experienced a recession**, and this was followed by major European countries facing economic difficulties.

Hence, a key takeaway from this is that while the US economy is performing, the US should also be concerned about the possibility economic challenges witnessed in other parts of the world.

What is the way ahead?

Despite concerns about China, its central bank doesn't seem to be taking strong action to deal with the problem. At the same time, in the US, prices for things are still quite high.

Hence, the global economic scenario raises worry and a suitable action is needed by both the countries to revive their economy.

3. Small With Smarts – On Air Pollution

Source– The post is based on the article “**Small With Smarts**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **14th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and Technology

Relevance: Issues related to research and innovation

News– The article explains the recent developments regarding reducing the air pollution in Delhi.

What are some recent developments regarding the tackling of air pollution in NCR?

Around half of Punjab's paddy cultivation area has been sown with the **short-duration variety, PR-126**. Punjab Agricultural University released it in 2017. It **matures early and produces less stubble**. This paddy variety will **lower air pollution**.

A **startup mentored by IIT-Delhi** has tested a device that reduced **PM2.5 and PM10** in its reach area by up to 86% within two hours in the pilot project.

This device has been validated by the atmospheric science department of IIT-Delhi. It **ionises the air** to make particle pollutants heavier and removes them from the air. It holds a **low-cost promise** for traffic junctions and other hotspots.

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What can be inferred by these developments on air pollutants?

There exists a vast world beyond **prominent research and development initiatives**.

Startups, equipped with proper access to funding and guidance, can provide **cost-effective solutions** across diverse sectors.

Recognizing that not every **entrepreneurial idea** proves successful in **practical applications** is crucial. Such outcomes are inherent to the **process of innovation**. They are entirely acceptable as long as **peer review procedures** continue to be **efficient and rigorous**.

4. Express View on Himachal Pradesh tragedy: A slippery slope

Source– The post is based on the article “**Express View on Himachal Pradesh tragedy: A slippery slope**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **16th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Changes to Geographical phenomenon, GS3- Disaster Management

News– recently cloudbursts and landslides in Himachal Pradesh claimed the lives of 50 people.

What are the reasons behind the recent disaster in Himachal Pradesh?

Floods and landslides are frequent occurrences in the Himalayan region. These youthful mountains are characterised by **geological activity**. The area has a **prolonged history of landslides**.

As per the **ISRO’s Landslide Atlas of India**, all twelve districts in Himachal Pradesh are vulnerable to landslides. However, recent years have witnessed an increase in the **instability of the slopes**.

According to data from the state’s disaster management records, the **number of landslides** surged by nearly sixfold between 2020 and 2022.

Climate change and the rise in instances of **extreme rainfall events** have aggravated the **vulnerabilities**. Indeed, the average temperature in the Himalayas is increasing at a faster pace compared to the rest of the country.

The **ecologically insensitive development** has compromised Himachal Pradesh’s ability to withstand adverse weather conditions.

Over the last decade, the state has been **widening roads**. A total of **69 national highway projects** has gained approval during this period. Five of them are designated as four-lane highways.

Road development should consider the **ecological vulnerabilities** of the area. The road expansion initiatives have neglected to consider the **stability of slopes**.

Furthermore, there is **minimal planning** regarding the management of construction debris. The Himachal Pradesh High Court has expressed grave concerns about the “**poorly executed construction**” of roads within the state.

Early Warning Systems designed to notify people about impending landslides are in their **initial stages of development** in the country. In Kangra, the EWS failed to effectively alert people about a landslide that occurred in the first week of this month.

Way forward-

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Effectively addressing the **uncertainties of weather** will necessitate **significant shifts in approaches and interventions at multiple levels.**

The tragic incident in Himachal should serve as a **cautionary signal for policymakers** against deferring such initiatives.

5. Disaster in the Himalayas: No one likes to say that tourism brings trouble

Source– The post is based on the article “**Disaster in the Himalayas: No one likes to say that tourism brings trouble**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **16th August 2023.**

Syllabus: GS3- Disaster Management

News– Article discusses the effects of infrastructure developments for tourism industry on Himalayas.

What is the recent development in Amsterdam that sets an example for tourism industry?

The city’s mayor has decided to prohibit **cruise ships** from docking in the central area. A study conducted in 2021 revealed that a single large cruise ship emits as much **nitrogen oxide in one day as 30,000 trucks.**

Each cruise ship brings around **7,000 tourists**, contributing to **employment and local businesses** in the city.

How development strategy adopted by Himalayan states are contributing to disasters?

The **landslides** along highways and the destruction of bridges has **minimal influence on the economic strategies** of Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.

There is a **clash of narratives** . On one side is the **discourse of development**, where tourism occupies a central role, particularly in hilly regions. On the opposing side, there is the **outcry of nature conservationists.**

Throughout the Himalayan region, **hospitality sector** has given little consideration to the disappearance of forests or the disposal of waste.

Rivers serve as the **ultimate drainage systems.** In the hills, **landslides’ debris** cleared periodically to alleviate traffic congestion on highways is deposited in rivers

The government prioritize **reconstructing** the damaged highway segments and bridge rather than rather than **changing its strategy.**

How attitude of tourism industry is threat to Himalyan ecology?

The **prevailing policy** is guided by the belief that the tourism industry is the **linchpin of prosperity.** There is underestimation of the **ecological impacts of unrestricted tourism** on Himalayan ecosystem.

Tourists’ behavior increasingly aligns with **established stereotypes.** They are often perceived as **individuals seeking enjoyment.**

Ensuring their **lavish experiences** is seen as a **fundamental aspect of hospitality,** even in pilgrimage destinations.

Occurrences like **forest fires** during the summer and the occurrence of landslides and floods during rainy seasons are now anticipated as **potential disasters.**

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Tourists don't appear to recognize that their style of travel can **harm the mountainous regions**. They seem to be oblivious to news about these incidents.

6. Evolution will not save aircraft from bird hits”

Source: The post is based on the article “Evolution will not save aircraft from bird hits” published in “Live Mint” on 18th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Bio-diversity & Environment

News: The article discusses the increasing number of bird strikes with aircraft in India, the challenges birds face adapting to modern aviation threats.

Why are birds collisions with planes rising in India?

Reasons for Rising Bird Collisions with Planes in India:

Increased Incidents: Data shows 1,149 bird strikes in the first half of 2023, a 62.3% rise from the previous year.

Flight Growth: While the number of flights has grown, the rise in bird strikes is even steeper.

Airport Attractions: Airports inadvertently attract birds. The rumble of runways can shake worms out of the ground, providing food.

Urban Birds Behavior: Birds might be traveling across different time zones due to flight noises.

Slow Evolution: Birds haven't evolved quickly enough to recognize and avoid the dangers of modern aviation, unlike other threats in their environment.

How are authorities addressing this issue?

Clean-Up Campaigns: Authorities clean around airports to reduce food that attracts avian scavengers.

Sound Deterrents: Sound buzz guns are deployed to scare birds away from airport areas.

Consulting Experts: Officials are consulting the Salim Ali Centre for Ornithology and Natural History for flight safety insights.

7. Message from the mountains – Himachal, Uttarakhand must check construction projects

Source: The post is based on the article “**Message from the mountains – Himachal, Uttarakhand must check construction projects**” published in **Business Standard** on 18th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster Management

Relevance: reasons behind natural calamities in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand

News: The recent death in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand due to natural calamities have raised concerns over the state government's decision to prioritize tourism revenue over the environment.

What are the reasons behind natural calamities in both states?

First, both states are experiencing serious issues due to increased deforestation, which weakens the mountains and increases the risk of landslides.

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Second, roads and tunnels are being constructed without considering the mountain terrain, making it even more unstable in an earthquake-prone area.

Third, waste dumped in rivers is worsening flood threats during heavy rains.

Fourth, hydroelectric dams, instead of controlling the floods, are contributing to flooding because operators haven't adjusted to climate change and unusual melting of ice on the mountains.

Fifth, the congested and poorly planned building construction is happening without considering proper systems for draining water and managing waste.

Sixth, the state administrations did not learn from the previous disasters of 2013 and continued construction in the ecological fragile regions to boost tourism.

Seventh, ecologists have also raised concerns about the Center's Char Dham Yatra project, which aims to expand roads to the pilgrimage sites of Badrinath, Kedarnath, Gangotri, and Yamunotri in mountainous areas.

Eighth, over 50,000 trees were cut to build a new highway between Delhi and Dehradun, which passes through an elephant and tiger sanctuary, to reduce travel time. Parts of these constructions collapsed during heavy rainfall.

Must Read: [Express View on Himachal Pradesh tragedy: A slippery slope and Himachal floods: a man-made disaster?](#)

What lies ahead?

Both states heavily rely on tourism revenue. However, they are now dealing with great losses. Hence, it is important for both the states to learn from such calamities and focus on sustainable development.

8. [Express View on RBI studies: Carrying hope](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "Express View on RBI studies: Carrying hope" published in "The Indian Express" on 19th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

News: The National Statistical Office will soon release GDP growth estimates for the first quarter (April-June). The RBI predicts an 8% growth. Despite global slowdowns and a drop in exports, India's economy shows positive signs like increased private consumption and investment. However, some sectors, like auto sales, are weak.

What are the major outcomes of the RBI's State of the Economy report?

RBI's State of the Economy Report Outcomes:

13. GDP Growth Prediction:

The RBI expects 8% economic growth for April-June.

14. Global Recovery Status:

The global economic recovery is slowing down.

15. Export Situation:

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Exports decreased by around 16% in July.

Merchandise exports were at a nine-month low of \$32.25 billion.

16. Positive Economic Indicators:

Private consumption and investment activity might balance the decline in exports.

E-way bill volumes showed strong growth.

FMCG sales increased.

Cargo at major ports and railway freight traffic rose in July.

Steel and cement consumption went up.

17. Areas of Economic Concern:

Automobile sales, excluding three-wheelers, are low.

More households/individuals are seeking MGNREGA work than last year.

Non-oil imports decreased, indicating weak domestic demand.

Uncertainty about how much investment will increase.

18. Investment Intention Study:

In 2022-23, plans for 982 projects with Rs 3.5 lakh crore were made.

In 2021-22, it was 791 projects worth Rs 1.96 lakh crore.

60% of these projects, funded by banks and institutions, are in infrastructure.

Major areas: power, roads, bridges, SEZs, biotech, and IT parks.

Uttar Pradesh, Gujarat, Odisha, Maharashtra, and Karnataka have more than half the project cost.

19. Future Investment Cycle:

Strong bank and corporate balance sheets suggest a good future for investment.

9. Climate crisis has hit home

Source: The post is based on the article "Climate crisis has hit home" published in "The Hindustan Times" on 19th August 2023. **Syllabus:** GS3- Disaster and disaster management.

News: In this article, the author discusses the severe climate changes in India, leading to disasters such as landslides and floods, and the impact on agriculture and living conditions. The author also emphasizes the need for policy changes and a stronger political will to address the environmental and climate crisis.

About the 2023 climate crisis in India.

20. Severe Weather Events:

Devastating landslides in Himachal Pradesh resulted in 70 deaths.

Uttarakhand faced extreme weather, leading to 13 casualties.

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Shimla, a popular tourist destination, severely impacted with 11 deaths in a temple.

21. Erratic Monsoon Patterns:

The monsoon in India showed inconsistent behaviors. June had a 65% rainfall deficit, but by July's end, it changed to a 4.8% surplus. By August 18, a 6% deficit was recorded.

What are the three distinct dimensions of the climate crisis in India?

Three Distinct Dimensions of the Expanding Crisis in India:

22. Uncontrolled Development in Himalayan States:

The Himalayan states face risks due to unchecked development.

Thousands of lives are endangered.

The Union government hasn't shown intentions to revisit development models.

Two controversial environmental laws prioritize business and national security over environment.

23. Changes in Weather Impacting Livelihoods:

Altered weather affects crop patterns and food security.

Quality of living is compromised.

Anomalies in rainfall patterns are intensifying.

Policymakers must adjust policies to the changing climate.

24. Need for Social and Political Will:

Addressing the crisis requires strong political commitment.

The environment currently lacks priority in the political arena.

What should be done?

Revisit Development Models: Rethink unchecked development in Himalayan states.

Strengthen Environmental Policies: Balance business and national security with environmental needs.

Adjust to Rainfall Anomalies: Incorporate changing weather patterns into policies.

Upgrade Infrastructure: Ensure it adapts to the changing climate.

Prioritize the Environment Politically: Recognize its importance in the electoral arena.

Foster Political Will: Address environmental challenges with urgency.

Engage the Public: Generate social will to push for environment-centric policies.

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10. Where prices are hurting

Source– The post is based on the article “Where prices are hurting” published in “The Indian Express” on 19th August 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance: Issues related to inflation

News– As the Reserve Bank of India has released its August monthly bulletin.

What are the inflation prospects of the country?

The **inflation** for July 2023 reached a 15-month peak of 7.44 percent. It indicates that the **issue of inflation** remains unresolved.

Supply chain pressures are gradually easing and **wage growth** is slower than anticipated. The conditions are becoming favorable for a reduction in core inflation.

Geopolitical tensions have increased the prices of agricultural commodities, metals, and energy. It has raised concerns about **food and energy security** and the potential impacts on core inflation.

This marks the third time when the **retail inflation rate** is higher than the upper boundary of the RBI’s **medium-term inflation target range of 4+ /-2 percent** in this calendar year.

What are the main revelations of the recently released RBI bulletin?

The **inflation rate** has risen, particularly for **essential items** like vegetables, cereals, pulses, milk, and dairy products. This increase in prices has impacted both **retail and wholesale inflation** levels.

In the month of July, India experienced a **retail inflation rate** of 7.44 percent, reaching its highest point in 15 months.

Among the 36 states and Union Territories, 15 of them registered a **retail inflation rate surpassing the national rate** of 7.44 percent in July. Additionally, 24 states and UTs had an inflation rate exceeding 6 percent.

The **eastern regions** and **Jammu & Kashmir along with Ladakh** exhibited better outcomes.

States in **eastern and Northeastern India**, excluding Manipur and Tripura, saw a retail inflation rate lower than 6 percent in July 2023.

Food and beverages observed a **significant surge** in inflation. It reached 10.57 percent in July compared to 4.63 percent in June.

The **inflation rate for cereals and related products** has remained in **double digits** for eleven consecutive months. It was 13.04 percent in July.

Pulses have experienced inflation of over 5 percent for the last four months. It has escalated to **double digits** since June.

After contracting for eight months, **vegetable prices** surged to 37.34 percent in July.

How rising inflation is impacting households?

The **upward trajectory** of food prices is expected to place **additional strain on household budgets**.

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A recent **Crisil report** highlighted that the cost of preparing a “**thali**” meal at home increased significantly for the third consecutive month in July, primarily due to the price of tomatoes.

11. Material consideration: On the LK-99 ‘superconductor’ episode

Source: The post is based on the article “**Material consideration: On the LK-99 ‘superconductor’ episode**” published in **The Hindu** on **19th August 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science and Technology

Relevance: confusions over a recent discovery – LK-99.

News: Recently, scientists found that the material called LK-99 is not a room-temperature and ambient-pressure superconductor.

What is LK-99?

LK-99 has been claimed by South Korean scientists as a superconductor at room temperature and atmospheric pressure. However, currently scientists have discarded their claims.

What are the reasons behind discarding LK-99 as a superconductor?

First, when superconductors get cold, they push away magnets, causing repulsion below their transition temperature. The South Korean video showed LK-99 partly repelling a magnet. However, **independent researchers found that the material was an insulator whose impurities could be magnetized.**

Second, the South Korean scientists saw less resistance in LK-99 around 104°C, which could mean it’s a superconductor. However, **researchers found that this drop occurred due to the copper sulphide impurities present in the material.**

Hence, **as per the scientists, no formal confirmation aligns with the initial declaration** that this material can conduct electricity without resistance in regular conditions.

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

What lies ahead?

The LK-99 case raises concerns over misunderstandings caused in the open science competition. However, this misunderstanding shouldn’t stop open collaboration.

Moreover, now, the burden lies on South Korean group to show evidence for their claim.