



9 PM

Compilation

July, 2023

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General Studies Paper – 1

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General Studies - 1

1. [The master plan and the slaves](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**The master plan and the slaves**” published in **The Hindu** on **3th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1-Urbanization

Relevance: Urban planning

News- Amitabh Kant, India’s G20 Sherpa, stressed at a recent Urban-20 City Sherpas’ meet that **a master plan is** crucial to manage urbanisation.

Master Plan is an instrument of governance for urban local bodies (ULBs). It is essentially a spatial plan of land-use allocation supported by bye-laws and development control regulations. The institutional structures, cultures, and practices of ULBs are built around this spatial vision and provision of urban services.

What are problems in master plan?

Firstly, the **master plan instrument is dated and archaic**. It requires an update. The concept, configuration and rationalities of this instrument drafted in the 1950s. For example, the Water Act-1974 focused on industrial pollution only.

Secondly, a master plan is simply a **spatial plan of land-use allocation supported by bye-laws** and development control regulations.

Thirdly, this spatial vision is at the **core of institutional structures** of ULBs. The ULBs are shaped and run by the agenda of regulating spatial growth and they become limited to **these ideas** and conceptions.

Fourthly, the statutory and spatial nature of the master plan can pose **constraints on the programmatic plans**, especially the spatially associated ones such as the plans for protection of water bodies.

Finally, there is no set criteria for mandating a spatial plan to regulate urban growth. Close to **65% of India’s urban settlements** do not have master plans, **according to NITI Aayog**.

What is the way forward?

we must acknowledge that the master plan instrument may be limited by its **archaic conceptions and entrenched institutional cultures**.

2021 report of the NITI Aayog should be prioritized with respect to **spatial (town) planning profession and education**. Recent moves such as **Gati Shakti and Model Rural Transformation Acts** are a reflection of this.

There is no need to go far for lessons to do this. Indian cities offer enough experiences to learn from.

India must **reimagine spatial planning** to address the growing and emerging governance challenges of urbanization

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2. [Choose a new palette for India's creative economy](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Choose a new palette for India's creative economy**” published in “The Hindu” on 6th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Art and culture

News: The article discusses the challenges faced by Indian artists in promoting their art.

What is creative economy and what is its significance?

The creative economy refers to sectors of an economy that involve the creation and exploitation of creativity or knowledge. It includes areas such as art, music, film, design, and digital content creation. Its significance lies in its contribution to job creation, economic growth, tourism, and exports, and its role in fostering societal development.

Notably, **the UNESCO World Conference on Cultural Policies and Sustainable Development (MONDIACULT 2022)** recognized culture's economic importance and transformative power for sustainable development.

What are the challenges faced by Indian artistes?

Economic and market challenges: Indian artists struggle with issues related to economic sustainability and gaining adequate market access to monetize their work.

Preservation of traditional art forms: In the face of rapidly changing societal trends, preserving and promoting traditional art forms presents significant challenges.

Inequalities in representation and support: Artists often face a lack of transparency in the selection process for financial assistance and event organization. Those based outside cities are particularly disadvantaged.

Crime in the art world: Artists must contend with art-related crimes such as theft, forgery, and illicit trafficking. These crimes undermine cultural heritage, financial security, and public trust.

What are the solutions for the creative economy?

Promoting a collaborative cultural economy: Creating a collaborative model that supports the cultural economy is vital. This includes encouraging tech-based start-ups in the arts sector.

Capacity-building centre for artists: A capacity-building centre can offer guidance, technical support, infrastructure, and access to investors, contributing to India's soft power.

Training and professional development: Artists need training, professional development, and market access. Networking within larger communities can also foster knowledge sharing.

Leveraging data analytics: Data analytics can be utilized to foster creative ecosystems that contribute to a sustainable world, highlighting emerging trends and informing policy recommendations.

Facilitation mechanism for artists and entrepreneurs: A facilitation mechanism can focus on fostering knowledge sharing, networking, and economic empowerment for individual artists and creative entrepreneurs. This can be achieved by offering business training, incubating innovative projects, and connecting them with global marketing platforms, tools, and practices. This platform can provide sustainable livelihood solutions for artists and artisans, leveraging the latest Information and Communication Technology (ICT) tools to enhance their participation in the business ecosystem.

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3. [‘Only by recognising the power & intelligence of the opium poppy can we even begin to make peace with it’](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Only by recognising the power & intelligence of the opium poppy can we even begin to make peace with it**” published in “**The Times Group**” on **8th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Modern history

Relevance: Opium trade and Opium war

News-The article is about new book of Amitav Ghosh ‘Smoke and Ashes: A Writer’s Journey Through Opium’s Hidden Histories’. The article discusses the profound impact of the opium trade on the economies and societies of India and China.

What is major issue between India and China?

Between India and China there is a high level of incomprehension. There is a huge historical influence of China on India – both economic and cultural.

However, there is complete lack of understanding of Chinese culture in India. China also lacks the understanding of Indian culture.

How colonial opium trade with China has made the Bihar and Punjab of today?

2 factors that resulted in devastation of Puvanchal region:

First, the resource curse of opium in rich and culturally fertile **Purvanchal region** is responsible for underdevelopment of these regions. While, it helped in industrialisation of England and America, but devastated the agricultural economy of Purvanchal.

After 1857 the **British started recruiting from Punjab**, instead of Bihar. They also started investing massively in the region which accounts for wealthy Punjabis of today.

What are some facts about opium trade during freedom movement?

During the course of Indian freedom Struggle, **from the 1880s onwards** both in India and China there was a **huge movement against opium**.

There were also divergent trajectories of opium trade. Britishers established an **absolute monopoly over opium cultivation** in the **eastern part** of India. In the western part they were resisted by various princely states.

What are present challenges related to opium consumption in present times?

There is **very high rates of addiction** especially in the border state of Punjab and also on the eastern border, the Northeast. In America also, opioids have become a leading cause of death .

How do India and China remember opium trade wars?

In India, very little is taught about opium trade and wars.

Modern China has emerged from the Opium Wars and from the struggle against opium. Wars are memorialised everywhere in China.

One of the major event is the **battle of Sanyuanli** between Indian sepoy and Chinese villagers. This event is considered as founding of nationalism in China

4. [Women’s reproductive autonomy as the new catchword](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Women’s reproductive autonomy as the new catchword**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 11th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 1- Population and associated issues & Social empowerment

News: world population day (July 11) theme ‘Unleashing the power of gender equality: Uplifting the voices of women and girls to unlock our world’s infinite possibilities’

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How is the World population day theme relevant to India?

The theme of this year's World Population Day, 'Unleashing the power of gender equality', resonates powerfully with India.

When we empower women and girls, we harness a wealth of leadership, creativity, and innovation. In India, women-led development across various sectors must prioritize reproductive autonomy.

Why is there a reframe in population perspective?

Global obsessions with population size and fertility rates have overshadowed reproductive autonomy. It's vital to understand there are no 'ideal' numbers. Genuine population stability comes when reproductive and sexual health decisions are discrimination-free, services are affordable and high-quality, and women and couples can choose their family size.

What progress has India made in family planning?

Despite challenges, India has made strides in family planning.

The country provides a comprehensive reproductive health services package, including modern contraceptives, counselling, and emergency contraception.

Through the Family Planning 2030 partnership, India expands contraceptive choices, increasing women's rights and autonomy.

What are the achievements of India's health, population and development programmes?

India's programmes have steadily improved over the years. **Life expectancy has increased significantly, with Indians now living a decade longer than in the 1990s.**

Maternal mortality rates have dropped from 254 in 2004 to 97 per 100,000 live births. Child marriages have halved since 2000, teen pregnancies have decreased, and access to essential services has improved.

What hurdles to gender equality persist in India?

Despite progress, many Indian women lack physical autonomy. **The recent National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) reveals that only 10% of Indian women can independently make health decisions.** Almost half of all pregnancies in India are unplanned.

What are the benefits of advancing gender equality?

Gender equality benefits all of society. In aging societies, gender parity in the workforce improves productivity. In countries with rapid population growth, empowering women through education and family planning can significantly boost human capital and inclusive economic development.

What opportunities does gender equality offer to India's Economy?

Raising women's labour force participation by 10 percentage points could contribute to more than 70% of the potential GDP growth opportunity (\$770 billion additional GDP by 2025), presenting a significant chance to advance gender equality and grow the economy.

What investments are needed for gender equality?

Achieving gender equality requires investments at all stages of a woman's life. Initiatives must engage with women, girls, and marginalized groups and empower them through legislative and policy changes.

How does world population day promote gender equality?

World Population Day reaffirms the commitment to placing individual rights, especially women's rights and wellbeing, at the center of population and development discussions. Gender-just approaches are foundational for a more prosperous India and world.

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5. [North India's monsoon mayhem](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**North India's monsoon mayhem**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **12th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Geography

Relevance: Climatology of India

News- The article explains the pattern of monsoon this year and factors influencing monsoon.

What has been the pattern of monsoon this year?

Monsoon onset was delayed by **Interactions between typhoons and cyclones**. **Cyclone Biparjoi** delayed the arrival of monsoon over Mumbai by nearly two weeks.

The monsoon in Mumbai arrived together with Delhi for the first time in over half a century.

The **distribution of rainfall** remains patchy. **Excess rainfall** is witnessed over the northern Western Ghats and northwest India. There is deficit in Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra.

Extreme heat has also been reported even with **heavy rainfall** in some areas of Himachal Pradesh.

What are the factors influencing monsoon in India?

Global warming creates a **warm, humid atmosphere**, which acts like a **drug for the weather**. All weathers are affected by global warming.

Weather patterns are also caused by other factors. One such factor is the **El Niño**.

Wildfires have led to burning over three times the normal area and **emitted** about three times the normal amount of carbon dioxide. This has **caused warming**.

The strongest winds break into **clockwise or anticlockwise patterns** in the upper atmosphere, especially in **mountainous terrain**, like the Himalayas.

The **strong clockwise winds** of the upper atmosphere require an **anticyclonic circulation** near the surface to feed the upper-level outflow. This convergence near the surface causes **excess rainfall**.

The warming over the Himalayas has not been uniform. Some parts in the mountain chain are impacted by **local warming**. During the monsoon, the **local features** impact the weather pattern. This can lead to **cloudbursts, heavy rains, or even heat waves**.

What are the factors that are having an influence on monsoon rainfall this year?

Rainfall over northwest India is in line with the fact that the Arabian Sea has warmed by around 1.5 degrees Celsius since January.

This year, **pre-monsoon rainfall** has been higher than normal due to the warm Arabian Sea, combined with an **unusually high frequency** of western disturbances. Soil has been left moister than normal, which has impacted the **monsoon development**.

The monsoon is also influenced by the **Atlantic Ocean**. The entire Atlantic has been warmer than average since March. An **Atlantic Niño, with a warmer tropical Atlantic**, usually tends to **dampen monsoon rainfall**. The effects of this on monsoon this year are unclear.

6. Demographic transition and change in women's lives

Source: The post is based on the article “**Demographic transition and change in women's lives**” published in **The Hindu** on 12th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 1- population and associated issues

News: The article discusses impacts of demographic transition on the lives of women.

How has India's demographic journey impacted women's lives?

The surge of India's population from 340 million at independence to 1.4 billion was fueled by decreased mortality rates. With **male life expectancy rising from 56 in 1941 to 69 today**, Indian families started having fewer children. This brought about significant shifts in the lives of Indian women, especially in their role as mothers, their engagement in education and employment, and their experiences in old age.

How has the decrease in 'Fertility Rate' affected gender preference?

With families having fewer children, a son's guarantee became harder, raising the probability of not having a son from 6% with four children to 25% with two. **A study from the India Human Development Survey found that 85% of women respondents expected old age support from their sons**, hence sex-selective abortions and neglect of sick daughters became prevalent, reducing the number of girls per 100 boys from 96 to 91 between 1950 and 2019.

What implications do fewer children have for women's education and employment?

As mothering became a lesser part of women's lives due to lower fertility, more opportunities for education and employment arose. **Women's years spent caring for children under five reduced from 14 to eight between 1992-93 and 2018-20**. However, despite over 70% of girls enrolling in secondary education, early marriage and childbearing persist as defining factors of women's lives, with the average age at first birth remaining below 22 years for women born in the 1980s.

What role does early motherhood play in women's employment?

Early motherhood hinders women's labor force participation because the peak childcare years clash with the period for gaining work experience and securing skilled jobs. As a result, women often only have access to unskilled work once their children have grown.

How has increased life expectancy affected women in old age?

With life expectancy rising, **the proportion of women aged 65 and above increased from 5% to 11% between 1950 and 2022 and is predicted to reach 21% by 2050**. Aging has unique implications for women, as they usually outlive their husbands and, without access to savings and property, become dependent on their children for support.

What measures can help break the cycle of gendered disadvantage?

Enhancing women's access to employment and assets could lessen their reliance on sons. However, efforts to increase women's labor force participation must be paired with access to affordable childcare. An experiment in Madhya Pradesh found that expanding the Anganwadis to include a crèche increased work participation of mothers. Practical strategies for childcare access could involve staffing crèche under the **National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme** or setting up neighbourhood childcare centres through self-help groups. These steps could help harness the potential demographic dividend fully.

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7. [Delhi's relationship with Yamuna river and how it evolved over time](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “Delhi’s relationship with Yamuna river and how it evolved over time” published in “The Indian Express” on 15th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- Modern History. GS1- Geography

Relevance- Historical and geographical aspects related to river Yamuna

News- Recently, the water level in Yamuna in Delhi rose to 208.66 metres. It caused Delhi’s worst flooding on record.

What is the history of forts built around river Yamuna?

Salimgarh Fort, constructed in 1546 by **Salim Shah Suri** stands on a **riverine island**. He was the son of Shershah Suri. **The Red Fort** was built in 1648 on the western bank of a branch of the Yamuna River.

In a painting from “**Reminiscences of Imperial Delhi**” by **Mazhar Ali Khan**, commissioned by colonial administrator **Charles Metcalfe**, the two forts are depicted connected by a bridge. This bridge was constructed by the order of **Bahadur Shah Zafar**.

Shah Jahan’s original city boasted **14 gates**. It included the “**water gate**” known as **Khizri Darwaza**, which provided direct access to the river.

Of these gates, only **Delhi Gate, Kashmere Gate, Ajmeri Gate, Turkman Gate, and Nigambodh Gate** have survived.

Other gates, such as **Lahori Darwaza, Kabuli Darwaza, Lal Darwaza, and Khizri Darwaza**, are no longer extant.

Shah Jahan himself first arrived at the completed Red Fort by way of the Yamuna River and entered through the **water gate**.

When it was inaugurated, Shah Jahan entered the Red Fort through the **Khizri Darwaza**. A **moonlight celebration** took place.

It was through this **Khizri Darwaza** that **Bahadur Shah Zafar** departed on the night of September 17, 1857, following the fall of Delhi.

How river Yamuna played an important role in relation to the fort?

Its presence was a significant factor in **selecting the fort’s location**, as it served as both a **natural barrier and a source of water** for the growing population.

Within the fort, a system of water channels was established, which relied on water sourced from the Yamuna.

Initially, the Yamuna River served as a **defence for the Red Fort**. However, the course of the river gradually shifted away from the fort during the **reign of Muhammad Shah ‘Rangila’**.

When Britishers decided to relocate the capital of the British Raj to Delhi, the **Coronation Park** area was initially proposed as the site.

However, during the monsoon season of 1911, this area experienced flooding. As a result, the decision was made to establish the **capital at Raisina Hill**.

What is the reason behind changing course of river Yamuna?

One of the factors believed to contribute to this phenomenon is the **movement of the Indian Tectonic Plate**.

The Indian Plate has been steadily **shifting northward**. It is resulting in the **rising of the Himalayas**. This movement is considered a significant reason for the **eastward shift of the Yamuna River’s course**.

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Additionally, rivers in the **alluvial plains of North India** are more prone to changes in their paths. The **alluvial terrain** in these areas is **soft and easily influenced by shifting river courses**.

In some places, Ganga river courses since 1786 have changed direction by up to 34 km. For instance, in Badaun, the river has **relocated** approximately 10 km from its previous position.

8. [How to Draft A Uniform Civil Code](#)

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 1 – Society and diversity of India,

Source: This post is based on the article “**How to Draft A Uniform Civil Code**”, published in **The Times of India** on 24th July, 2023.

News: The article emphasizes the importance of creating a UCC that is not biased towards any religion and ensures equality, liberty, and dignity for all citizens.

The UCC should be drafted in a way that it does not discriminate against women and should be inclusive of all gender identities.

Historical Background

The idea of a UCC was first discussed on March 30, 1947, by the Sub-Committee on Fundamental Rights set up by the Constituent Assembly.

The members were divided on the issue, with some advocating for a UCC as a fundamental right, while others were concerned about the potential backlash from the Muslim League.

The result was a compromise where the state would “endeavour” to secure a UCC, but no actual code was drafted.

What are the gender related issues in present personal laws?

The current religious laws in India, including the Hindu Succession Act and the Muslim law of marriage, are discriminatory towards women.

Hindu Succession Act follows a patriarchal notion that a woman severs all ties with her birth family upon marriage. Similarly, the Muslim law of marriage, which allows a man to have up to four wives, while women is allowed to have only one husband.

Restitution of conjugal rights is an outdated concept. Under this law, a court orders a wife to return to her husband, in case a wife separates without divorce and without giving a reason.

What should be the key Features of the Proposed UCC?

The UCC should be comprehensive, inclusive, and gender-just. It should enhance the constitutional principles of equality, liberty and dignity of each member of the family. The Law Commission of India has an opportunity to frame a code with such features. **For example;**

The proposed UCC should distinguish between the legal and the sacred aspects of marriage.

The law should only tackle the question, whether the marriage is between two freely consenting adults who are not in an existing marriage. A simple registration process can prevent men from marrying multiple times.

The concept of “**illegitimate**” children should be discontinued, and children in atypical families, like those born to homosexual couples or outside wedlock should be treated the same as children in typical ones.

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The law should also ensure equal shares for persons of all gender identities across religions in matters of inheritance.

9. [The anatomy of the Yamuna floodplains](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The anatomy of the Yamuna floodplains**” published in “The Hindu” on 28th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- changes in critical geographical features (including waterbodies and icecaps)

News: The author discusses the historical and ecological significance of the Yamuna River’s floodplains in Delhi. He highlights how urbanization, construction, and lax regulations have encroached upon and degraded these areas, leading to severe flooding and challenges for the residents. He also emphasizes the need for better planning and respect for the river’s natural flow and importance.

What are the significances of the Yamuna River’s floodplains in Delhi?

Significances of the Yamuna River’s floodplains in Delhi:

Historical Importance:

The environmentalist Anupam Mishra labeled Yamuna as Delhi’s “real town planner.”

Delhi was traditionally planned along the river’s course.

It ensured Delhi never faced water scarcity or extreme floods.

Ecological Role:

The floodplains recharge groundwater and store excess water.

They act as a buffer during floods, slowing water runoff.

Sediments of floodplains create aquifers that rejuvenate groundwater.

Livelihoods:

A 2022 report identified 56 bastis housing 46,750 people on these floodplains.

Half of these households depend on farming; others rely on daily wage work, fishing, and animal herding.

Agricultural Value:

Rich silt deposited by the river aids in farming.

Traditional crops include rice, wheat, and flowers.

Housing Crisis Solution:

Many displaced or migrating people have historically found shelter here due to affordability.

Urbanization Challenges:

Construction on floodplains has restricted the river’s natural flow.

Encroachments like the Akshardham Temple and Commonwealth Village are built on designated floodplain zones.

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Climate Resilience:

Floodplains help manage intense rainfall and prevent devastating floods.

What are the challenges faced by the Yamuna River's floodplains?

Urban Encroachment: Rapid urbanization and haphazard construction activities affect floodplains. Examples include Akshardham Temple, Commonwealth Games Village, and luxury apartments.

Loss of Floodplain: Restricts river's natural flow, increasing flood risks. Like, Delhi experienced major floods in 1978, 1988, and 1995.

Lack of Proper Policies: Floodplain zoning not adequately included in the Master Plan.

Climate Change: Intensified rains lead to rapid swelling of the river.

River Constriction: Constructions constrict the river, reducing its ability to expand and breathe.

Pollution: Population growth has outpaced sewage infrastructure, increasing river pollution.

What should be done?

Preserve Floodplains: Stop encroachments to maintain the river's natural flow. Examples: Stop projects like the Commonwealth Games Village on floodplains.

Policy Improvements: Include floodplain zoning in the Master Plan.

Only four states have a National Floodplains Zoning Policy.

Climate-Resilient Infrastructure: Create infrastructure that can withstand heavy rains.

River Health: Focus on de-silting drains and rejuvenating the river.

Enhance Drainage Systems: Improve city drainage to prevent flooding.

Green Areas: Develop more green spaces for natural water absorption.

10. Express View on 'award wapsi': Writer's choice

Source: The post is based on the article "**Express View on 'award wapsi': Writer's choice**" published in "The Indian express" on 28th July 2023.

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

News: A parliamentary panel, constituted after the 2015 award return controversy, wants Sahitya Akademi awardees to promise not to return awards in political protest.

About Major findings of The Parliamentary Standing Committee report on "award wapsi":

Writers chosen for the Sahitya Akademi award should commit not to return their awards in political protest.

Such acts of returning awards negatively impact the award's prestige and reputation.

It undermines the achievements of other awardees.

The committee wants to get agreement from shortlisted candidates before finalizing the award.

What are the arguments against the Parliamentary Committee Reports?

Arguments Against the Parliamentary Committee Reports:

Independence of Sahitya Akademi:

The Sahitya Akademi is an autonomous body from the 1950s.

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Initially, the government agreed not to control it after its setup.

An award from the Akademi is an appreciation by peers, not a state honor like the Padma awards.

Role of a Writer:

Writers aren't representatives of the state.

The claim that returning an award is "disgraceful to the country" is considered misplaced.

The state should view its association with a writer as a privilege, not patronage.

Purpose of the Award:

An award shouldn't be an incentive to conform.

It should honor individual excellence.

Context of "award wapsi":

39 writers returned their awards in 2015 as a protest against rising intolerance.

The murder of Sahitya Akademi winner M M Kalburgi by alleged right-wing activists was a significant trigger.

These writers emphasized the right to dissent and the state's responsibility to safeguard it.

Overarching Message:

The government should understand the protest's essence instead of criticizing its political implications.

11. Mussoorie Misery

Source– The post is based on the article "Mussoorie Misery" published in "The Times of India" on **29th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Geography

Relevance: Issues related to Himalayan ecosystem

News- NGT has ordered the Dhami government to follow 19 recommendations for saving Mussoorie from destruction by construction and tourism.

What are some of the recommendations of NGT?

Regulate the number of tourists and charge them.

Use these funds for **waste management** and for monitoring various **construction activities**.

What are the issues faced by tourist places in the Himalayas?

In 2001, a study revealed that Mussoorie had reached its **carrying capacity**. Despite this finding, tourist arrivals **surged by 255%** between 2000 and 2019.

To accommodate the rising number of tourists, mountains are continuously being blasted without **adequate consideration** of the **impact on hydrology**.

This approach does not benefit tourists. It makes their journeys **unappealing and unsafe**. Tourists are exposed to **polluted air, traffic jams**, and the risk of life-threatening **landslides**.

The warnings issued by the **Mishra committee in 1976** regarding the vulnerabilities in the local areas have not been heeded.

For more readings on Mishra committee–

<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/city/dehradun/joshimath-sinking-panel-had-warned-50-years-ago/articleshow/96608800.cms>

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General Studies Paper –2

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General Studies - 2

1. [The rise of bilateralism](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The rise of bilateralism**” published in “**Business Standard**” on **3rd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

News: During Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s recent visit to the United States, six disputes between the countries at the WTO were withdrawn. While India has historically been committed to multilateralism in trade policy, there are indications that this commitment is not being implemented as strongly as before.

Why India historically pursued a multilateral trade policy?

Unlike plurilateral trade pacts, multilateral trading agreements **do not distort trade**.

Unlike bilateral-trade agreements, multilateral trading agreements like WTO **empower even relatively small trading nations** like India. (India’s share in world trade is very small when compared to its population or domestic output.)

Why should India not depend solely on bilateral trade agreements?

Bilateral deals are **inherently unfair** as stronger trading powers tend to dominate, leaving smaller nations vulnerable.

Relying on close strategic partnerships as the basis for good trade relations is unsustainable and unwise. Focus on bilateral agreements over multilateral rules **exposes India to arbitrary shifts in trade policies, influenced by other country**.

India dropped out of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership and focused on trade deals with countries like Australia instead. This emphasis on free-trade agreements (FTAs) with developed-world partners has **not yielded significant benefits**. Even an India-EU FTA would not have the same impact as restoring the multilateral trading order.

What should be done?

The lack of judges in the WTO appellate body has made the WTO’s dispute resolution process powerless. India should **persuade the US to drop its veto on the appointment of new judges** to the **WTO appellate body**.

2. [Navigating the maze of EU tech Regulations](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Navigating the maze of EU tech Regulations**” published in “**Business Standard**” on **3rd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations – Effects of policies of developed and developing countries in India

News: The European Union (EU) has agreed on a new Data Act. It became the fifth significant technological legislation in the EU.

This Act aims to regulate how data generated from personal devices and public technology infrastructure should be accessed and handled by companies, both within the EU and worldwide.

What are some salient provisions of the EU’s data act?

The Data Act seeks to prevent Big Tech from collecting personal data of users and treating them as the firms’ personal intellectual property.

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It also allows individuals and small businesses to choose who can handle their personal and non-personal data.

An individual can ask a firm to move his or her data to another firm, potentially leading to rival firms gaining trade secrets.

How does it impact India?

India is planning to regulate personal and non-personal data separately. It will be done by defining an umbrella tech regulation and then form multiple sub-regulations for various sectors. This approach is influenced by the overall structure of EU laws.

However, Indian regulations are unlikely to take the as strict an approach as the EU. Instead, the government might take an ex-ante approach. This approach will leave room for future adjustments, in line with how technologies develop.

3. [A bigger BRICS – Expansion of the group](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**A bigger BRICS – Expansion of the group is in offing, challenge for founder members is to ensure it does not become a Chinese bandwagon**” published in **The Indian Express** on 3rd July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

Relevance: challenges associated with the expansion of BRICS

News: Middle-sized countries with strong economies in the global south are looking to join BRICS.

Why are those countries interested in joining BRICS?

BRICS represents 40 percent of the world’s population and 23 percent of global GDP, making it an attractive grouping for other countries.

Further, **the change in the geopolitical shifts in the world from the time of Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, has prompted these countries** in the global south to look for a platform that can acknowledge their voice and power. These both are potentially possible in BRICS.

Over 20 countries are in line for membership, with Saudi Arabia, Indonesia, the UAE, Egypt, and Argentina expected to be granted membership this August.

Must Read: [The paradox of BRICS, its new pathway](#)

What are the challenges with expanding BRICS grouping?

An increase in membership is likely to weigh the group in favour of China because some countries waiting to join are also part of the Chinese Belt and Road Initiative.

This raise concerns that an expanded **BRICS could be seen as a Chinese-led anti-American bloc.**

India, which has been strengthening its bilateral relationship with the US, has been concerned about expansion. **India views China’s role in driving these countries for membership of BRICS along with the support of Russia.**

India also raised its concern in last year’s BRICS that any addition of new members must follow the carefully thought-out objective criteria for membership.

This should be mutually discussed among the present members, so that all are of the same view regarding expansion.

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Further, at the BRICS foreign ministers' meeting last month, India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar emphasized the need to consider the ways in which existing BRICS countries collaborate with each other and engages with non-BRICS countries.

Must Read: [BRICS FM meeting in South Africa: What's on the agenda?](#)

What lies ahead?

Despite the concerns, **India may not be able to prevent expansion entirely, as many of the countries are also friends of India.** Hence, India seems to have accepted the possibility of limited addition of five new members.

However, **the challenge would be** for the original BRICS members and the new entrants to ensure that the group does not become a Chinese bandwagon.

4. [Sriram Panchu writes: Governor R N Ravi's actions do not behove his office](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "**Sriram Panchu writes: Governor R N Ravi's actions do not behove his office**" published in the "**The Indian Express**" on **3rd July 2023.**

Syllabus: GS2- Issues pertaining to federalism

Relevance- Office of Governor

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

How can a Governor handle these types of complicated situations in a better way without any controversy?

Governor should not **create any controversy** and preserve the **dignity of the office**. Then **initially respect** enhances, which gradually create a **reservoir of trust**.

The governor becomes a **wise counsellor**. Her words of **advice and caution**, even on matters outside his **legal purview**, will ordinarily be heeded by a chief minister.

Governors need to try and **emulate distinguished** earlier governors like Gopalkrishna Gandhi and T N Chaturvedi.

What is the way forward for the reform in the office of Governor?

There is value in the post, both for **constitutional and ceremonial functions**. There is a need to **appoint the right persons**, and by a **proper method**. There is a need to **reduce favouritism and reward**.

A **cadre of distinguished persons** from different fields like civil service, armed forces, academics, culture, respected former ministers may be created.

There is a need for **caution on appointment of judges**. A **cooling off period** is required so that the attractions of the post do not deflect the person.

From this panel, a suitable name should be picked in consultation with the chief minister.

What is another issue related to misuse of power by central government agencies?

The number of Opposition party state ministers being investigated, especially by the ED, has gone up dramatically. They are lodged in jail for long periods beyond the time, **reasonably required for custodial interrogation**.

The application of the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act** has led to **inordinate difficulties in securing bail** since the **presumption of innocence** is overturned.

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There is a **serious mixing of criminal investigation and prosecution** with politics. **Probity in governance** is necessary but checks on **political misuse of the enforcement machinery** is also needed.

For more reading- <https://blog.forumias.com/that-wasnt-a-capital-idea-on-ministers-dismissal-by-governor/>

5. Making it count – on NFHS Survey

Source- The post is based on the article **“Making it count”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **3rd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population. GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance- Issues related to disability

News- The Union government recently decided to drop the disability-specific question from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-6.

What is the reasoning provided by the central government for this decision?

The Ministry of Health and Family responded that **questions about disability** were already asked as part of the **76th round of Sample Registration Survey**, conducted in 2018.

Any **specific information** can be tabulated from the raw data, which is also available in the **public domain**. **Disability data** will not change fast.

How is NFHS more useful in providing more comprehensive data about disability rather than SRS?

The count of **6.1 lakh sample households** that the NFHS relies on, makes the data set **truly representative**.

The **elaborate questions** asked by NFHS will provide **valuable specifics** on the lives of the disabled.

The SRS provides insights into **prevalence and incidence of disability, education level, living arrangements, care-givers, certificate of disability, accessibility and unemployment rate**, among others. But the NFHS asks more **comprehensive questions**.

NFHS seeks answers on **health and nutrition status, access to health schemes, insurance, sexual behaviour, availability of family planning, use of contraception, domestic violence, household amenities and possessions, lifestyle indicators, and access to drinking water and toilets**.

Therefore, NFHS will yield **better, more robust, data** on the disability sector.

What is the way forward to know the prevalence of disability using NFHS?

Health Ministry officials claim that the sole NFHS question on disability too resulted in **under-reporting**. It might be a function of **training for field staff** who ask questions. The state must add questions on disabilities and **train field staff**.

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6. [A case of unchecked power to restrict e-free speech](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**A case of unchecked power to restrict e-free speech**” published in **The Hindu** on **3rd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Indian Polity

Relevance: Right to free speech and digital rights

News-The Karnataka High Court judgment against Twitter subverts the procedural safeguards that must be employed while restricting the freedom of speech

What are the issues with Karnataka HC judgement in this case?

The Supreme Court of India upheld the **validity of Section 69A** and the Blocking Rules in **Shreya Singhal vs Union of India**.

However, the Karnataka High Court has held that observations in Shreya Singhal don't call for **providing notice to the users of the content**. It is contrary to judicial precedent set by SC.

The High Court's judgment reveals that one of the reasons was that the content could lead to the spread of “**fake news**” and “**misinformation**”. These are not grounds under which free speech can be **restricted under Article 19(2) and Section 69A**.

The Supreme Court has repeatedly held that there **must be a direct link** between the speech and the potential threat to public order. However, the High Court is convinced that these blocking orders are “well-reasoned”, even though **no nexus can be established with public order** and the security of the state.

Moreover, the **High Court rejected Twitter's contention** that Section 69A only permits the blocking of specific tweets. **Wholesale blocking of Twitter accounts** amounts to limiting freedom of future speech and expression.

What are the implications of this decision for freedom of speech?

It has the potential of **inducing a chilling effect** on the freedom of speech of online platform users.

The Karnataka High Court's judgment **erodes the principles of natural justice** which dictate for the affected party should be allowed to present their case to the best of their abilities.

Along with the recently amended **IT Rules on fact-checking**, the judgment has the dangerous potential of **reposing untrammelled power in the State** to remove any content that it deems to be unfavourable.

7. [Why Govt is going after 'dark patterns'](#)

Source: This article has been framed based on India Express article “Why Govt is going after ‘dark patterns’”, published on 4th July.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2– Government policies for the various sectors

News: The article discusses the concept of “dark patterns” and the Indian government's initiative to curb their use on e-commerce platforms.

Dark patterns, also known as deceptive patterns, are tricks implemented by websites or apps to manipulate users into doing things they didn't intend to, or to discourage behavior that's not beneficial for companies. The term was coined by Harry Brignull, a London-based user experience (UX) designer, in 2010.

Read More – [Centre to Issue Norms Against 'Dark Patterns' in Online Advertisements](#)

For example, Instagram simplifies signing up and logging in, but makes deleting or deactivating one's account a more complicated procedure to subtly discourage users from doing so.

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The Indian government has asked e-commerce companies to stop using dark patterns on their platforms. The Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food and Public Distribution has set up a 17-member task force to prepare guidelines to protect consumers.

What was the need of guidelines against dark patterns?

Numerous websites and apps trick their users into allowing them to track their location or gather their data. For example, as per Vox report “Instagram uses terms like ‘activity’ and ‘personalised’ instead of ‘tracking’ and ‘targeting’. The user does not realize that what they’re actually giving the app permission to do.

It can lead to consumers making decisions that they may not have made otherwise.

This can result in consumers spending more money, sharing more personal information, or having difficulty in opting out of services.

The government’s move to curb the use of dark patterns is aimed at protecting consumers from such manipulative practices.

Government initiatives against dark patterns?

The Ministry has started classifying complaints received on the National Consumer Helpline 1915 to compile information on dark patterns.

This information can be used by the Central Consumer Protection Authority to initiate action under the Consumer Protection Act, 2019.

What actions have been taken in other countries against dark patterns?

The United States and the United Kingdom have enacted laws to restrict the use of dark patterns.

In 2021, California introduced amendments to the California Consumer Privacy Act, which aimed to prohibit the use of dark patterns.

UK released guidelines in April 2019, which were later made legally binding under the Data Protection Act of 2018. These guidelines prohibited companies from employing “nudges” to influence underage users into selecting low privacy settings.

8. [For science to flourish: National Research Foundation plugs a policy gap](#)

Source: This article has been framed based on India Express article “**For science to flourish: National Research Foundation plugs a policy gap**”, published on 4th July.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2,

News: The article discusses the establishment of the National Research Foundation (NRF) in India, which has been approved by the Union Cabinet.

The NRF is set to provide high-level strategic direction to scientific research in India, aligning with the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP), 2023.

Read More – [India’s National Research Foundation \(NRF\) explained](#)

What is the Significance of NRF?

The establishment of the NRF could lead to a more coordinated and strategic approach to scientific research in India.

It could also stimulate increased spending by industry on research and development, which could lead to more innovation and economic growth.

The NRF will seed, nurture and promote research, innovation and development across universities, colleges, research institutions, and R&D laboratories.

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It will fill the funding gap between central and state universities. The NRF will prioritise research funding for institutions set up in states.

The NRF will also encourage young researchers who have gone abroad to do their PhD or post-doctoral work to return to India. It will increase the Intellectual capital.

What are the challenges in achieving the NRF's aim?

A significant problem faced by scientists is that even after scientific projects are reviewed and sanctioned, fund-release is not timely or adequate. Therefore, fund-release must be thoroughly investigated and correctional steps must be implemented.

It is important to ensure that basic research and small-scale research proposals are not ignored.

Merger of government science institutions under an umbrella may promote crucially important interdisciplinary research. However, with the merger it may happen that funding for some domains get badly reduced.

9. [Clearing the water](#)

Source: This article has been framed based on India Express article "**Clearing the water**", published on 4th July.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 – Social Issues – Availability of drinking water

News: In 2019, government promised that rural households would be assured of piped, potable water by 2024. However, the progress has been slower than expected due to various challenges.

What is the present status of potable water?

In 2019, only about 3.2 crore, or about 16% of rural households, had access to piped water. Today, those figures stand at 64%, a substantial increase but still below the target.

The Jal Shakti Ministry has been working on the 'Har Ghar Jal' mission to provide piped water connections to households. Since 2019, about nine crore households have gained access to piped water.

Some of the large States with 100% compliance, i.e., Gujarat, Haryana, Punjab, already started on a fairly high base in 2019.

The figures are based on the data reported by States.

What are the factors that are hindering the progress?

The COVID-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine war have reportedly slowed down the mission. It has created hurdles in accessing pipes and civil construction, which is necessary for the project.

There is a discrepancy in villages declared as 'har ghar jal' and the certified villages. States have reported only 1,68,157 villages as 'Har Ghar Jal' and only about 35% of these villages have been certified, which means gram panchayats have reported full compliance.

10. [How the QS World University Rankings reinforce elitism and caste bias](#)

Source: The post is based on an article "**How the QS World University Rankings reinforce elitism and caste bias**" published in **The Indian Express** on 4th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues Related with the Education System

Relevance: About the QS World University Ranking 2024

News: Recently, the QS World University Ranking 2024 was released.

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What are the findings of the QS World University Ranking 2024?

Nine out of the top ten spots were taken by universities from the US and Europe.

The National University of Singapore (NUS) became the first Asian university to come under the top 10, recording the eighth position.

In terms of Indian institutions, IIT-Bombay achieved a significant milestone by making it to the top 150 universities list, ranking at 149.

The ranking criteria comprise the following nine indicators: 1) Academic Reputation, 2) Employer Reputation, 3) Faculty Student Ratio, 4) Citations per Faculty, 5) International Faculty Ratio, 6) International Student Ratio, 7) International Research Network, 8) Employment Outcomes and 9) Sustainability.

What are the concerns with the QS rankings?

Out of the nine indicators, Academic Reputation and Citations per Faculty collectively have 50 percent of the weightage.

In the context of India, these indicators raise questions not only about elite institutions but also about individual faculty members and their research, **as both reputation and citation value of each individual carry significant weightage.**

Most estimates in India suggest that 98% of professors and 90% of assistant or associate professors in institutions like IISc and IITs come from the upper castes. This shows a significant disparity in representation.

This also implies that the knowledge base and perspectives of only 20% of the population dominate at least 90% in the respective field.

Considering these factors, academics from IIT Bombay will most likely nominate peers from similar institutions known for conducting prominent research, to the Academic Reputation survey.

This raises concerns about the representation of their work and citation.

Furthermore, the number of citations holds significant weight in determining legitimacy and can impact factors such as promotions and salaries.

Without proper representation, **researchers from marginalized backgrounds may face even greater challenges in** gaining recognition, diminishing their citational value regardless of the merit of their work.

Hence, **the QS World University Ranking does not take these factors into consideration** and publishes a report preserving global educational inequalities.

What is the way ahead?

This lack of representation in the higher educational institutions in India keeps the knowledge and experience of the majority in this country unexplored or invisible.

Additionally, **it maintains elitism in the higher education system.** The cyclical nature preserves the status quo, ensuring that institutions remain inaccessible and unassailable.

Hence, even if there has been improvement in the ranking of IIT-Bombay, it is not a matter of pride as there are structural flaws in the education system, which needs to be addressed.

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11. [Eradicating sickle cell disease, securing the future of India's tribal communities](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Eradicating sickle cell disease, securing the future of India's tribal communities**” published in “**Indian Express**” on **4th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2- Issues related to Health

News: Recently, PM Modi launched the Sickle Cell Anaemia Elimination Mission.

What is Sickle cell disease?

Sickle cell is a **genetic disorder** in which a person's red blood cells become distorted and take on a sickle-like shape. This disease is **commonly found among tribal communities**.

Sickle cell disease exists in **two forms** within the human body.

One is the **Sickle Cell trait**, in which the individual does not exhibit any disease or symptoms, and lives a normal life.

The second form is characterised by the **presence of symptoms** related to sickle cell disease.

If two individuals with Sickle Cell trait marry each other, there is a high probability that their child will have Sickle Cell disease.

How the government plans to eradicate sickle cell disease?

The government plans to eradicate sickle cell disease through two approaches.

The first approach focuses on prevention, ensuring that new cases are not born.

The second approach involves managing the treatment and providing adequate healthcare facilities for individuals already affected by the disease.

The government will provide for screening of individuals for Sickle Cell trait before marriage, to prevent the spread of the disease.

After screening, individuals will be provided with smart cards in their local language, enabling prospective partners to easily determine whether their future children will be affected by Sickle Cell disease or not.

Individuals identified with the disease through screening will undergo regular testing, receive treatment and medication, vaccinations for other diseases, get dietary support, and have access to timely counselling services.

Health and Wellness Centres established through the Ayushman Bharat scheme will also play a significant role.

12. [Lessons from the fracas over foodgrains](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Lessons from the fracas over foodgrains**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 5th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Government policies and intervention & GS 3 – issue related to poverty and hunger

News: The Karnataka government recently decided to convert the promised Anna Bhagya scheme to a direct benefit transfer temporarily. It has brought into focus the limits of a state government's policy intervention on a crucial matter such as food security.

What is Karnataka's Anna Bhagya Scheme?

The Anna Bhagya scheme, an initiative by Karnataka, aims to supply 5 kg of free rice monthly to 4.42 crore beneficiaries. This group consists of 45 lakh Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) cardholders, 3.58 crore Priority Household (PHH) cardholders, and 39 lakh cardholders from a

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special PHH category within Karnataka. These provisions would be over and above the regular allocations provided under the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

What are the Challenges for Karnataka's Anna Bhagya Scheme?

Sudden change in OMSS-D policy: The biggest challenge for the Anna Bhagya scheme was the sudden change in the Open Market Sale Scheme-Domestic (OMSS-D) policy by the central government. The Union Food Ministry stopped the sale of surplus grains to states, under this scheme. The OMSS is now limited to accommodate small and marginal buyers and traders. It was a major route to supplement the allocation for rice-deficit states.

Effective communication gap: There was also a lack of effective communication between different departments at the national level and the state government. If there had been better coordination, the difficulties in launching the scheme could have been mitigated.

Financial burden: Lastly, the financial cost of the scheme is another significant hurdle. With FCI agreeing to supply grains at ₹36.6 per kg, the monthly cost for the state would amount to around ₹840 crore.

Lastly, supplies for the scheme would not have been fulfilled, just by OMSS-D.

What is OMSS Policy?

Read here: [The Open Market Sale Scheme for wheat and rice](#)

Why has the central government shifted the OMSS Policy?

This Shift in policy due to **a)** lower quarterly stocks of rice and wheat, which was at the lowest in three years, **b)** uncertainty about the upcoming monsoon season and its potential impact on food grain production, **c)** concerns over state-level food schemes which rely on the central government and FCI to support such schemes without considering broader trends and realities.

What are the lessons for states from this event?

States must have comprehensive plans and mechanisms in place before launching any large-scale scheme.

The states must consider the macro picture to ascertain the practicality of their new schemes, in the light of national food security and financial implications.

It also underscores the need for states to consider all aspects before making promises that rely heavily on central support.

Political parties should exercise restraint while making electoral promises, especially on critical issues like food security.

13. If the consumption of tobacco is not okay, India should just ban it

Source: The post is based on the article “**If the consumption of tobacco is not okay, India should just ban it**” published in “**Live mint**” on 5th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues related to health

News: India's Ministry of Health and Family Welfare plans to enforce additional anti-tobacco controls on Online Curated Content Providers (OCCPs)

What are Online Curated Content Providers (OCCPs)?

OCCPs are platforms that deliver digitally streamed entertainment content over the internet. These platforms include popular streaming services like Netflix, Amazon Prime, and Disney+. OCCPs typically offer a wide range of content, including movies, TV series, documentaries, and other forms of entertainment, which they curate or organize based on the user's preferences,

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viewing history, or specific categories. OCCPs are different from other online platforms like YouTube, Instagram, Facebook, etc., which provide user-generated content.

What is the government plan to enforce more anti-tobacco regulations on OCCPs?

As per these guidelines, the OCCPs will be required to display textual warnings on the harmful effects of tobacco use when scenes involving such products are shown.

The OCCPs have been given 90 days to comply and adopt a technical solution to this. Additionally, the warnings must be displayed in the language of the audio track of the content, which means OCCPs may need to translate the warnings into multiple languages.

The content providers are also expected to review their existing libraries manually to identify all instances of tobacco use. This implies a significant task of viewing and marking the relevant sections in their vast content libraries.

The onus of implementing these changes and adhering to the new guidelines will be primarily on the content owners, with OCCPs offering the required technical solutions. This could lead to substantial content going offline if it's impractical for OCCPs or content owners to comply with these new regulations.

What are the challenges in implementing this plan?

Multi-language compliance: The requirement to display warnings in the language of the audio track can lead to logistical and financial burdens, as it necessitates translating warnings into multiple languages.

Manual review requirement: Manually identifying content containing the use of tobacco products could take millions of hours, as it cannot be accomplished solely by automated technology. This diverts significant resources from content creation to compliance efforts.

Burden on small providers: Smaller streaming platforms might find it especially difficult to comply with these new guidelines. It might stifle innovation and foster an unequal playing field.

Potential content loss: If content owners refuse or fail to comply with these guidelines, OCCPs may need to remove the non-compliant content, leading to a significant loss of content available for consumers.

Impact on International Content: It could deter international content creators from including tobacco warnings in their work, limiting the availability of popular international titles in India.

What should be done?

Re-evaluation of guidelines: The government should avoid unnecessarily burdensome requirements. The focus should be on measures that are practical, efficient, and not overly disruptive to the industry.

Learning from global practices: Countries like Singapore, Australia, and the EU have managed to create regulations that balance public health concerns with industry growth. India can gain valuable insights from these models.

Comprehensive public health campaigns: Instead of placing the entire burden on OCCPs, the government could invest in comprehensive public health campaigns addressing the root causes of tobacco consumption, such as stress and peer pressure.

Inclusive policy framework: Regulations should be created in consultation with industry stakeholders to ensure they are inclusive and consider the operational realities of OCCPs. This will ensure a more effective and fair policy framework.

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14. [Antibiotics with promise — a lifeline India awaits](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Antibiotics with promise — a lifeline India awaits**” published in **The Hindu** on **5th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2-Issues related to health

News-The article emphasizes the need for [Emergency Use Authorisation \(EUA\)](#) for essential antibiotics that can make a profound difference between life and death.

What are the challenges posed by Antibiotic resistance?

Infection specialists, intensivists, oncologists, and doctors treating severe infections in critically ill and immunocompromised patients are facing challenges.

Each year, **millions of lives are lost due to the lack** of available antibiotics in the face of these formidable pathogens.

The relentless march of drug resistance has rendered **once-effective treatments ineffective**.

Doctors are left with **limited choices** and often resort to **suboptimal treatments** that may have **significant side effects** or offer little hope of a cure.

It adds to the **immense pressure and helplessness experienced by doctors** on the front lines.

What is the way forward?

India must extend the **COVID level of urgency as in granting EUA for** to saving the lives of patients who may otherwise succumb to infections resistant to all currently available antibiotics.

Cefiderocol, a licenced antibiotic in several countries, developed by a **Japanese company**, has demonstrated excellent efficacy against drug-resistant infections. **India demands access** to this life-saving antibiotic without delay.

However, we must emphasise the importance of **responsible and appropriate utilisation** of these medications.

A **collective decision by a team of experienced doctors**, including infectious diseases experts should be made mandatory before initiating their use.

By **granting EUA for cefepime/zidebactam**, an Indian innovation, and **cefiderocol**, a globally recognized antibiotic, we can strengthen our arsenal against drug-resistant infections.

As a nation known for its scientific achievements, we can **make a substantial impact** on the world stage.

15. [Let Them Think – on education system of India](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Let Them Think**”, published in The Times of India on 5th July, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, Issues related to Education system in India

News: Recently, 550 academics have criticized the move of Indian Institute of Science (IISc) to cancel a discussion on UAPA, prisons and the criminal justice system.

What the move of IISc has been criticized for being against NEP’s objective?

The National Education Policy 2020 aims to transform the educational system from a content-focused, rote-learning model to one that develops the advanced cognitive skills such as critical thinking and problem-solving. The policy encourages addressing creativity challenges through an interdisciplinary approach.

IISc is the top institution in GOI’s national rankings in its categories. The decision to cancel the discussion highlights that an institute of high standard is also not following the approach of

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NEP. It indicates that the Indian education system may not have fully grasped the NEP's message.

The development of creativity cannot be achieved by limiting students to a strict curriculum and discouraging any activities that might provoke questioning. Protecting students from real-world issues will be counterproductive in enhancing their cognitive abilities.

Therefore, any attempt by an institution to prevent students from exploring diverse perspectives on UAPA and its role in the criminal justice system is a significant disservice to them.

16. Thwarting Twitter – on Karnataka HC judgment against Twitter

Source: This post is based on the article “**Let Them Think**”, published in The Times of India on 5th July, 2023.

Syllabus topic: GS Paper 2, Government Policies for various sectors

News: The article discusses the recent rejection by the Karnataka High Court of a petition by Twitter, Inc., which challenged the validity of the Union government's blocking orders.

Read More about the case– [A case of unchecked power to restrict e-free speech](#)

The court ruled that Twitter, as a foreign entity, could not invoke the constitutional guarantee of free speech and expression on behalf of its users.

It also imposed a fine of ₹50 lakh on Twitter for indulging in “speculative litigation” despite not complying with the blocking orders for a long period.

Court refused to entertain all arguments based on:

- The absence of notice to users and
- Lack of proportionality involved in large-scale suspension of accounts and posts on few topics.

What are the issues reported by the author with the judgment?

The court's decision will potentially encourage account-level blocking rather than the removal of specific tweets, links, or URLs deemed harmful to public order or national security.

It will have significant implications for freedom of speech and expression in India, particularly in the context of social media platforms.

It also raises questions about the rights and obligations of large media companies in relation to user-generated content. A definitive verdict from the Supreme Court may be needed to clarify these issues.

What should be done?

Laws in most countries allow intermediaries such as social media platforms and Internet service providers to remove any offending content.

Democracies should formulate policies and regulations rooted in fairness and natural justice.

Government should avoid imposing undue restrictions on freedom of speech and expression.

In Shreya Singhal case (2015), Section 69A of the IT Act was upheld by the Supreme Court, because, the section provides adequate procedural safeguards.

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17. [Potential gains – Govt is encouraging use of farm waste](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Potential gains – Govt is encouraging use of farm waste**” published in **Business Standard** on **6th July 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 policy changes and new guidelines for crop-residue management.**

News: Recently, the agriculture ministry has introduced new guidelines for crop-residue management.

About the New Guidelines

The primary aim of the new guidelines is to promote economic uses of farm waste. It makes farm waste a source of income for farmers, rather than burning it as useless refuse.

For this, rural bodies like farmers’ producer organizations, cooperative societies, village panchayats, and private entrepreneurs will be collecting biomass from fields. Then, they will supply it to entrepreneurs engaged in producing various utility items from it.

The government will provide financial assistance in the form of 65% of the project cost, along with subsidies on machinery and equipment.

Assistance will be provided through the **National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) and the Agriculture Infrastructure Development Fund (AIDF)**.

Moreover, amendments have also been made to the existing [biomass co-firing policy](#).

What amendments have been made in biomass co-firing policy?

Along with a new set of guidelines, **policy amendments have been made which include improving the norms for co-firing thermal power plants with pellets made of biomass.**

The amended policy provides for benchmarking the prices of pellets, with the expectation that power units will establish sustainable biomass-supply chains.

Implementation of these measures can reduce the reliance on environmentally unfriendly fossil fuels in power generation.

These are consistent with a global trend of incentivizing the use of biomass as a feedstock for energy production and as part of measures to reduce economic development’s carbon footprint and combat climate change.

Why were these amendments and guidelines required?

It will **address the issue of crop residue burning**, which causes severe air pollution in the National Capital Region (NCR) during October-November every year.

As per official estimates, switching from coal to biomass in thermal power units can reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 38 million tones.

However, **challenges exist due to the lack of infrastructure and resources for collecting, transporting, and processing biomass and farm waste.**

Although the Energy Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2022 mandates all thermal-power units to use renewable fuel as part of their feedstock, compliance with this provision is inadequate.

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18. Who Will Be The +1 In China+1?

Source– The post is based on the article “Who Will Be The +1 In China+1?” published in “The Times of India” on **6th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance: India and China bilateral relationship

News- Rising tensions between the United States and China has brought the race among nations to become the +1 in the China+1 contest where India has many advantages over Southeast Asian countries.

What are the factors that are in favor of India?

First, it has by far the largest workforce. The **UN Population Division** estimates that working age population in India stood at **950. 2 million in 2021**.

Second, India has **lower wage** rate because of the much larger workforce and the lower per-capita income. It because India’s 45% of the workforce is still in agriculture and its working age population is expected to grow more compared to Southeast Asia.

Third, India is **internally a single market**. It means there are no barriers to the movement of goods and services within. Whereas, Southeast Asia is even though connected by free trade area (FTA) agreement, the goods can only cross borders, once they **satisfy the rules of origin** criterion.

Fourth, India’s internal market is large. India’s GDP at **\$3. 4 trillion in 2022** is already significantly larger than \$3 trillion of Southeast Asia minus Singapore which is in Southeast Asia but not a competing China+1 location.

What are the challenges in front of India?

One major concern is that the **countries in Southeast Asia** are already members of the Regional and Comprehensive Economic Partnership (**RCEP**). **Therefore, supply chains of SE Asia with China are already well established. It is a major** advantage for them. Malaysia and Thailand are also members of the Comprehensive Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (**CPTPP**), which accounts for **one-sixth of the world GDP**.

India is not a member of either of the agreement and has limited engagement with Asian countries.

Upgradation of “Look East” policy to “Act East” would not be fruitful due to deterioration of relationship with China.

However, India should consider strengthening it’s relations with rest of Asia.

How can India strengthen its relations with Asian countries?

Thus, **two main avenues** to deepening the engagement with Asia are **strengthening the existing FTA** with the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean)** and **seeking the membership of CPTPP**.

Joining **CPTPP with a 20-year implementation period** negotiated as a part of the deal has a potential to make India a developed country by 2047.

Simultaneously, **gaining duty-free access to this large market** is bound to make us the number one China+1 destination.

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[19. Online education is inadequate for reasons we have long known](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Online education is inadequate for reasons we have long known**” published the **minton 6th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2-Issues related to Education

Relevance: Online Education

News- Online education is unable to address core requirements of good education and that is why it has very limited effectiveness.

What are the limitations of online education?

The answers lie at the very core of **what education is and how learning happens**.

Education is about developing **three kinds of things** in the learner which are **Capacities (reading, critical thinking,)**, **Values and dispositions (Like empathy, non-discrimination) and Knowledge**.

Online Education does not **develop values and fundamental capacities** but focuses on goals linked with knowledge.

Education provides 2 kinds of goals: 1) Know-How 2) Know-what

Know-what tells us the concepts and content knowledge, while **Know-how** provides the knowledge of how to do things.

Good education is often about **developing know-how and not only the know-what**. It is because an infinite amount of content is available, but if a student knows how to do things, he will automatically grab know-whats of the thing.

While know-what can be understood without a teacher, know-how is much more difficult to understand and requires a teacher. Online education is unable to cover the know-how system properly.

Why is the teacher unable to provide effective education online?

Attention and focus: In education, it's about sustained attention which is lacking in online education.

Emotional state: Being excited, bored, or sad has a direct effect on learning.

Motivation: The learner's desire is affected by a complex range of things in the **learner's immediate environment and life**.

To ensure learning, the teacher must **orchestrate attention and perseverance**, understand and **manage emotions and motivation**. But this cannot be done online.

Further, **different learners learn different things** more effectively by listening, talking, doing, seeing and experiencing.

It's about discussion, questioning, arguing, etc., and all this evolves organically in a group of students with a teacher. This again is **nearly impossible online**.

[20. How India can leverage its biggest strength](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**How India can leverage its biggest strength**” published in “The Indian Express” on 6th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues related to development and management of Human Resources

News: India's present demographic scenario is extremely favorable, with an average age of 29 years. This youthful population sets India apart from other populous nations and presents a unique advantage for the country's economic growth.

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What is the present demographic scenario in India and around the world?

India's demographic advantage: India's present demographic scenario is extremely favourable, with an average age of 29 years. This youthful population sets India apart from other populous nations and presents a unique advantage for the country's economic growth.

The aging global scenario: Contrarily, the global scenario is characterized by aging populations, especially in developed countries. For instance, the average ages in the US, China, France, Germany, and Japan are significantly higher, ranging from 38 to 48 years. Moreover, these nations are expected to witness higher old-age dependency ratios by 2075, with Japan at 75.3%, France at 55.8%, the US at 49.3%, the UK at 53%, and Germany at 63.1%.

India's golden opportunity: Given these circumstances, the next 25 years could be the golden era for India, leveraging its youthful workforce to drive economic growth and progress.

What are lessons from Asia's Growth Stories?

Asia's economic triumphs: Asian countries like China, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, and Singapore serve as ideal examples of leveraging demographic dividends. Notably, China, with an almost 10% annual growth rate over four decades, transformed its economy through labour-intensive manufacturing.

Key strategies: These nations strategically moved their labour force from agriculture to manufacturing and services, resulting in consistent growth and reduced old-age dependency. This shift was backed by structural transformations, including infrastructural development, labour law reforms, and trade facilitation measures.

Implication for India: These growth stories underline the necessity for India to focus on similar transformative strategies, especially in labour-intensive manufacturing sectors, to fully capitalize on its favourable demographics.

What are the Indian government's initiatives to reap the demographic dividend in India?

Skill development initiatives: The government has launched programmes like **Jan Shikshan Sansthan**, **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana**, and **National Apprenticeship Promotion Scheme** to improve employability through skilling, re-skilling, and up-skilling. These initiatives aim to make the Indian labour force more productive and efficient. The MSDE Vision 2025 further aims to improve the linkage between education and skill.

Healthcare reforms: The Ayushman Bharat and Swachh Bharat Mission seek to improve health equity in India. The **Pradhan Mantri Bhartiya Janaushadhi Pariyojana** aims to make drug prices affordable and accessible, enhancing overall public health.

Education policy: The National Education Policy 2020, alongside **the Samagra Shiksha programme**, is focused on providing inclusive, equitable, and quality education at all school levels, ensuring a productive labour force in the future.

Support for MSMEs: Recognizing MSMEs as the backbone of Indian manufacturing, the government has endeavoured to support them in improving competitiveness, achieving scale, digital infrastructure, technology upgrades, and branding.

Flagship programmes: The government has introduced flagship programmes like Skill India, Make in India, and Start-up India to enhance the productivity of the labour force and to foster innovation and entrepreneurship.

What should be done?

India's young demographic offers a unique advantage for economic growth. However, capitalizing on this opportunity requires several strategies: transitioning the labour force from agriculture to manufacturing and services, bolstering MSMEs, enhancing skilling programs, and improving health and education services. These steps, combined with accelerated policy

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reforms and effective execution of initiatives like Skill India, Make in India, and Start-up India, will enable India to fully harness its demographic dividend.

21. [India's shield of privacy should reflect Article 21](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**India’s shield of privacy should reflect Article 21**” published in **Live Mint** on **7th July 2023**.

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

Relevance: **About new** Digital Personal Data Protection Bill and associated concerns.

News: The monsoon session of the Parliament is likely to take up the new Digital Personal Data Protection Bill.

About the New Digital Personal Data Protection Bill

Read Here: [New Digital Personal Data Protection Bill in Monsoon Session](#) and [Cabinet gives nod to Data Protection Bill](#)

What are the concerns with the New Digital Personal Data Protection Bill?

There are concerns over privacy due to the “deemed consent” clause in the Bill. The clause has been designed for emergency data access, however, there are also threats of the clause being misused by the authorities.

This is evident from the fact when the government attempted to break chat encryption for the sake of public security, raising suspicions over the privacy and potential of misuse by the government.

Hence, it is crucial to address the flaws in the bill to align it with its original purpose as defined by the judiciary. Else, privacy as a fundamental right would be weakened.

Read More: [Draft Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022: Benefits and Concerns – Explained](#)

How can privacy as a fundamental right can be effectively implemented?

A [Supreme Court ruling](#) in 2017 recognized privacy as a fundamental right under **Article 21 (Right to Life and Personal Liberty) of the Indian Constitution**.

However, **basic rights hold value only if they are upheld against all forces, including the state**. This also requires unbiased judicial procedures.

Therefore, privacy, as a key aspect of liberty, can be protected when no one is arbitrary arrested and unnecessary spying on individual also comes to an end.

Moreover, given the increasing digital realm, **it is also crucial that individuals should be owner of their data by law**.

They should be given rights to decide over sharing their data, and only necessary information should be made available to the state.

Further, given the alleged use of spyware like Pegasus, clear limits on intrusion by state agencies are also essential. **Properly issued e-search permits may serve** the purpose.

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[22. Express View on CPR losing its tax exemptions: Think tanked](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Express View on CPR losing its tax exemptions: Think tanked**” published in **The Indian Express** on **7th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 2 – The Role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders**

Relevance: **concerns associated with the** Centre for Policy Research (CPR)

News: The Centre for Policy Research (CPR), a prominent think tank has faced scrutiny from state agencies.

What steps has the government taken against the CPR?

A few months ago, the Ministry of Home Affairs cancelled CPR’s FCRA (Foreign Contribution Regulation Act) registration. Now, **the Income Tax department has cancelled CPR’s tax exemption status, which it has held since 1976.**

These decisions have been taken after a show cause notice was issued by the IT department in December last year. **The notice stated that CPR was engaging in activities that were not in line with its registered objectives and conditions.**

Must Read: [Power against knowledge: On Centre for Policy Research FCRA licence suspension](#)

What were the activities CPR was involved in?

In September last year, the IT department conducted surveys on the CPR regarding alleged tax discrepancies.

The IT department identified certain violations, **including CPR’s involvement in the Hasdeo movement against coal mining in Chhattisgarh forests.**

The investigation team of the IT department **has also red-flagged funds provided by CPR to Jana Abhivyaakti Samajik Vikas Sanstha,** an organisation involved in the preservation of the environment.

The IT department claimed that funds were used to address issues related to litigation, mobilization of people, and funding for the Hasdeo movement, **which falls outside CPR’s stated mandate.**

What can be the implication of the measures taken by the government against CPR?

The CPR has worked on areas from analysing election data to evaluating the government’s flagship programmes such as PM Poshan.

This researched analysis contributes to policy debates and helps both state and non-state agencies to improve their decision-making processes.

Further, it is also difficult to expect the state planning boards or Niti Aayog to fill this task of both making and auditing public policy as well as do broad analysis of political and social trends.

Hence, **many governments rely on think tanks to build capacities in decision-making. These think tanks in turn rely on donors.**

Hence, **disrupting the flow of funds to think tanks can severely** impact their activities, potentially leading to their closure.

What can be the way ahead?

While CPR needs to address questions raised by the tax authorities, **cancelling its tax exemption status, which is a key to its funding, is seen as an example of excessive regulation.**

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It also raises concerns about returning to the era of the license permit inspector raj.

Further, tax inspectors may succeed in forcing institutions to conform with the government's goals and priorities. However, this approach will hurt policymaking and restrict the range of ideas that policymakers may discuss and debate.

23. [India's strategic choices](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**India's strategic choices**” published in “Business Standard” on 7th July 2023.

Syllabus: Syllabus: GS 2- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests & GS 3- Science and Technology- indigenization of technology and developing new technology.

News: the article talks about the issues associated with the outcomes of recent PM's visit to Foreign Countries.

Why are the possible issues arising from recent deals?

prepares for another visit to Paris, there are speculations about a potential partnership with French engine-maker Safran to design and develop an engine for India's futuristic, fifth-generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA). However, this could stir controversy as the British firm, Rolls-Royce, has also offered to partner with the Defence Research & Development Organisation (DRDO) for the same project.

Prior Commitment to US-Made Engines: The Indian Ministry of Defence (MoD) has already committed to using US-made General Electric (GE) engines for the Tejas fighter. This existing commitment adds another layer of complexity to the situation. If India now enters into a major agreement with Safran for the AMCA project, it might raise questions about the coherence of India's defense procurement strategy.

Strategic Implications: The AMCA project has immense strategic importance for India, as it is expected to be a crucial component of the Indian Air Force's fifth-generation fighter fleet. Thus, any controversy surrounding its development could cast a shadow on the broader procurement process and strategy of India's defense sector.

What are the India's limitations in co-developing defence equipment with US?

Capability differential: The primary constraint in US-India high technology cooperation has been the disparity in technological capabilities. Historically, the Indian side has had a more limited range of high-tech offerings compared to the advanced technology available in the US.

Limited co-development experience: India's limitations in co-developing defence equipment have been an obstacle. Past collaborations have revealed challenges related to technical expertise, manufacturing capabilities, and infrastructure, which have constrained the depth of cooperation.

India has a long history of space collaboration with Russia. Indian scientists were traditionally trained in Russia, and the country played a significant role in India's first astronaut mission in 1984. This historical connection with Russia in the space domain could potentially impact the dynamics of space collaboration between India and the US, as India's past association with Russia might influence its approach to collaborations with other countries, including the US.

What can we conclude from the recent developments?

India's Prime Minister international engagements reflect India's balancing act in maintaining diverse alliances. The India-US relationship is improving with new initiatives, notably in high-tech cooperation and space. Despite this, India's historic ties with Russia and its commitment to multiple vendors in defence deals, such as Safran and GE, highlight potential complexities.

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Additionally, the lack of consensus at the SCO meeting signifies geopolitical constraints. However, through careful diplomacy, India aims to solidify its place in the international landscape by strengthening relationships and pursuing strategic partnerships.

24. Limits of expansion – on Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS)

Source: The post is based on the article “Limits of expansion” published in “The Hindu ” on 7th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Government policies and intervention & GS 3 – issue related to poverty and hunger

News: The National Conference of Food Ministers failed to resolve the issue of the discontinuance of rice and wheat sales to States under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS) in view of the Centre’s restrictions.

Read – [Lessons from the fracas over foodgrains](#)

What was the aim of The National Conference of Food Ministers?

The aim was to discuss important topics such as creating an action plan for the procurement of coarse grains and placing a strengthened focus on food and nutritional security.

Why has this issue arisen?

The issue arises because **a)** the state government launched a large-scale scheme without having a comprehensive plan and mechanism in place, **b)** The Union Food Ministry halted the sale of surplus grain under the open market sale scheme, affecting the state ‘s plan to use OMSS to implement their scheme.

What are the lessons for the state from this issue?

Reduced dependency on the Centre for State schemes: States should not overly rely on the Centre or its agencies for implementing state-specific food sector schemes. This is underscored by the Food Corporation of India’s withdrawal from providing additional foodgrains for the Anna Bhagya 2.0 programme in Karnataka.

Resource identification and cost-effectiveness: States need to identify their own resources and implement food security schemes in a cost-effective manner. As demonstrated by the situation in Karnataka, finding an equivalent supplier at a feasible cost can be a challenge.

Feasibility of expanding entitlements: States should consider the feasibility of expanding entitlements, such as increasing the amount of foodgrain provided from 5 kg to 10 kg, considering their own resource constraints.

Advance planning: The states should undertake careful and advanced planning for their food security schemes. The situation in Karnataka brings into focus the pitfalls of ill-planned attempts to replicate Union government schemes without considering the states’ individual resources and contexts.

What should be done?

With potential El Niño impacts on foodgrain production and procurement on the horizon, the Centre and the states are urged to concentrate on strengthening the Public Distribution System. Instead of trying to expand existing schemes, the focus should be on making current systems more foolproof and efficient.

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25. India needs a Uniform Civil Code

Source: The post is based on the article “**India needs a Uniform Civil Code**” published in “The Hindu ” on 7th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

What is UCC?

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is a proposed law in India that aims to replace personal laws based on scriptures and customs of each religious community with a common set of rules governing every citizen. It seeks to ensure equal justice and rights for all citizens by establishing common rules for issues like marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption, regardless of religion.

What are the constitutional debates on UCC?

The UCC has a deep-rooted history in the Constitution of India and its creation. Notably, discussions during the Constituent Assembly debates highlight the significance and need for a UCC.

Babasaheb Ambedkar, the primary architect of the Indian Constitution, strongly supported the UCC. He believed it was key to achieving gender equality and eliminating social issues. He voiced his confusion over why religion has been allowed to create barriers in the way of legal and social reform.

Several other notable figures like Alladi **Krishnaswamy Ayyar** and **K.M. Munshi** also expressed their support for UCC. They stressed that a UCC was needed to unify and secularize the nation’s way of life.

Despite the support, the Assembly did not reach a consensus, and the UCC ended up in **Article 44 of the Directive Principles**, making it a constitutional obligation for the state to implement it.

What is Supreme Court’s Stand on UCC?

India’s Supreme Court has also voiced its opinion on the matter. In the **Shah Bano case**, it regretfully remarked on the failure to bring Article 44 to life and expressed that a UCC would foster national integration. In the **Indian Young Lawyers Association case (2018)**, the court ruled that religious freedom should align with the Constitution’s fundamental rights. Despite its views, the court refrained from issuing directives to the government, respecting the parliament’s legislative domain.

What is the significance of UCC?

Reduces social inequalities and discrimination: A UCC would safeguard fundamental rights, decrease social disparities, and curb gender discrimination. It represents a unified legal system that upholds constitutional principles, serving as a mechanism for promoting equality and justice for all citizens.

Promotes gender equality: The UCC is critical for empowering women and establishing gender parity in matters such as marriage, divorce, and inheritance. It would help abolish practices that deny women their rights and provide them with equal opportunities and protections.

Encourages national integration: The implementation of a UCC will help cultivate a sense of unity among India’s diverse communities, fostering social cohesion and national integration. It is a significant step toward building a new, inclusive, and egalitarian India.

Conclusion

The call for the UCC is a call for social reform, a code aligned with the principles of justice, equality, and an inclusive society. Thus, it’s crucial for citizens, religious leaders, and political parties to support its implementation, as it would represent a significant step toward a more

equal and fair society.

26. [Express View on data protection Bill: Personal is private](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Express View on data protection Bill: Personal is private**” published in “Indian Express” on 7th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Government policies and interventions for various sectors

News: The Union cabinet has approved the draft data protection Bill, which is set to be introduced in Parliament in the upcoming monsoon session.

This Digital Personal Data Protection Bill is a crucial part of the regulatory framework being introduced to govern India’s rapidly expanding digital economy.

Read – [draft Digital Personal Data Protection Bill](#)

What are the implications of Digital Personal Data Protection Bill?

The Bill may empower the central government to exempt any government agency from its purview.

The government may have the discretion to appoint members to the data protection board. It raises concern about the independence and autonomy of institutions. The board will be charged with ensuring compliance and dealing with grievances and disputes.

The legislation is likely to have shifted towards a blacklisting framework from a whitelisting approach for dealing with cross-border data flows. The shift towards a blacklisting framework for cross-border data flows could be influenced by the prevailing geopolitical environment.

The Bill prescribes penalties up to Rs 250 crore per instance, for failing to prevent a data breach. However, the word ‘per instance’ is not defined yet.

27. [Our national surveys are based on faulty sampling](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Our national surveys are based on faulty sampling**” published in “Indian Express” on 7th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Government policies and interventions for various sectors

News: The article discusses the importance of data quality in surveys that inform policy decisions in India.

Policymakers in India typically rely on sample surveys of households to assess previous policies or to frame new ones.

However, the data quality related to the National Sample Survey (NSS), National Family Health Survey (NFHS), and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) is inadequate due to outdated sampling frames and archaic survey mechanisms.

What are the Issues associated with the present surveys?

Surveys use outdated sampling frames and hence, are not representative

The surveys are said to grossly and systematically underestimate India’s progress and development, leading to misleading estimates.

For example, nearly all major surveys in India conducted post-2011 have overestimated the proportion of the rural population significantly. They have relied on 2011 for the sampling frame.

There is also a problem with the response rate, which is systematically correlated with wealth levels. The response rate falls with growth in income and wealth of households. No adjustment has been made for this error in the surveys.

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If the policies are framed based on these estimates, they are not going to yield the desired results. This will result in a continuous gap between ground realities and survey estimates.

What should be done?

Statistical reforms should not merely focus on the availability, frequency, and largeness of data, but greater emphasis should be placed on data quality.

28. The infinite variety of custom – on UCC and Tribals debate

Source– The post is based on the article “**The infinite variety of custom**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **8th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance– UCC

News- The Prime Minister’s push for a uniform civil code has led to alarm among tribal communities in different regions of the country.

What are the concerns of tribals regarding UCC?

Tribal fear that significant parts of their way of life would be undone if a UCC is implemented. Tribal feel that “**one code for one country**” undermines the Constitution.

Most tribes have a **patrilineal line of succession**. They fear that non-tribal people and people of other religions can trap their women to grab land if daughters are allowed to claim father property.

Tribal fears that UCC will impact their **customary practices**. They also believe that civil courts are too **cumbersome and inaccessible**.

Special legislation such as the PESA Act, 1996; the Chota Nagpur Tenancy Act, 1908; and the Santhal Parganas Tenancy Act, 1876, recognise customary practices in Jharkhand. These are protected under the **Fifth Schedule of the Constitution**.

There are also **judicial precedents** which recognise **customary practices** and authorise lower courts to make decisions on their basis.

The sharpest protests against a UCC in the north-east emerged from Nagaland, Meghalaya, and Mizoram.

Many tribal bodies have said that UCC is **unconstitutional** because of protections provided in **Articles 371A and 371G** of the Constitution of India.

A UCC could also come in conflict with the **Sixth Schedule of the Constitution**.

Social practices in the north-east vary from community to community. They fears that their **traditional system** will be affected by a common code

PESA Act, 1996 empowers the tribal villages to use their “customary mode of dispute resolution” for disputes related to land, family, and marriage, among others. The **community-based systems of settling disputes** in Arunachal Pradesh are “more democratic” than those of modern-day courts. The tribal communities fear that the UCC could undermine this Act.

Adi community in Arunachal Pradesh have Kebang system for settling disputes. Unlike the formal judicial system, everyone’s a winner in the Kebang system.

In Meghalaya, daughters inherit **ancestral property** from their parents. The Khasi customary law vests the **right of inheritance** on the youngest daughter.

The **best practices and aspects of customary laws** can be accommodated when a **common code** is prepared without affecting **traditional systems**.

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Change cannot be **imposed** on communities. They will change when they feel the need to.

29. [Choice is theirs: BCCI puts unfair restrictions on men cricketers](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Choice is theirs: BCCI puts unfair restrictions on men cricketers**” published in the “**The Times of India**” on **8th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance- Issues related to sports administration

News- The article explains the issue of male players regarding BCCI restrictions on their overseas business

What are the concerns of male cricketers?

Women cricketers can do business overseas without **jeopardising their career**. Their male counterparts are denied that right. Male cricketers must retire from all forms of domestic cricket to get that opportunity. This is unfair.

Media reports indicate that the BCCI is thinking about **cooling off periods** for retired players before they look for overseas opportunities. Cooling off makes sense in **sensitive areas such as the military or government** to prevent **conflicts of interest**. But it is not the case with cricket.

What is the way forward for better career prospects for male cricketers?

England and Australia allow their players to find the **balance between club contacts and national duty**. It's a **realistic approach**. **Peak earning potential** for a cricketer is limited to a few years.

BCCI should take a **pragmatic approach** and leave it to active players to decide about their business contracts.

30. [China's loss of momentum, rebuilding a bridge too far](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**China's loss of momentum, rebuilding a bridge too far**” published in “**The Business Standard**” on **8th July 2023**.

Syllabus GS2- International Relations

News- The Chinese economy is presenting a strange picture.

How is the Chinese economy showing a different trend from other economies of the world?

Much of the world is facing inflation. But, Beijing faces deflation in producer prices and low consumer price inflation.

Central banks in other countries have been increasing interest rates. But, the Chinese are easing **up on monetary policy**.

There is a **stock-market boom in countries like India**. **But**, the Shanghai Composite index is lower than it was in 2009.

Growth in last year was expected to be **5.5 per cent**, but fell short at **3 per cent**. This year's official growth target is 5 per cent. But the outlook for growth is uncertain due to the lack of domestic demand and of private investment.

Industrial production is lower than the pre-Covid level four years earlier. **Exports** and Imports are down.

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What are the factors behind the recent slowdown in the Chinese economy?

Some of these are cyclical issues. But, there are **structural constraints**. These are a shrinking population in the working-age bracket, massive public and quasi-public debt, over-construction in housing, shortage of consumer demand and poor project choices.

China has **shifted from capital investment to private consumption** as the primary driver of growth. But, it has failed to achieve growth aims.

Western world is **de-risking itself** by reducing its dependence on Chinese manufacturing. Any **meaningful de-coupling** is not possible. But, more foreign investment will be headed to other countries as a result of **di-risking moves** by the west.

What assumptions can be from these developments about the global political economy?

Earlier assumptions were that China would become larger than the US as an economy, and challenge Western strategic dominance. It may **need to be revised**.

It is a **rebalancing of global power**, rather than a substantial power shift.

[31. Ten military lessons from the Ukraine conflict for India](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Ten military lessons from the Ukraine conflict for India**” published in “Indian Express” on 8th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interest.

What are the military lessons from the Ukraine conflict for India?

The military lessons from the Ukraine conflict for India are;

Geopolitical conflicts can be inherently escalatory and high-stakes: Studying the Russia-Ukraine conflict reminds us that geopolitical tensions can quickly escalate and have severe consequences for regional stability and alliances, such as NATO.

Prolonged wars involve evolving aims: Long-lasting wars tend to escalate and can surprise even seasoned military analysts with their evolution, such as Russia's continued resistance against Ukraine.

A stable domestic front is crucial for prolonged wars: Wars demand not only battlefield strategy but also political stability and domestic resilience, which are intertwined.

Battlefield and political resilience are interconnected: Just like Russia, India should ensure its military and political strategies are coherent and adaptable, even in the face of setbacks.

Prolonged wars are wars of reserves: These types of wars need extensive reserves – including political will, military capacity, industrial logistics, and manpower. A consistent narrative can also bolster morale.

War strategies are complex and evolving: The Ukraine conflict shows that warfare blends tactics from different eras, demonstrating that India should be prepared to adapt and learn from both past and present military strategies.

The rise of intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) tools changes the battlefield: ISR technologies reveal more of the battlefield than ever before, making traditional stealth tactics less effective. India must consider the potential of these technologies, including their capacity to shorten engagement windows and blur the lines between combatants and non-combatants.

The democratization of combat information calls for decentralized firepower: As combat information becomes widely accessible, there will be pressure to distribute firepower more

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broadly, potentially to smaller units like platoons. This means India needs to prepare for simultaneous, multi-location engagements and develop new command structures to manage dispersed forces.

Modern technology impacts the dynamics of the battlefield: Beyond Visual Range (BVR) capabilities and other technology-rich strategies are becoming increasingly lethal. This suggests that India must keep pace with technological advancements and find a balance between precision and volume firepower, especially as sensor and strike capabilities converge.

Military technology must align with national doctrine: India should adapt technology to suit its own military doctrine, rather than subscribing to a one-size-fits-all approach.

India should learn from global military trends: India needs to independently evaluate its military strategy by learning, unlearning, and relearning lessons from past wars and current global trends. This will ensure strategic autonomy and aid in defense reform processes.

32. Sobriety after the euphoria of the U.S. state visit

Source: The post is based on the article “**Sobriety after the euphoria of the U.S. state visit**” published in “The Hindu” on 8th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests

About historical development of India US relations

In the past, U.S.-India relations have seen their share of disappointments, notably during the tenures of U.S. Presidents Lyndon B. Johnson and Richard Nixon. Johnson denied aid to India during the 1962 China-India conflict, and Nixon made a show of force during the 1971 India-Pakistan conflict, causing strain in the relationship.

However, the recent state visit by Indian PM to the U.S. marks a significant shift in this relationship. The U.S. demonstrated its clear support for India, promising technology transfer in critical areas like fighter jet engines production and other emerging technologies. This can significantly boost India’s military and aerospace capabilities.

What are the major differences in India’s previous visits then and now?

Earlier Visits: Visits by early Indian Prime Ministers, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, were foundational, setting the groundwork for future relations. Some visits faced challenges, like Indira Gandhi’s, which was considered a disaster due to disagreements between both nations.

Rajiv Gandhi’s visit: Rajiv Gandhi’s visit to the U.S. was considered successful and it broke many past barriers in Indo-U.S. relations.

Manmohan Singh’s visit (2005): During Prime Minister Manmohan Singh’s visit in 2005, India achieved a civil nuclear cooperation between India and the U.S.

The most recent visit by Prime Minister Modi witnessed significant advancements in defense and technology collaborations, showcasing the enhanced position of India as a prime defense technological partner of the U.S.

How the civil nuclear deal marked a shift in India- us relationship?

The civil nuclear deal was a significant milestone in the India-US relationship for several reasons:

Waiver and approvals: The U.S. helped India secure a waiver under the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and approval of the U.S. Congress for the 123 Agreement, enabling India to reach an India-specific Safeguards Agreement with the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). These were exceptional achievements that had few parallels in global history.

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India's unique position: As a result of this deal, India has the ability to keep some reactors outside IAEA safeguards, allowing them to be utilized for military purposes. This unprecedented freedom reflects a remarkable shift in India's global standing.

In essence, the civil nuclear deal marked a shift in the India-US relationship by elevating it to a level of strategic cooperation, mutual respect, and global significance that was unprecedented.

Why India should be cautious?

History of changing alliances: The U.S. has been known to change its priorities and allies based on its strategic interests, often influenced by the preferences of its current President. This dynamic and unpredictable nature of U.S. foreign policy makes it important for India to remain cautious and not overly reliant.

Circumstance vs conviction: The present positive shift in U.S.-India relations appears to be more driven by changing global circumstances, such as the rise of China, rather than an inherent shift in U.S. perceptions about India. It's important to remember that circumstances can change.

Differences in alliances: India is not currently the kind of ally that the U.S. typically seeks. For example, India wouldn't be able to be part of an arrangement like the AUKUS Pact, which involves deep strategic commitments between the U.S., the UK, and Australia. The fundamentals underlying the Quad (comprising India, Japan, Australia, and the U.S.) and AUKUS are quite different.

Potential as a 'Bridge Power': India has the potential to act as a 'bridge power', mediating between conflicting parties in the Indo-Pacific, West Asia, and Europe. India should seize this opportunity to assert its position on the global stage, instead of being overly influenced by any one power.

33. Ominous signs- on Khalistani separatism

Source: The post is based on the article "Ominous signs" published in "The Hindu" on 8th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Internal security

News: On July 8, rallies by pro-Khalistan separatists are planned in the U.S., the U.K., Canada and Australia that target Indian diplomatic missions and diplomats. The Indian government has taken steps to speak to officials in these countries for added security and vigilance.

What is the current situation regarding pro-Khalistan rallies?

There is an increase in pro-Khalistan separatist activities targeting Indian diplomatic missions and diplomats in the U.S., the U.K., Canada, and Australia. This includes planned rallies marked as "Kill India" and "Khalistan Freedom". These activities have left the Indian government worried and has led them to take steps such as speaking to officials in these countries for increased security.

How have the foreign governments been notified?

India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval has spoken with his British counterpart about the issue. Additionally, India's Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has communicated with its counterparts in all the affected countries, requesting pre-emptive action.

What risks are associated with these planned rallies?

The threats towards Indian diplomats abroad, including attacks on Indian missions and arson attempts, indicate a significant rise in overseas separatist activity. The rallies planned for July 8 pose a security risk to the Indian diplomatic missions. They also test the resolve of the foreign governments to investigate groups threatening violence and their commitment to international security conventions.

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How should the affected countries respond to these threats?

Countries hosting these rallies must ensure adequate protection to Indian diplomatic interests as obligated under international conventions. They should also investigate any group threatening violence and sharing intelligence on any organizations supporting them. The use of “freedom of speech” should not be a cover for failing to prevent criminal acts.

How should India alter its diplomacy regarding this issue?

India must reconsider its public diplomacy in relation to this issue. The repeated calling out of foreign governments, freezing diplomatic contact, or downgrading security for the British High Commission may not be diplomatically effective. Instead of voicing protests, India should leave law enforcement issues to the sovereign governments of those countries.

What is the ideal way for countries to deal with the growing violence from such groups?

Given the escalating threats, it is crucial that there is cooperation between the governments rather than brinkmanship. This cooperation should include sharing information and intelligence, and discussing solutions to address the growing violence by such groups.

34. Standing up for National Anthem: What the Supreme Court has ruled

Source: The post is based on the article “**Standing up for National Anthem: What the Supreme Court has ruled**” published in **The Indian Express** on **8th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Structure, Organization & Functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

Relevance: About the SC rulings on singing National Anthem

News: An executive magistrate in Srinagar has sent 11 men to jail after they were detained for allegedly not rising for the National Anthem at an event on June 25 where J&K Lt Governor Manoj Sinha was present.

What are the Supreme Court rulings related to singing the National Anthem?

Bijoe Emmanuel Case: The law around alleged disrespect to the National Anthem was laid down by the Supreme Court in its 1986 judgment in **Bijoe Emmanuel & Ors vs State Of Kerala & Ors**.

The case involved the three children from the religious group Jehovah’s Witnesses who refused to participate in singing the National Anthem at their school. For this, they were expelled by the school.

However, when the case reached SC, **it held that forcing them to sing the Anthem violated their fundamental right to religion under Article 25 of the Constitution and the court also provided legal protection to them.**

The Supreme Court further stated that Article 25 was incorporated in recognition of the principle that the ultimate measure of a true democracy, lies in the ability that even an insignificant minority finds its identity under the Indian Constitution.

SC also held that standing up respectfully for the National Anthem but not singing does not constitute an offence **under the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971.**

Shyam Narayan Chouksey Case: The matter involving singing the national anthem again came up to SC in **Shyam Narayan Chouksey vs Union of India (2018)**.

The court initially passed an interim order in 2016 that “all the cinema halls in India shall play the National Anthem before the feature film starts and all present in the hall are obliged to stand up to show respect to the National Anthem”.

However, in its final judgment in 2018, the court modified its interim order.

The court held that the extent that **playing of the National Anthem prior to the screening of feature films in cinema halls is not mandatory, but optional or directory.**

Must Read: [Why make a show of patriotism: SC judge](#)

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[35. Numbers Game – on data collection methods for surveys](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Numbers Game – on data collection methods for surveys**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **10th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance– Issues related to data collection and statistics by government

News- In the last four months, three members of the PM’s economic advisory council have independently expressed concern about the quality of official statistics.

What are issues with government statistics and data collection?

The primary data generation process is hampered by the lack of adherence to set timelines. The census has been indefinitely postponed, creating a significant gap in the data system. In addition, surveys such as the consumer expenditure survey and the economic census are also experiencing delays.

Users have raised concerns over the **quality of the data** generated.

The National Statistical Commission (NSC), formed in 2006 to spearhead statistical activities and establish standards. It was intended to gain authority through legislation. However, even after seventeen years, the legislation has not been passed.

What is the way forward to strengthen the statistical system of the Indian government?

The NSC membership selection process should involve a committee comprising parliamentarians. It is crucial for shielding the statistical system from allegations of political bias.

A mechanism to ensure **financial autonomy** is necessary. An upgrade to the statistical system must be overseen by a **technically equipped body** that has **statutory powers**. **Reliable data** is an **essential need**.

India has built an **impressive structure** to capture **administrative data** by governments. However, this mode of data collection needs to be complemented by the **official statistical system** generating **primary data through surveys** to fill the gaps.

While India has developed a robust structure for collecting administrative data by the government. However, this data collection method needs to be balanced with the official statistical system’s primary data generation through surveys to cover the existing gaps.

[36. Delhi’s Kyiv Calculations – on India-Ukraine relations](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Delhi’s Kyiv Calculations**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **10th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance: India and Ukraine bilateral relationship

News- India’s MEA secretary (west) Sanjay Verma’s upcoming visit to Kyiv could potentially mark a turning point in Indo-Ukrainian ties.

What are the issues with India and Ukraine bilateral relationship?

Historically, the relations between India and Ukraine are based on the premise that Ukraine is a **satellite of Russia**. There were no efforts to innovate, rethink and revisit.

Whereas, Ukrainians feel that India has not done enough to stop **Russian aggression**. Today, Ukrainians use phrases like “**India does not care**” for India’s response towards Russia’s war against Ukraine.

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There is a lack of **high-level political visits**. Ukraine hosted Indian Presidents in 1993 and 2005. But the only time the PM of India Indira Gandhi visited was in 1982, when Ukraine was a part of the USSR.

What has been India's position on the Ukraine war?

PM Narendra Modi stated publicly in the presence of President Vladimir Putin, **"this is not an era of war"** at the SCO Summit in Samarkand. India also reiterated its support for **territorial integrity, sovereignty and commitment to the UN Charter** by member states.

However, India did not condemn **Russian aggression** openly.

What are potential bilateral relationships between India and Ukraine?

Policymakers in India realise the urgent need to overhaul **India's policy towards Ukraine**. In this context, this visit will rekindle hope.

India was present at a **summit on Ukraine in Copenhagen**. This was the first ever presence of **non-Western states** like India, Saudi Arabia, Brazil and South Africa in such a format.

This summit is an established platform with almost 50 countries, based on the **10-point Peace Plan** of the Ukrainian President.

The war has brought out the **post-colonial identity** of modern Ukraine. It shows the similarity with the nations in the **southern hemisphere**.

Ukraine is no longer a problem of Europe alone. So, India's involvement is important to protect its **national interest** as a **global player**.

What are the challenges in Indian foreign policy approach towards Russia?

It is difficult to reshape India-Russia relations and remove the **legacy of the Soviet era**.

Russian strategists fully understand **India's strategic necessity** to be closer to the US and the West, but it also expects that India holds no open objection to its **closeness to China**.

Countries of the Global South are becoming aware that **Russia's policies towards countries of the former Soviet Union** are based on **hegemony and sphere of influence**. **Russia is ignoring agency and representation of these countries**.

After more than 30 years of sovereign Ukraine's existence, Russia is apprehensive of **India's independent policies** towards it.

What is the way forward for India and Ukraine bilateral relationship?

There is a need to widen **people-to-people contacts and academic exchanges**.

The **war against Ukraine** is an opportunity for India to get rid of its **post-Soviet inertia and start afresh**. India is expected to understand Ukraine from this standpoint.

[37. Restoring the World Trade Organization's crown jewel](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"Restoring the World Trade Organization's crown jewel"** published in **The Hindu** on **10th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 2 – Important International Institutions**

Relevance: **concerns associated with** WTO's dispute settlement system (DSS)

News: In June 2022, at the Geneva ministerial conference, the member-countries of the World Trade Organization (WTO) reached a crucial agreement.

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Recently, an agreement was reached for revival of the WTO's dispute settlement system (DSS) by 2024, also known as the "crown jewel" of the organization. **DSS has been paralyzed due to the non-functioning of its appellate body** since 2019.

What is the Dispute Settlement System of the WTO?

[Click Here to Read](#)

What are the reasons behind the non-functioning of the appellate body of the DSS?

The United States has blocked the appointment of appellate body members, making it inactive. It has criticized the appellate body of the WTO for exceeding its institutional mandate and engaging in judicial overreach.

One of the main concerns raised by the U.S. is that the appellate body has been creating binding precedents through its decisions, which goes against the WTO's dispute settlement understanding (DSU).

It is well-established that **there is no rule of stare decisis, i.e., no rule of precedent in international law. It is system followed by Courts under which Courts** refer to the previous, similar legal issues to guide their decisions.

Further, **the WTO's DSU also makes this clear in Article 3.2 by stating that** the appellate body rulings can neither add nor diminish the rights and obligations of WTO member-countries.

Therefore, the appellate body needs to ensure consistency in the interpretation and application of WTO agreements **without establishing binding precedents**.

However, **the appellate body has encouraged WTO panels to consider previous interpretations, only in similar cases**, while it has also departed from previous rulings which have cogent reasons.

Moreover, **other appellate bodies, such as** the International Court of Justice and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea also follow past decisions.

Why are other strategic reasons behind the United States blocking the appointment of DSS's appellate body members?

The United States appears to have a larger strategy of de-judicializing trade multilateralism.

With the creation of the WTO, governments around the world accepted certain norms of international law to evaluate their actions and gave this authority to international courts, which resulted in the legalization of international relations.

It also led to judicialization of international relations, with the expansion of international courts and tribunals that dominated national decision-making.

This judicialization has raised concerns about the erosion of national sovereignty as countries delegate critical decision-making powers to international courts.

Therefore, the United States, **facing the economic challenges posed by China, aims to regain full control over its trade policies by doing away** with the judicial review of the WTO appellate body.

Note: According to Daniel Abebe and Tom Ginsburg, De-judicialization is the reverse phenomenon where countries weaken international courts to take back decision-making power.

Must Read: [Dispute Settlement System of the WTO: Challenges and Solutions – Explained](#)

What can be the way ahead?

It seems useless to try to restore the WTO's appellate body through negotiations with the United States. **Instead, other countries should try to elect the appellate body members by**

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resorting to voting at the WTO's General Council meeting.

38. What Data Protection Bill needs to do to actually protect

Source: The post is based on the article “**What Data Protection Bill needs to do to actually protect**” published in “**Indian Express**” on 10th July 2023.

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

News: India's government is considering reintroducing the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill during the upcoming Parliament Monsoon session. The aim of this potential move is to better protect online users, referred to as 'digital nagriks' or digital citizens.

What is data portability?

Data portability is a provision that allows users to move their personal data from one digital platform to another. It's designed to give individuals more control over their online data. For instance, a small business using a large e-commerce platform can take its user data and transfer it to another platform. This means that if the business is unhappy with the practices of the current platform, it can switch to a competitor without losing all the data it generated on the original platform. This empowers users and provides them with more control over their own data.

What is data interoperability?

Data interoperability refers to the ability of different digital platforms to work together and exchange information seamlessly. It would allow users who switch platforms to not only take their data with them, but also continue interacting with users from the original platform. This enhances the users' flexibility and freedom, and also encourages cross-platform communication and interaction.

For instance, if data interoperability were implemented, a Twitter user could choose to leave Twitter for a rival platform, taking all her personal data with her. In addition, due to data interoperability, she would still be able to communicate with her contacts on Twitter, despite having switched platforms.

Should the Government Include Data Portability and Interoperability Provisions?

Given the benefits of data portability and interoperability, the government should include these provisions in the revised Digital Personal Data Protection Bill.

Such a move can significantly enhance user control over personal data and potentially stimulate India's start-up ecosystem by fostering healthy competition. It's a crucial step to transform and democratize digital experiences, making it more beneficial and empowering for users, while also encouraging innovative and responsible practices in data management by tech platforms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, incorporating data portability and interoperability into the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill could enhance user control, stimulate India's start-up ecosystem, and revolutionize internet interaction, offering a critical step forward in our increasingly digital world.

39. Blurred lines – on US's delivery of cluster munitions to Ukraine

Source: The post is based on the article “Blurred lines” published in “The Hindu ” on 10th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations (IR)

News: The Biden administration recently decided to send cluster munitions to Ukraine in the wake of the ongoing Russian invasion. It illustrates both the difficulties faced by Kyiv and its western allies in the protracted war, and the U.S.'s willingness to intensify the conflict.

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About Convention on Cluster Munitions

Convention on Cluster Munitions, an international treaty, which was adopted by more than 100 countries on May 30, 2008, prohibited the manufacture, transfer, and use of cluster munitions. It entered into force on Aug. 1, 2010.

Is the U.S. contradicting its own criticisms of war crimes?

Even though the U.S. has not signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions, it has previously criticized Russia for using such munitions in the conflict, labeling it as war crimes. Yet, the U.S.'s change of stance, as part of its 42nd aid package to Ukraine, underlines the pressures Ukraine is enduring on the battlefield.

What are the factors behind this US's Decision?

Ukraine's dependency on the West for resources like artillery shells and ammunition stands in stark contrast to Russia's undisturbed weapon supply. This discrepancy strains the Western reserves, leaving Ukraine in a disadvantageous position.

Initially, it was assumed that Ukraine's swift victories would pressure Russia's President Vladimir Putin. But, the strong defensive fortifications by the Russians along the front line present formidable obstacles. Ukraine's minor territorial gains in the southeast came at high costs. Also, their aim of cutting off Putin's land bridge in Zaporizhzhia remains unfulfilled.

This challenging reality led to the U.S.'s "difficult decision" of sending cluster munitions. Despite President Biden justifying it as aiding Ukraine's self-defence, the decision to send these potentially civilian-targeting weapons to the battlefield blurs moral lines.

40. The Global South: origins and significance

Source: The post is based on the article "**The Global South: origins and significance**" published in "The Hindu" on 11th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

News: The refusal of several important African, Asian, and Latin American countries to stand with NATO in the Ukraine crisis has pushed the phrase "Global South" to the fore once more.

What does the term 'Global South' Signify and why is it relevant today?

The term "Global South" broadly refers to developing or underdeveloped countries, primarily situated in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These nations often face higher levels of poverty, income inequality, and lower life expectancies in comparison to the wealthier nations of the "Global North," which mostly include North America, Europe, and parts of Oceania.

How did 'Global South' replace the term 'Third World'?

The term 'Global South' was first used in 1969 by political activist Carl Oglesby. However, it only gained significant traction after the 1991 Soviet Union breakup. Before that, 'Third World' was the widely used term for under-industrialized nations, coined by Alfred Sauvy in 1952. After the Soviet Union's fall, the term 'Third World' became less popular, largely due to its negative associations with instability and poverty. The phrase 'Global South' emerged as a more neutral replacement, dissociating from the problematic narratives of 'developed' and 'underdeveloped' nations.

Is the 'Global South' geographically defined?

No, the term 'Global South' isn't geographically constrained. The two largest countries in the Global South, China and India, are located entirely in the Northern Hemisphere. It is more of a geopolitical term denoting political, economic, and historical commonalities. Most of these

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nations experienced colonialism and imperialism, shaping their perspective on global power dynamics, especially in relation to the West.

What's changing in the 'Global South'?

A significant shift in wealth has been noted since the 21st century, with wealth moving from the North Atlantic to Asia Pacific. By 2030, three of the four largest economies (China, India, and Indonesia) are expected to be from the Global South. **The combined GDP of BRICS nations, which are dominated by the Global South, has already surpassed that of the G7 countries.** Additionally, cities like Beijing now boast more billionaires than New York.

Is the 'Global South' gaining more political influence?

Countries from the Global South are increasingly flexing their political muscles. For instance, China is playing an important role in Middle Eastern diplomacy, while Brazil is actively proposing peace plans for the war in Ukraine. This rise in political and economic power is reshaping global dynamics, with experts predicting the arrival of an "Asian Century" and a "post-Western world."

[41. China view on SCO summit: Iran welcome, need to 'save' group from India](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "**China view on SCO summit: Iran welcome, need to 'save' group from India**" published in "**The Indian Express**" on **11th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance- India and US bilateral relationship

News- The membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is growing. Iran is the newest entrant at the just-concluded 23rd leaders' summit in New Delhi.

India's association with the SCO began in 2005 as an Observer country, and it became a full Member State at the Astana Summit in 2017.

What are the viewpoints of the Chinese strategic community about India's membership of SCO?

China's **strategic affairs community** was opposed to the **SCO membership of India**. India's role and presence within the grouping is compared to **Turkey in North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)**.

Foreign policy analysts in China have welcomed **Iran's entry**. It will prevent India from **completely destroying the SCO**.

India is **spreading disharmony** within the SCO. It is openly opposing the **Belt and Road Initiative** and unwilling to support the initiative to set up an **SCO Development Bank**.

India has actually used its **SCO membership** as a "platform" to **challenge and embarrass China**.

Some observers believe that India was accepted as a full member on **Moscow's insistence**. The purpose was to **counterbalance China** for advocating **Pakistan's inclusion** into the organisation.

China agreed to the Russian viewpoint that **unity between Moscow, Beijing, and New Delhi** is necessary for challenging **US-led Western dominance in Asia**, or particularly in Central Asia and Eurasia.

Moscow was wooing India for **purchasing Russian weapons**, and put **pressure on Beijing** to keep it **sandwiched between Moscow and New Delhi**.

China was surprised when New Delhi joined the **Quadrilateral Security Dialogue gathering** in Manila when Doklam was continuing.

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Despite India joining the SCO and **Wuhan and Chennai friendship summits in 2018 and 2019**, the **Doklam standoff** was precursor to the **Galwan border clash**.

Many scholars have called for **expelling India** from the SCO. They point to the success of **Modi's official state visit to the US**.

Some voices in China are demanding for the **SCO "exit mechanism"** and **impose appropriate "constraints"** on member states.

As per scholars, New Delhi has made deliberate efforts by suddenly transforming the first **Indian presidency summit of the SCO** into a **mere two-hour online affair**.

42. [Sujan Chinoy writes: New America-India partnership opens up the potential for a multi-polar Asia](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **"Sujan Chinoy writes: New America-India partnership opens up the potential for a multi-polar Asia"** published in **"The Indian Express"** on **11th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Regional and global groupings

Relevance: SCO

News- The membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) is growing. Iran is the newest entrant at the just-concluded 23rd leaders' summit in New Delhi.

What are the reasons behind the increasing closeness between India and the US?

India's realization of its potential heavily relies on a **closer partnership, particularly in high-tech sectors**, with the United States. The US cannot effectively establish a **multi-polar Asia** without a **strong and resilient relationship** with India.

Prime Minister Modi's visit is expected to influence the evolving **geo-economic and geo-strategic dynamics of the Indo-Pacific region**.

Over fifty years ago, communist China benefited from **advanced US technologies**. However, this dynamic shifted when China began **challenging US dominance**.

Importantly, the two countries **lacked shared values**. In contrast, the close partnership between democratic India and democratic US is more **viable and sustainable** in the long term.

Why have some voices expressed concern over enthusiasm in the US for closer partnership with India?

Despite significant efforts from the United States, India cannot become a **true ally or a significant strategic partner**.

Notion of shared values is **empty, lacking any substantial alignment** in this regard. India's **perceived neutrality** in the Ukraine crisis and allegations of **democratic regression** have become convenient grounds for criticism.

Why do these concerns have no solid basis?

[Text Wrapping Break]**Shared values** are not the **sole determining factor** in shaping US foreign policy. The US has **established treaty alliances and security partnerships** with various authoritarian regimes across the globe.

In Latin America, the US has maintained **strategic ties** with a range of **fascist and military regimes**, including leaders like Fulgencio Batista in Cuba, General Pinochet in Chile.

Similar alliances can be found with **several Gulf monarchies**. US policy towards these countries has been primarily driven by **US interests, rather than shared values**.

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Neither its **political system of China** nor the **Tiananmen Square incident** in 1989 hindered Western democracies from engaging with China. In contrast, India is the world's **most populous democracy** and a **credible representative of the Global South**.

President Biden and the US government have consistently highlighted **India's democratic credentials**.

It was evident from the **joint statement** released during Prime Minister Modi's visit. It underscores **values such as freedom, democracy, human rights, inclusion, pluralism, and equal opportunities** as areas of common ground.

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

[Text Wrapping Break]The convergence between India and the US today is rooted in the evolving **geopolitical landscape** and the emerging threats posed by **authoritarian states**.

Both countries believe that **coercion and bullying** have no place in international relations. Working towards **stability and multi-polarity in Asia and the broader Indo-Pacific region** is a **shared objective**.

India and the US do not need to be formal treaty allies for upholding a **rules-based international order**. Even with some differences on **current global order and reform of multilateral institutions**, a **deeper partnership** is possible.

43. Day-to-day Supreme Court hearings from Aug 2: The issues in challenge to Centre's 2019 Jammu & Kashmir decisions

Source- The post is based on the article "**Day-to-day Supreme Court hearings from Aug 2: The issues in challenge to Centre's 2019 Jammu & Kashmir decisions**" published in the "**The Indian Express**" on 11th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance- Issues related to special status of J&K

News- The Supreme Court on Tuesday has said it will begin [hearing petitions challenging the changes to Article 370](#).

What was the modus operandi used by the central government to change the constitutional status of J&K?

The Centre issued an order amending The **Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 1954**, and superseding it with The **Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019**.

The new order made "all the provisions of the Constitution" applicable to J&K state. The government also amended **Article 367 to add a new Clause (4)**. It makes the Constitution of India **directly applicable** to J&K.

Article 370 provided for application of **only Article 1 and Article 370** to Jammu & Kashmir. Other provisions of the Constitution did not **automatically extend to J&K**.

But clause (1)(d) of Article 370 empowered the President of India to extend them through an executive order with the concurrence of the government of J&K.

The President issued a **declaration under Article 370(3)**. It makes all its clauses **inoperative except**. The provision that all articles of the Constitution shall apply to J&K is still operative.

What are the constitutional issues raised by this move of the central government?

Article 370(3) granted the President the authority to **declare Article 370 null and void** only if recommended by the **Constituent Assembly of Jammu and Kashmir**.

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However, the **Constituent Assembly** no longer existed. So, this power of the President became **defunct**.

Article 370 clarified that the state government referred to the **Maharaja of J&K, who acted upon the advice of the council of ministers**. There was no state government in J&K. So, the President had no means to obtain the consent of the state government.

There was **no constitutional or legal mechanism** available to the Central government to revoke or amend Article 370.

The Central government utilised the **President's powers under Article 370(1)(d)** to modify Article 367, which provides **guidelines for interpreting the Constitution**.

A new clause was introduced into Article 367, replacing the **"Constituent Assembly of the State"** mentioned in Article 370(3) with the **"Legislative Assembly of the State."**

During the **President's direct rule in J&K**, the President assumed all the functions of the J&K government.

President's Rule serves as an **interim arrangement** until an **elected government** is established, and thus, the administration under President's Rule should not make decisions that fundamentally alter the **constitutional structure of the state**.

On what basis, the abolition of Article has been challenged before SC?

The J&K Legislative Assembly did not possess the authority to propose any amendment to the Constitution of India as per **J&K constitution**.

The **Jammu and Kashmir (Reorganisation) Act, 2019** divided J&K into two Union Territories. It is **unprecedented in India's constitutional history**.

It **violates Article 3** of the Indian Constitution. The President must refer such type of Bill to the legislature of that state.

The Parliament cannot **substitute the state legislature**. Under the President's Rule, only the **essential powers** required to handle the day-to-day affairs of the state can be exercised by Parliament.

The constitutional changes are **"colourable legislation"**. This is an attempt to **disguise the true purpose** and are therefore **legally invalid**.

44. [Don't waste the wastewater](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"Don't waste the wastewater"** published in **The Hindu** on **11th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Health

Relevance: significance of wastewater surveillance in improving public health

News: A recently published study in The Lancet Global Health has reiterated the effectiveness of using wastewater for public health surveillance.

What is wastewater surveillance?

Wastewater surveillance is the process of monitoring wastewater for contaminants. It was originally proposed to monitor the spread of poliovirus and played a role in confirming India's victory over poliovirus.

Recently, it was identified as an approach for tracking the spread of SARS-CoV-2.

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What are the advantages of wastewater surveillance for public health?

Wastewater surveillance is effective in detecting known or emerging health threats. It is a cost-effective approach that does not rely on invasive samples from individuals with clinical symptoms.

However, despite the improvements made in public health surveillance system in India, it still faces many implementation challenges.

According to a report by Niti Aayog, the public health surveillance system suffers from uneven coverage and fragmented disease-specific efforts.

How can wastewater surveillance be effectively implemented in India?

Wastewater surveillance in India could involve analysis of samples from varied sources such as wastewater ponds in rural areas and centralised sewage systems in urban localities.

These samples would then undergo testing in laboratories to identify disease-causing agents such as genetic fragments of bacteria or viruses.

The data could be integrated with other health data sources to provide real-time insights into community-level disease patterns, sometimes even earlier than clinical data.

Moreover, the integration of wastewater surveillance into existing surveillance mechanisms has the potential to enhance India's epidemiological capabilities.

How can the integration of wastewater surveillance into existing surveillance mechanisms enhance India's epidemiological capabilities?

Strengthening public health laboratory could strengthen the capacity to detect diseases at an early stage, particularly in areas with limited access to healthcare facilities and diagnostic testing.

Additionally, the [Ayushman Bharat Digital Mission](#), offers an opportunity for the integration of wastewater surveillance. This integration can enable real-time tracking of disease spread and enhance targeted public health responses.

Further, **the success of wastewater surveillance relies on effective data sharing, domestically as well as internationally.**

Domestically, granting health departments at all levels of government access to wastewater surveillance data **can enhance disease monitoring and response capabilities.**

Whereas, **internationally**, sharing this data with global health agencies can **facilitate collaborative efforts in disease tracking and mitigation.**

Must Read: [NITI Aayog releases 'Vision 2035': Public Health Surveillance in India](#)

What efforts have been taken by India in public health and wastewater surveillance?

India has already championed public health surveillance and mobilised resources accordingly. **The integration of wastewater surveillance also aligns well with Niti Aayog's current vision.**

Additionally, **social media surveillance and occupational health surveillance**, are also being recognized as valuable tools in public health surveillance.

What can be the way ahead?

India's leadership in international platforms like the G20 presents an opportunity to highlight the importance of innovative approaches to disease surveillance, and advocate for enhanced public health surveillance that integrates wastewater sampling.

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By actively promoting this agenda, India can call for international commitments and support as well as establish itself as a leader and coordinator in this field.

45. [Citizen action for clean politicians, cleaner politics](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Citizen action for clean politicians, cleaner politics**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **12th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance: Issues faced by Indian political system

News- The article talks about criminalisation of politics and the role of money power in the Indian political landscape.

What are some facts and statistics about criminalisation of politics in India?

1,777 Out of the 4,001 MLAs currently in session have criminal cases, which is 44%. The current Lok Sabha has **43% members with criminal cases**.

28% of MLAs have serious criminal cases today. 47 MLAs have **murder cases**, 181 have **attempted murder cases**, 114 have **crimes against women cases**, and 14 have **rape cases**.

The states/Union Territories with highest number of **MLAs with serious crimes cases** are Delhi (53%), Bihar (59%), Maharashtra (39%), Jharkhand (38%), and Uttar Pradesh (38%).

The **candidate with a criminal record** has a **winning chance** over 15%. In comparison, it was 4.7% for those with a **clean record**.

The number of **candidates with criminal records** has increased only because the party leaders continue to give more tickets to them.

In advanced countries, there is no such system of **distributing tickets**. Candidates are selected in a more **open and democratic process**.

Winning is the means to **recover the money** spent and **accumulate it** for the next election.

ECI has taken very **little action** on this.

What shows the role of money power in politics?

The **average assets** of the MLAs were ₹13,63 crore. **Candidates with criminal cases** have average assets of ₹16,36 crore.

Winning depends on wealth. Candidates in Indian Elections are now spending more than the **United States presidential election**. Candidates are **spending public money** to promise freebies like free water, free electricity, free travel, and free food.

Spending on elections is at an all-time high. Money is being spent on clothes, mobile phones, cooking utensils, liquor, and cash for voters

46. [Message from Madras on POCSO Act](#)

Source: This post has been created based on the article “**Message from Madras**”, published in The Times of India on 12th July, 2023.

Syllabus topic: GS Paper 2 – Government policies for the vulnerable sections of the society

News: Madras High Court recently stated that the cases involving consensual sex between adolescents should be distinguished from actual abuse cases. Therefore, the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act and the Juvenile Justice Act, should be reviewed.

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The court also stated that criminalizing consensual adolescent sex is against the interest of adolescents.

In 2013, India raised the age of consent from 16 to 18. It led to categorization of cases of sex with individuals below 18 as statutory rape.

What are the issues involved with criminalization of consensual sex?

It negatively impacts family relationships. According to data from the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB), “family problems” and “love affairs” are the main causes of suicides among individuals under 18.

Chief Justice of India Chandrachud has recently urged the **Parliament to reconsider the age of consent**. He highlighted the importance of adolescent health care, stating that teenagers should not be overly burdened by the law.

It results into humiliation of both the accused and the survivor during investigations.

In 2022, the Supreme Court banned the two-finger test, with reason that it adds to the trauma of female survivors. However, the practice continues.

[47. What India can gain from Europe — and Europe from India](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “C Raja Mohan writes on PM Modi in Paris: **What India can gain from Europe — and Europe from India**” published in **The Indian Express** on 12th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests

News: India’s PM visit to Paris this week is expected to produce new agreements, especially in defense and space, and raise the bilateral strategic partnership to a higher level.

How might India contribute to European Security?

India’s PM visit to Paris may redefine India’s role in global security affairs, particularly with Europe.

India’s contribution during the World Wars is often forgotten. Nearly one million Indian soldiers served in the First World War and two million in the Second World War, playing a vital role in establishing peace in Europe.

This historical engagement could serve as a precedent for a renewed role in European security.

Why has India’s role in global security diminished?

India’s political alignment with the Soviet Union during the Cold War and its subsequent dependence on Russia for security support hampered its global security politics.

India’s strategic autonomy was constrained due to its fear of losing Russia’s backing on the Kashmir issue in the UN Security Council.

This trend continues as evidenced by India’s silence over Russian aggression in Ukraine and annexation of Crimea.

What are the reasons for India to take a fresh look at European security and prospects for renewing India’s role?

Changing security landscape in Europe: The NATO summit and the ongoing war in Ukraine, coupled with differing stances on resolving the conflict, call for fresh perspectives. As an emerging global power, India can play a vital role as an impartial mediator in European security matters.

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Impact of European security on Asia: The outcomes of the war in Ukraine are expected to have profound consequences for Asian security. “Partnership without limits” unveiled by Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese leader Xi Jinping highlights the increasing engagement of Asian countries in European affairs.

Understanding France’s stance on China: Understanding French’s stance on China, which has generated controversy in Asia, is important for India. France’s attempts to de-risk its economic ties with China and diversify its Asian commercial engagement present opportunities for India.

Modernising India’s defence industry: France can play a vital role in modernising India’s defence industrial base through co-development and co-production of weapons. Strengthening India’s defence capabilities, in turn, can help stabilise the balance of power in Asia, indirectly contributing to European security.

Recalibrating India’s European strategy: The war in Ukraine offers a rare political incentive for India to recalibrate its European strategy, which has been long influenced by Russia. An integrated view of European security can help India emerge as a valuable interlocutor between the West and Russia.

Engagement with European security institutions: The need to engage deeper with European security institutions prompts India’s renewed interest. Working with institutions such as **NATO**, **the EU’s Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO)**, **the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre (INTCEN)**, and the intelligence-sharing forum among the EU’s national spy agencies, **Club de Berne** can help India play a more active role in global security.

[48. India@75, Looking at 100: Preparing for a digital future](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**India@75, Looking at 100: Preparing for a digital future**” published in Indian Express on 12th July 2023.

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

News: Digital transformation in India is facing some foundation related challenges.

India is witnessing a remarkable digital transformation. It represents the world’s second-largest online market, the lowest data rates, and a growing fintech landscape. However, this acceleration has created potential divides, especially in terms of equitable access to technology.

It helped office work and children’s education during the pandemic. However, issues in Aadhaar-based digital social security programs, such as biometric mismatches, have resulted in the denial of benefits to some citizens.

How are infrastructure challenges impacting the ‘Digital Economy’?

The State of India’s Digital Economy Report emphasizes the role of absent analogue foundations that drive the digital economy, including physical and social infrastructure.

Aspects like poor power supply and low literacy levels contribute to an internet usage gap.

To address these challenges, **the Indian government has set goals to provide 4G network coverage to all villages by 2024** and strengthen digital literacy initiatives.

What are the initiatives taken to strengthen India’s ‘Digital Ecosystem’?

The Indian government has launched several initiatives, such as **Sanchar Saathi**, to address the ecosystem’s vulnerabilities highlighted by increasing cybercrimes and financial frauds.

The impact of digital transformations shouldn’t only be measured in the number of new technologies or users but also by how it affects people’s lives.

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Targets on user numbers and network participants should be expanded to include outcomes on financial security, health benefits, and improved living standards.

What principles should policymakers consider?

As India approaches its 100th year of independence and digital ecosystems become integral to economic growth, four principles are suggested for policymakers.

Firstly, the rush to digitise everything should be stopped, because the basic infrastructure is not ready.

Secondly, consultative policy making is needed, with beneficiaries placed at the heart of the process.

Thirdly, policymakers should focus on creating adaptive policies and agile regulatory frameworks. **Lastly**, policy should be data-driven and evidence-based. The lack of consistent data for meaningful analysis and assessment of the digital ecosystem is a hurdle that needs addressing.

How to ensure the success and sustainability of 'Digital Transformation'?

The success of any transformative process rests on transparency, regular monitoring, and impact assessments. These processes must be institutionalised to build accountability for such significant changes, helping to establish trust and long-term sustainability of the digital transformation.

[49. Let's not have regulatory overlaps on data compliance](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Let's not have regulatory overlaps on data compliance**" published in Live Mint on 12th July, 2023.

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

News: According to recent judgement of Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU), in Europe, it's now legally established that if a company violates data protection laws through abuse of market dominance, competition authorities can assess data protection compliance to determine any breach of competition laws.

How is data protection affecting other regulatory frameworks?

As businesses transition to digital platforms, data protection laws are increasingly superimposed on other legislative frameworks. Traditional regulators are engaging with data protection issues, blurring boundaries and forcing businesses to adjust internal processes to meet multiple, sometimes conflicting, regulatory demands.

What is the conflict between data protection and competition regulation?

The conflict between data protection and competition regulation arises in the digital economy where dominant tech companies collect vast amounts of user data. This gives them a competitive advantage, raising questions about fair competition. Concurrently, it blurs the boundaries of traditional regulatory scopes, as competition regulators now have to consider data protection issues in their assessments.

How did European authorities respond to these concerns?

European competition authorities have started investigating Big Tech companies' data advantages for potential anti-competitive implications.

One example was the **German Federal Cartel Office's 2019** investigation into the merged user data of social media platforms, where it found the company violated the EU's data protection law by bundling consent with standard terms and conditions.

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The Court of Justice of the EU (CJEU) upheld this decision, setting a precedent that allows competition authorities to consider GDPR compliance when determining market dominance abuse.

In anticipation of this, European legislators introduced a provision in the **Digital Markets Act** to prevent large “gatekeeper” online companies from combining user data without explicit consent, further emphasizing the interconnected nature of competition regulation and data protection.

What are the compliance challenges for businesses?

For businesses, regulatory compliance can be a burden, demanding clarity on what actions are required and which regulator to satisfy. With overlapping regulations, organizations face the potential of increased compliance responsibilities, especially when the requirements of different regulators diverge.

What lessons can India learn as it develops a new data protection regime?

As India prepares to enact a new data protection law, the case study of Europe suggests the importance of avoiding regulatory overlaps. Clear boundaries between different regulatory mandates can provide clarity for companies on compliance expectations. In instances of unavoidable overlap, a system is needed to reconcile conflicting regulatory demands.

50. Green washing – Changes to conservation laws must be backed by scientific evidence

Source: The post is based on an article “**Green washing – Changes to conservation laws must be backed by scientific evidence**” published in **The Hindu** on **12th July 2023**.

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

Relevance: **concerns with the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023.**

News: The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023 is currently under discussion by a Joint Committee of Parliament.

What is the present legislation governing the industrial exploitation of forest land?

The Forest (Conservation) Act of 1980 empowers the state to regulate and impose costs on industrial exploitation of forest land.

Further, **SC ruling in the T.N. Godavarman Thirumalpad case (1996)** expanded the scope of protection under the Forest (Conservation) Act of 1980 to even non-officially classified forests.

What are the key provisions of the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023?

Read Here: [Objections overruled, Forest Bill goes to House unchanged](#)

What are the issues with the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023?

The amendments do not contribute significantly to regenerating natural forests but rather incentivize afforestation for commercial purposes.

While the concept of grooming private forests may sound appealing in theory, expecting them to serve as a permanent carbon stock is unrealistic, considering the strong market incentives to use them as “carbon credits.”

Read More: [The Forest \(Conservation\) Amendment Bill, 2023 weakens the very purpose of the legislation, which is to protect and conserve India’s forests](#)

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What is the present status of forest cover in India?

As per the biennial reports of the Forest Survey of India, India's forest cover has seen only marginal increases. The growth in forest cover within officially recorded forests remains stagnant or shows only minor increments.

However, it is tree cover in orchards, plantations and village homesteads that has been on the rise and supplementing India's claim that 24% of its area is under forest and tree cover.

India, as part of its international climate commitments, has committed to increasing this number to 33% and adding a carbon sink of 2.5 billion to 3 billion tons of CO₂ this way, by 2030.

What is the way ahead?

Changes to conservation laws may be necessary. However, due to new climate realities, these changes should be supported by robust scientific evidence.

[51. Bibek Debroy writes: Why normative recommendations of finance commissions remain on paper](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Bibek Debroy writes: Why normative recommendations of finance commissions remain on paper**" published in "The Indian Express" on 13th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Function and responsibility of various constitutional bodies & GS-3 - Government budgeting

News: The article talks about the work of India's Finance Commissions, which give advice on how money should be moved between the national and state governments. The article says that this advice often doesn't get followed because it's too complicated or not a priority.

What is the Role of Finance Commissions?

Finance Commissions (FCs) in India are established under Article 280 of the Constitution. They primarily handle three responsibilities:

1. Vertical devolution, which involves transferring funds from the Union to states.
2. Horizontal distribution, which concerns distributing funds between states, based on specific formulas.
3. Grant-in-aid, regulated under Article 275, provided to states in need of assistance.

What Was the Impact of the 13th and 15th Finance Commissions?

The 13th FC was set up in 2007 and made recommendations for the period 2010 to 2015. A focus of the 13th FC was on grants-in-aid, which are significant parts of FC transfers.

Two key areas for grant assistance highlighted by the 13th FC were **justice delivery and the statistical system.**

Despite optimistic expectations, the impact in these areas was disappointing. For instance, the FC hoped to dispose of a large number of pending court cases and enhance the justice delivery system with a funding of Rs 2,500 crore. However, the actual outcome was not as expected.

Similarly, the 15th FC made a number of reform suggestions for both Union and state levels, and performance-based grants. Yet, many of these recommendations, despite being comprehensive, were often ignored.

Why normative recommendations of finance commissions remain on paper?

Lack of compliance: Both the Union and state governments sometimes overlook or ignore the recommendations. They may not agree with them or have other priorities.

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Complex reforms: Some of the suggested reforms can be complicated to implement. They require significant changes in government processes and policies.

Resource constraints: The governments, particularly at the state level, might face resource constraints. This can make it hard for them to put the recommendations into practice.

Policy prioritization: The governments often focus more on resource distribution. The recommended reforms may not align with their policy priorities.

Conditionalities: Some states object to the conditions attached to grants. They believe these restrictions limit their expenditure options.

Insufficient data: There can be a lack of necessary data to implement the recommendations. For instance, the 13th FC pointed out statistical gaps that hindered implementation.

Performance-Based Grants: The 15th FC proposed performance-based grants. However, this requires the establishment of clear and efficient performance metrics, which can be challenging.

What should be done?

For better results, the Finance Commission should make recommendations simpler and more practical. It should also work with governments to understand and overcome their challenges.

Governments should prioritize these recommendations, gather needed resources, adjust grant conditions, and fill data gaps.

[52. Express View on SC order on ED chief: State's strong arm](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Express View on SC order on ED chief: State's strong arm**” published in “The Indian Express” on 13th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Issues associated with the functioning of judiciary – Supreme Court

News: The Supreme Court has made a decision in the case of Sanjay Kumar Mishra. He is the chief of the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The court decided that two extensions to his term were not valid. Mishra must leave his job on July 31. This is four months earlier than planned.

What is the Supreme Court's (SC) view in the Sanjay Kumar Mishra case?

The Supreme Court has shared its opinion on the matter of Enforcement Directorate (ED) chief Sanjay Kumar Mishra's tenure. Here's a simplified breakdown of the Court's perspective:

Separating procedural and political elements: The Supreme Court was cautious in differentiating between the procedural and political aspects in the challenge to Mishra's appointment. It was clear in its stance that while political motivations might be involved, the focus should be on the legal procedures followed or violated.

Unlawful extensions: The Court announced the two tenure extensions received by Mishra as invalid. They instructed him to step down from his position on July 31, much earlier than the end of his original term.

Parliament's authority to modify laws: The Court upheld the power of Parliament to amend laws. It stated that Parliament has the right to modify laws to extend the tenure of positions like the ED and CBI chief.

Warning against arbitrary power use: The Court also emphasized the importance of not using this power arbitrarily. It suggested that, while Parliament has the authority to change the laws, it should not be done randomly or without good reason.

Specific criticism in Mishra's case: The Court expressed disapproval of how this power was used in the specific case of Mishra. It found fault with the government for extending his tenure, despite a previous Court direction against it.

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Rejection of opposition's claims: The Supreme Court declined to consider the Opposition's plea. The Opposition had accused the central government of using the agency for its own political gains, but the Court did not entertain this.

Expectations from the agency: Lastly, the Court placed the onus on the ED to demonstrate its fairness and transparency. It expects the agency to convince its critics about its impartial and honest operations.

53. [Christophe Jaffrelot writes: What the Indo-French relationship needs](#)

Source: The post is based on the article

“Christophe Jaffrelot writes: What the Indo-French relationship needs” published in The Indian Express on 13th July 2023.

“French Connections” published in **“Times of India”** on 13th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

News: This article discusses the strategic and security-focused relationship between India and France. The article highlights their cooperation in balancing China's influence, conducting joint military operations, forging big defence contracts, and their partnership in nuclear energy. The article also emphasises the future possibilities of their collaboration, like the International Solar Alliance and involvement in regional networks and minilateral forums.

What is the significance of India and France relations?

Economic relations: In the fiscal year 2022-23, the bilateral trade between India and France was valued at \$12.56 billion. Despite this figure, there is potential for growth. Both countries are focusing on the India-EU Free Trade Agreement (FTA) to bolster their economic ties.

Role in global politics: In the current shifting global political scenario, both India and France can serve as significant balancers. This highlights the importance of their alliance not just bilaterally, but also for global stability.

Strategic and defence significance: India and France share a strong strategic relationship, with France being India's second-most important ally after the US. They are commemorating 25 years of this alliance. Notably, France opposed sanctions on India following its 1998 nuclear test. In terms of defence, France was India's second-largest supplier from 2018 to 2022, accounting for 29% of India's imports. During PM Modi's visit, purchases of 26 Rafale jets and three Scorpene submarines are expected, which will strengthen India's defence capabilities.

Geopolitical importance: The geopolitical landscape has brought India and France even closer. After being excluded from the Trans-Atlantic alliance's AUKUS pact in 2021, France has expanded its engagement with countries like India. This relationship is particularly significant in the Indo-Pacific region, where both countries oppose China's increasing dominance.

How nuclear and military cooperation between India and France helps in strengthening its relationship?

Nuclear Cooperation: Strengthening Strategic Ties

Providing crucial support: After the US imposed sanctions on India in 1974, France offered crucial support by supplying enriched uranium for the Tarapur nuclear plant. This helped maintain India's nuclear energy capabilities.

Learning from experience: France, having developed its civil nuclear energy sector outside of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), provided valuable guidance for India, which was in a similar situation.

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Against global sanctions: Unlike other countries such as the US and Japan, France did not impose sanctions on India following its nuclear test in 1998. This demonstrated solidarity and mutual understanding.

Military Cooperation: Building Trust and Sharing Resources

Sharing military facilities: In 2018, France and India agreed to share access to each other's military facilities, an agreement that demonstrated a high level of trust and understanding between the two countries.

Joint military exercises: The ongoing "Varuna" joint naval exercises have helped strengthen operational cooperation and trust. These exercises include French and Indian naval units working together, which solidifies their military partnership.

Arms supply diversification: France has significantly contributed to India's efforts to diversify its arms suppliers. The 2016 Rafale deal, where India bought 36 aircraft from France, is a noteworthy example of this cooperation.

What are the Future Possibilities for Indo-French Cooperation?

4. India and France need to continue strengthening their strategic and defense partnership, which includes possible procurement of Rafale jets and Scorpene submarines by India.
2. Both countries could give more impetus to the International Solar Alliance to boost global solar energy use, highlighting their commitment to environmental sustainability.
3. They could create more minilateral groups in the Indo-Pacific region, broadening their cooperative network. To counterbalance the influence of China in the Indo-Pacific region, they should intensify their collaboration.
4. France's participation in the Indian Ocean Commission, Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, and the Indian Ocean Rim Association opens avenues for deeper collaboration with India in regional matters.
5. Reviving and strengthening trilateral forums like the France/India/Australia dialogue could enhance their collective regional influence.
6. New minilateral partnerships, like the one between France, India, and the UAE, could be further developed for broader regional cooperation.
5. Economically, there's a need to boost their bilateral trade, which stood at \$12.56 billion in 2022-23. For this, both nations should expedite efforts to actualize an India-European Union Free Trade Agreement (FTA).

54. Quiet diplomacy could ease South China Sea tensions

Source- The post is based on the article "**Quiet diplomacy could ease South China Sea tensions**" published in "**The Hindu**" on **13th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral and regional groupings

Relevance: India and Philippines relationship

News- The Foreign Ministers of India and the Philippines met at the fifth meeting of the Philippines-India Joint Commission on Bilateral Cooperation, in New Delhi, on June 29.

What were the important outcomes of the meeting?

It was decided to open the resident **defence attaché office** in Manila; and **increased cooperation** between the Coast Guards of the two countries.

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Both agreed for **acquisition of naval assets** by Manila under a **concessional line of credit** from Delhi; expansion of **training and joint exercises on maritime security and disaster responses** and commencing a **maritime dialogue**.

Most notable development was the agreement on **regional and multilateral issues**, particularly on the South China Sea.

While India restated its consistent stance of adhering to **international law, including the United UNCLOS**, it notably called for the respect of the **2016 Arbitral Award on the South China Sea**. This marks a departure from India's previous position.

What was the decision of the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA) in a case related to the South China Sea dispute to address conflicts with China?

The arbitration process considered various aspects, including **maritime rights, the status of specific marine features, historical rights, and the legality of certain Chinese actions** in the South China Sea, which Manila deemed as unlawful.

According to **UNCLOS Article 296**, the tribunal's decision is considered **"final and binding."** The PCA rejected China's claim of **historical rights in the South China Sea** and the unanimous decision favoured the Philippines.

The tribunal also declared that any previous claims to resources within the **"nine-dash line"** were not grounded on a legal basis.

It concluded that China's development and land reclamation activities had significantly altered the reefs, which violated its **commitments under UNCLOS**.

The tribunal further criticised China for causing **irreversible damage to the marine environment** and destroying evidence of the natural condition of features in the South China Sea.

The tribunal found China guilty of violating the **Philippines' sovereign rights in its Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ)** by interfering with fishing and petroleum exploration, constructing artificial islands, and failing to prevent Chinese fishermen from operating in the area.

The tribunal also determined that China had **no legal basis to assert historic rights** to resources within the sea areas falling under the tribunal's jurisdiction.

What is the importance of the South China Sea?

The South China Sea holds significant importance as a **crucial maritime passageway connecting the Pacific and Indian Oceans**. It plays a vital role in **global geopolitics, economy, and strategic interests**.

Maintaining **free and stable maritime routes** is essential for **global trade and the world economy**.

What is the way forward to resolve the South China Sea conflict?

Despite the ruling by the PCA, the actual situation on the ground remains unchanged, making it practically challenging to enforce the decision.

Recognizing that the South China Sea issue necessitates a **political framework**, dialogue becomes the key to resolving it.

Leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) should pursue a **political solution through "quiet diplomacy"** since the prospects of resolving the matter purely through legal means are limited.

The responsibility of establishing a **"political framework"** and making progress towards a legally binding **"code of conduct"** primarily lies with ASEAN's leaders. It is essential for ASEAN

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nations to foster greater understanding and unity among themselves.

55. Is it possible to have partial app bans?

Source– The post is based on the article “**Is it possible to have partial app bans?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **13th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Indian Polity

Relevance: Right to Internet

News- Telecom Regulatory Authority of India (TRAI) has sought inputs on having “selective” app bans instead of internet shutdowns

What is the history of Internet shutdowns in India?

Internet shutdowns are imposed in States and districts across India from time to time to **maintain law and order**.

It has a straining effect on access to education, work, banking, and information. As such, the government has sought to **impose restrictions rather than complete shutdown**.

In **Jammu and Kashmir as well as in Manipur**, authorities have gradually loosened long-term restrictions.

How would the TRAI move work?

The approach suggested by TRAI would require telecom operators and messaging app firms like WhatsApp to **cooperate with each other** and stop access to services during a shutdown.

What are the past efforts towards app regulation?

In 2015 and 2018, the TRAI had **held consultations** on regulating messaging apps.

Telecom operators argued in favour as messaging apps bypass stringent security and surveillance regulations.

However, the Department of Telecommunication (DoT) and the TRAI rejected this argument. Later, **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology** amended the **IT Rules, 2021** to trace the original sender of a forwarded message.

What about regulating or blocking VPNs?

The government has been showing **concerns against Virtual Private Networks (VPNs)** because of its **encrypted nature**.

VPN firms usually **route data** through servers located in another country, and change the IP addresses to **evade detection and blocking**.

Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (**CERT-in**) **published directions in 2022** requiring **VPN firms to retain records** of users from India led to shifting of servers located in India.

However, **Internet rights activists** say that blocking VPNs would be a damaging move for **online privacy specially for journalists, whistle-blowers and activists** as it protects them from surveillance and censorship.

56. Weakening autonomy – on ED’s tenure extension

Source– The post is based on the article “**Weakening autonomy**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **13th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Indian Polity

Relevance: Institutional Autonomy

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News – Supreme Court’s verdict in 2021 to allow **multiple extensions** of service to heads of investigative agencies is a setback.

What is the verdict all about?

The Supreme Court has supported changes made in 2021 that allow heads of investigative agencies to have multiple extensions of their service.

This decision is seen as a **setback to protecting the independence** of these agencies.

However, the court has also cancelled the two one-year extensions given to the **Director of Enforcement, S.K. Mishra**. As a result, Mr. Mishra has been asked to step down on July 31.

The court stated that although Parliament can change the basis for a judgement through legislation, **it cannot nullify a court order**.

Mr. Mishra was appointed for a two-year term in 2018, but in 2020, his appointment was retrospectively changed to a three-year term. Despite being past the retirement age, he received two annual extensions in 2021 and 2022.

The government ignored the court’s earlier suggestion that such extensions should only be granted in **exceptional cases**.

What are the impacts of judgements?

The Court’s endorsement of a tenure extension system will **undermine their independence** and against the rule of law.

The amendments **violate fundamental rights** as the government can instruct the Directors who can pick and choose what cases to investigate based on political instructions.

It also **offends the rights of citizens** to equal treatment and impartial investigation.

The misuse of government agencies against political opponents.

57. An unacceptable verdict in the constitutional sense

Source: The post is based on the article “**An unacceptable verdict in the constitutional sense**” published in “The Hindu” on 14th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues related to functioning of Judiciary – Supreme Court

News: The Allahabad High Court recently declined the plea of an inter-faith couple living together, who sought protection from alleged police harassment. The couple claimed that they were being mistreated by local police due to a complaint made by a family member. The court implied that live-in relationships are a “social problem”.

What is the view of Allahabad High court in Kiran Rawat vs State of UP case?

Perspective on Live-In relationships: The Allahabad High Court viewed live-in relationships as a “social problem”. The court believed that traditional law is biased towards marriage and does not intend to encourage such relationships.

Reference to Supreme Court (SC) verdicts and context: The High Court referred to past SC verdicts on live-in relationships, such as D. Velusamy (2010), Indra Sarma (2013), and Dhanu Lal (2015). However, it argued these verdicts were made in the specific context of their respective cases, not to promote live-in relationships in general.

Interpretation of personal liberty and autonomy: The court’s decision implied that marriage is essential for constitutional protection, seemingly prioritizing social and religious orthodoxy over individual rights. It referenced the Muslim law not recognizing premarital or extramarital sex as an example.

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Section 125 of the Criminal Procedure Code (Cr.PC): The High Court referred to this section, which pertains to maintenance for wives, not “other women”. This reference was seen as irrelevant to the case at hand, focusing on personal marriage laws instead of the main issue of alleged police harassment.

Final verdict: The High Court denied the couple’s plea for protection, a decision criticized for its disregard of constitutional principles and individual rights. **For example**, the court’s focus on the couple’s live-in status over their fundamental right to not be harassed by police was a point of contention.

What were the previous supreme court judgements on “Live-In Relationships”?

The SC of India has previously shown a progressive stance on live-in relationships. In several verdicts, such as **D. Velusamy (2010)**, **Indra Sarma (2013)**, and **Dhanu Lal (2015)**, the top court acknowledged live-in relationships and asserted that they should not be viewed negatively. It emphasized individual autonomy and personal liberty in these relationships.

The court also clarified in **S. Khushboo vs Kanniammal & Anr. (2010)** that there is no statutory offence when adults willingly engage in sexual relations outside of a marital setting, implying acceptance of live-in relationships.

Why is the judgement seen as unconstitutional?

This judgement is seen as unconstitutional for a few reasons.

Firstly, critics argue that the court prioritized societal norms over the constitutional principles of individual autonomy and personal liberty.

Secondly, the court seems to have ignored Supreme Court verdicts that are binding on all courts as per Article 141 of the Constitution.

Lastly, the judgement relied on personal marriage laws that were not relevant to the case, disregarding the couple’s fundamental right not to be harassed by the police. The court’s decision is viewed as undermining the principle of constitutional morality in personal relations.

What are the impacts of this judgment?

The impact of this judgment can potentially be significant.

- It may deter other couples in live-in relationships from seeking legal protection due to fear of social stigma and judicial bias.
- The judgment could also embolden police or societal harassment of such couples.
- Furthermore, it undermines the precedent set by the Supreme Court regarding personal liberty and autonomy.
- Lastly, it challenges the constitutional principle of individual freedom and could potentially influence future cases involving live-in relationships and inter-faith couples.

58. Scientists need the oxygen of free speech

Source: The post is based on the article “**Scientists need the oxygen of free speech**” published in “The Hindu” on 14th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Society, GS 2- Fundamental rights & GS 3- Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

News: Last week, over 500 scientists and academics criticized the Indian Institute of Science for stopping a discussion about the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. In response, the head of the Indian Institute of Science, Education and Research in Mohali issued a warning to two professors who signed the letter.

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Why is open discussion important in scientific institutions?

Importance of open discussion in scientific institutions are:

Expression of constitutional rights: Scientists, like all citizens, have the right to participate in societal discussions. It's vital that research institutions respect this constitutional right, thus encouraging free and open conversations.

Educational role: Scientists often enjoy the privilege of public support for their research. This grants them the opportunity to delve deep into complex subjects. By sharing their insights on public interest matters, they uphold their responsibility to educate society. **For instance,** discussing the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act can provide valuable knowledge about its social and legal implications.

Overlapping science and society: Science and society are interlinked, making open discussions even more crucial. Researchers shouldn't limit themselves to purely scientific matters. Rather, they should discuss how science can impact society and politics. For example, climate change research naturally leads to broader discussions about global politics, inequality, and justice.

Promoting social benefit: By involving themselves in social and political discussions, scientists can help ensure that their research benefits society, rather than promoting private profit. This is in line with India's tradition of scientists, like Meghnad Saha and D.D. Kosambi, who engaged with social issues.

Upholding academic freedom: Censorship of discussions in research institutions threatens academic freedom. To safeguard this freedom, scientists must be allowed to express their views, even if they appear controversial or critical of the government.

Which law was used for censorship in this case, and what is the view of the judiciary on it?

The law used for censorship in this case is the **Central Civil Service (Conduct) Rules**, invoked by administrators like those at IISER Mohali. These rules prohibit criticism of the government.

However, the judiciary has expressed a different view. **In 2015, the Allahabad High Court** ruled that these rules do not apply to a Central University.

Furthermore, **the Tripura High Court stated in 2020** that even if these rules apply, they cannot deprive citizens of their fundamental right to free speech. This signifies the judiciary's support for freedom of expression.

What is the impact of censorship on academic freedom?

Censorship in academic institutions, like the instances at the Indian Institute of Science and the Indian Institute of Science, Education and Research Mohali, restricts open dialogue.

This can severely limit academic freedom. Scientists and academics may become hesitant to discuss important social and political issues, steering critical debate.

What should be done?

- To ensure academic freedom, scientific institutions should resist censorship and encourage open discussions on social and political issues.
- Administrators should avoid preemptive censorship out of fear of government reprisal.
- Scientists, backed by their community, should stand up against any arbitrary use of authority that stifles discussion.
- Upholding the value of free speech will not only protect academic freedom but also foster comprehensive understanding of science's role in society.

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59. G N Devy writes: On Uniform Civil Code, intent matters

Source: The post is based on the article “G N Devy writes: On Uniform Civil Code, intent matters” published in “India Express” on 14th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 1- Society & GS 2 – mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

News: The article raises concerns about the [Universal Civil Code](#) (UCC) in India, particularly its potential to overlook diverse cultural customs and linguistic rights, and its inability to address caste inequalities. It emphasizes the need for the UCC to respect diversity and promote genuine equality.

What is the impact of the UCC on Adivasi?

Impact on adivasi Matrimonial Customs: It could change the Adivasi tradition where men move to their wives’ houses after marriage. This custom, considered by many as fairer than the traditional practice of women moving to their husbands’ houses, may not be recognized under the UCC.

Influence on adivasi women’s rights: Adivasi women enjoy significant rights in their communities. For instance, in some Adivasi tribes, the wife can choose to end the marriage in consultation with the community. These rights might be threatened under a uniform civil code that doesn’t consider such practices.

Effect on adivasi property rights: Some Adivasi communities follow matrilineal inheritance, where property is passed down to daughters rather than sons. This unique tradition may not be accommodated in the UCC.

Adivasi customary laws and the UCC: Adivasi communities have their own laws and customs, which might not align with the principles of a uniform civil code. The question remains whether the UCC will take these unique practices into account or impose a standard set of laws, regardless of community customs.

What are the major issues with UCC?

Clash of traditional customs and UCC: The UCC might not consider unique customs of various communities, like the Adivasis or the Khasis. For example, Adivasi traditions of matrilineal residence or Khasi women being family heads might not be recognized.

Language recognition issues: Out of hundreds of languages in India, only 22 are protected by the government. The UCC may not recognize the right to speak in one’s language as a civil matter.

Handling of caste inequalities: The UCC may not adequately address caste inequalities and discrimination, leaving marginalized groups without proper protection.

Conflict between religious and civil identity: Religious identity plays a significant role in personal decisions like marriage. A UCC may find it difficult to reconcile this with civil law, leading to potential clashes.

Risk of majoritarian imposition: The UCC could be seen as an attempt to impose majority views on diverse communities. For instance, communities with different customs on marriage or inheritance could be seen as less “nationalistic.”

What should be done?

- The Universal Civil Code (UCC) must respect India’s diversity. It should account for unique customs and traditions of various communities.
- The right to speak in one’s language, a civil matter, should be recognized.
- The UCC needs to address and rectify caste inequalities and discrimination. It must carefully navigate the intersection of religious and civil identities, especially concerning personal decisions like marriage.

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- Finally, it's important that the UCC is not perceived as a majoritarian imposition.
- In summary, it must promote equality and respect diversity to avoid the risk of causing civil strife.

60. Why India-France ties are strong, what's the significance of PM Modi's visit

Source– The post is based on the article “**Why India-France ties are strong, what's the significance of PM Modi's visit**” published in the “**The Indian Express**” on **14th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance: India and France bilateral relationship

News- PM Modi is on a visit to France.

Why is the partnership between India and France important for India?

Over the past 25 years, four French Presidents and three Indian Prime Ministers have cultivated this relationship.

The **strategic partnership** between the two countries began immediately after India's nuclear tests. Most Western nations had distanced themselves from New Delhi.

France holds the distinction of being the first country to recognize **India's strategic significance** following the 1998 nuclear tests.

The partnership between India and France is the **most crucial strategic alliance** for India in Europe. It is characterised by a **complete convergence of interests**.

D.B. Venkatesh Varma described India and France as “**mirror images**” in their **shared pursuit of strategic autonomy** amid **global power dynamics**.

There is a **notable alignment** in their strategic outlooks. France consistently supported India at crucial junctures, including during the civil nuclear negotiations with the United States.

What are the areas of cooperation between India and France?

Defence– The defence relationship between India and France is characterised by **trust and dependability**. Unlike defence deals with the United States, French **defence agreements** come with **no conditions or limitations**.

During the Prime Minister's visit, it is expected that agreements will be made regarding the acquisition of **26 Rafale-M fighters** for the Indian Navy. **Co-production of three additional Scorpene class submarines** at Mazagaon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd may be agreed.

France has offered its **Safran engine for the indigenous Tejas Light Combat Aircraft**, with a commitment for **complete technology transfer**.

Climate change– The two countries also collaborate closely on **climate change initiatives**. They signed a Road Map on Green Hydrogen. It aims to **integrate** the French and Indian hydrogen ecosystems to establish a **reliable global supply chain for decarbonized hydrogen**.

In February 2022, Road Map on the **Blue Economy and Ocean Governance** was signed.

Digital technology– There are possibilities for future **cooperation in digital technology**. A potential roadmap could be established for collaboration on **6G, artificial intelligence, and quantum computing**.

An MoU signed recently between **NPCI International Payments Limited and Lyra**, a French payment services provider, may soon enable **UPI and RuPay payments** in Europe.

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What shows the convergence of India and France on regional and global issues?

Both India and France value their **strategic autonomy**. Both pursue **independence in their foreign policies** and seek a **multipolar world**.

As per French President, Europe must not get entangled in America's confrontation with China and preserve its **"strategic autonomy"**.

He warned that Europe's **security dependence on the US** could turn European states into **"vassals"** if the **US-China confrontation** escalated. He also pushed the idea of **Europe as a "third superpower"** with **France in the lead**.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine and its **geopolitical consequences** has brought a new European awareness of the **strategic importance** of India and vice versa.

France has a **better appreciation** than other European states of **New Delhi's position on the war**.

India understands that if there will be a **rapprochement between Europe and Russia**, it will have to be led by France. For this reason, French support will also be critical to a **consensus outcome at the G20 summit**.

France is the only EU state with **territories in the Indo-Pacific**. It could be an important partner for building **maritime domain awareness** and keep an eye on **China's presence in the region**.

61. [Data protection Bill: Hiding behind consent](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **"Data protection Bill: Hiding behind consent"** published in **"The Indian Express"** on **14th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- e-governance. GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance: Issues related to regulation of data

News-. The Union Cabinet recently approved the [draft Data Protection Bill](#).

What are the issues with the draft data protection Bill?

It appears the objective of the bill is to facilitate **data collection and processing** by the government and private entities rather than addressing the **concerns for data protection**.

SC has recognised privacy as a **fundamental right** of citizens. It has emphasised the importance of **informational self-determination and control** for protecting the **privacy and freedom** of individuals. To ensure these protections, the SC established the standards of determination through three criteria: **legality, legitimacy, and proportionality**.

Legality– Legality entails the existence of **appropriate laws**, particularly for significant **government digital applications like digital surveillance**.

However, the current Bill seems contradictory. **Section 5 of the latest draft** implies that the proposed Act would permit any purpose **unless explicitly prohibited by law**.

Legitimacy and proportionality– Legitimacy is related to the **obligation of the state** to convey that **proposed digitalization** involves a **valid interest**. Digital application should meet the **test of proportionality**.

There should be a careful balance between the extent to which **Fundamental Rights** might be affected. But there are currently no **established standards** for either of these tests.

Legitimacy is disregarded. There is a lack of clear standards for **determining proportionality**. The draft bill contains the provisions to make **"reasonable efforts"** and implement **"appropriate technical and organisational measures"**.

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These are insufficient measures for assessing the **intrusive nature of the digital application** and effectively **balances risks**.

Consent provision– Draft Bill seems to have heavy **reliance on consent**. Individuals need to have an accurate understanding of all the **privacy risks** associated with **complex digital applications**.

In pervasive applications, denying consent may **limit options, create hardships, or impede freedom of expression**.

What are the suggestions for improvement in the draft data protection Bill?

Specific guidelines and criteria are necessary for **conducting risk assessments and determining legitimacy**. These standards cannot be developed without **well-defined guidelines and regulations**.

It should acknowledge the **privacy risks associated with digital applications**.

There are not only the risks of **illegal surveillance, profiling, and unauthorised exposure** of private information. There are also **indirect harms** when data elements are linked together to create **distorted digital representations**.

The measures of **post-violation complaints and penalties** are not adequate for protection. Protection from indirect harms needs to be **ex-ante rather than ex-post**.

Data fiduciaries and data controllers need to have standards for **ex-ante privacy protection and purpose limitation**.

Effective data protection necessitates an **accountability-based framework** rather than one **solely based on consent**. This framework places the responsibility on **data controllers and fiduciaries**, regardless of the **level of consent**, rather than **solely on individuals**.

[62. Out of alignment – On India-UK Bilateral Investment Treaty](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “Out of alignment” published in the “The Indian Express” on 14th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements

Relevance – Issues related to foreign investment

News – Negotiations are undergoing on the India-UK bilateral investment treaty.

What is the main point of contention in negotiation?

London has conveyed its unease regarding New Delhi’s insistence on including the “**exhaustion of local remedies clause**” in **dispute resolution mechanisms**.

This clause has played a central role in India’s decision to **unilaterally terminate** 68 out of 87 Bilateral Investment Treaties between 2013 and 2019. It has also been a **fundamental aspect of a model BIT** by the Indian government.

Why is the “exhaustion of local remedies clause” problematic?

1) It is impractical to expect foreign investors to rely solely on **local remedies**. The **Indian judicial system** is known for its slow pace.

Policy interventions by the government further **complicate matters**. For example, the Vodafone case lasted 13 years, partly due to the government **retroactively amending tax laws**. This compelled Vodafone to appeal to the **Permanent Court of Arbitration**.

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2) Courts and regulators have not consistently upheld **contractual obligations**. In the **dispute between Amazon and Future Group**, the **Singapore International Arbitration Centre (SIAC)** initially ruled in favour of Amazon,

A decision later confirmed by a single-judge Bench of the Delhi High Court. However, **on appeal**, a Division Bench of the same court **favoured Future Group**. But the Supreme Court upheld the **SIAC's decision**.

The government claims that **international arbitration** favours investors over governments. But it is incorrect.

Data from the UNCTAD demonstrates that out of 1,104 known cases of international dispute settlement, 274 rulings were in favour of states, while 212 rulings favoured investors.

What should be the India government's approach towards investment treaties?

India should accept **international arbitration for confidence-boosting of investors**.

It should honour **decisions of arbitration courts**. It will avoid the embarrassment caused by **seizing of Indian assets abroad** by corporations to **enforce arbitral awards**, which occurred in the case of Cairn Energy.

India should not **impose this clause** in **investment treaties**.

[63. Problematic – on EU resolution on Manipur violence](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Problematic**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **15th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2-International relations. **GS3- Security**

Relevance: Internal security matters of India and its international implications

News- Recently, the EU parliament has passed a resolution on Manipur violence.

What are issues with the EU parliament resolution?

The EU Parliament resolution has framed the problem in Manipur on **religious grounds**. It is portrayed as a **Hindus versus Christians issue**.

The fight between the **Hindu-majority Meitei community and the Christian denominated Kuki-Zo community** has led to vandalising of churches and temples. It has given way to this understanding.

Why is India 's response to the EU resolution an overreaction?

India wants **greater economic integration**. It promotes itself as the **representative of a nation committed to democratic, liberal and plural values and the rule of law**. It cannot dismiss scrutiny by like-minded nations.

India's dismissal of the EU Parliament's resolution on the violence in Manipur shows **colonial mindset**.

Indian politicians have expressed their concerns over **attacks on Hindu temples in Australia** and **racial prejudice** in the U.S. and **anti-immigrant violence** in Europe.

What are the factors responsible for violence in Manipur?

Violence was the result of **erroneous order** passed by a single judge Bench in the Manipur High Court. It includes Meiteis in the **list of Scheduled Tribes in the State**.

It led to **discontent among the Naga community** which is also predominantly Christian by denomination. But, the **ethnic violence** has been limited to actions by militants belonging to the **Kuki-Zo and the Meitei communities**. It was exacerbated by an **ethnic polarisation**.

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Socio-economic variances in the “hill” and “valley” areas, has led to distrust. There was an inability of the government led by Chief Minister N. Biren Singh to **manage the situation**.

64. [Express View on UNAIDS report: AIDS and inequality](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Express View on UNAIDS report: AIDS and inequality**” published in **The Indian Express** on 17th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

News: In this article, the author discusses the challenges in eradicating AIDS by 2030.

About current AIDS data

- HIV affects 70% of people globally, but treatment suppresses the virus in most cases.
- “Hyper-masculinity” inhibits many men from seeking HIV testing or treatment.
- Women and children often do not receive optimal HIV treatment, with only 67% and 46% achieving viral suppression, respectively.
- United Nations Member States committed to implementing a bold agenda to end the AIDS epidemic by 2030.

What are the major constraints in achieving the target of eliminating AIDS by 2030?

Poverty and marginalization: Poor and marginalized communities often lack access to the necessary healthcare and are subjected to stigma. As a result, HIV patients from these communities continue to suffer and are left behind in the fight against AIDS.

Gender inequality: Gender inequality is another major constraint. Men often avoid getting tested due to societal pressure, also known as “hyper-masculinity”, hindering early diagnosis and treatment. Meanwhile, women, particularly in low-income regions, do not receive optimal HIV treatment. According to UNAIDS, viral suppression is seen in 76% of male patients but only 67% of female patients.

Insufficient funding: Despite increasing overall health budgets, lower and middle-income countries heavily depend on external funds for AIDS related expenses. These funds are insufficient to effectively combat AIDS, especially in parts of West Asia and Africa.

Lack of prevention programs: There’s a significant gap in HIV prevention programs, especially for children and young women. The viral suppression rate amongst children is just 46%. In sub-Saharan Africa, only 40% of districts with high HIV incidence are covered by dedicated prevention programs.

Drug shortages: Countries like India have witnessed patient protests due to shortages in essential drugs. This indicates the urgent need for improved supply chains and local manufacturing capabilities to ensure the continuous availability of AIDS medication.

What should be done?

- Efforts should focus on addressing poverty and gender inequality to improve access to AIDS healthcare.
- Men should be encouraged to get HIV testing, and women’s treatment needs to be optimized.
- Funding for AIDS in lower and middle-income countries needs to be increased. Prevention programs, particularly for children and young women, should be expanded.
- Finally, governments must address drug shortages, possibly by boosting local production of AIDS medications.

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65. First, Make All Polygamy Illegal – on Uniform Civil Code (UCC)

Source: The post is based on the article “**First, Make All Polygamy Illegal**” published in Times of India on 17th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 1- Society & GS 2 – mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

News: In this article, author argues that instead of focusing on a full Uniform Civil Code (UCC) in India, attention should be given to banning polygamy first. They believe dealing with other issues can come after polygamy is made illegal across all communities.

Why Polygamy should be a real target in the UCC debate?

Prevalence in communities: Even though the overall percentage is low, polygamy still exists in various Indian communities. For instance, about 1.9% of Muslims and 1.3% of Hindus practice polygamy.

Legal exceptions: Certain communities, like Scheduled Tribes and Muslims, are allowed to practice polygamy due to exemptions in the law. This discrepancy makes polygamy an important focus in the UCC debate.

Impact on gender justice: Addressing polygamy first can lead to improved gender justice. By banning polygamy, matters of inheritance and women’s rights can be better addressed, as demonstrated by the Hindu Succession Act following the Hindu Marriage Act.

Staged reforms: Tackling polygamy before other UCC issues allows for a systematic and sequential approach to social reform. This strategy proved effective with the Hindu Marriage Act and the Hindu Succession Act.

Minority rights protection: Focusing on banning polygamy prevents its misuse as a shield for other UCC issues. This way, the rights of the affected minorities, albeit small in number, can be better protected.

What are the challenges in implementing a full-fledged UCC?

Potential disruption to traditional practices: Implementing a complete UCC might disturb long-standing cultural practices. Some communities, like certain Scheduled Tribes, follow traditions like matrilineal descent or ultimogeniture, where the youngest sibling inherits property.

Taxation complications: The introduction of a UCC could impact the Hindu Undivided Family as a tax category. This might not be favorable for millions of Hindus who currently enjoy certain tax benefits under this category.

Multiplicity of socio-cultural norms: India is a diverse country with varied socio-cultural norms across communities. Harmonizing these into a UCC is a significant challenge due to resistance to change and the need to respect cultural diversity.

Reluctance in certain communities: There could be resistance from communities that are not ready for certain aspects of the UCC, such as the proposed ban on polygamy. As pointed out, only 1.9% of Muslims and 1.3% of Hindus practice polygamy, but the issue has been contentious in the UCC debate.

Balancing reform and respect for diversity: A full UCC must strike a delicate balance between implementing necessary social reforms and respecting the cultural diversity of India’s numerous communities. This makes the process of establishing a full-fledged UCC quite challenging.

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[66. An enlarged Nato does not enhance its appeal](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**An enlarged Nato does not enhance its appeal**” published in **Live mint** on 17th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests

News: In this article author discusses the geopolitical implications of Ukraine’s potential NATO membership, the tension between NATO and Russia, and the suggested role of India amidst these global political changes.

How will Ukraine’s NATO membership impact other nations?

Effects on Russia: Ukraine’s NATO membership would limit Russia’s power. As Ukraine is Russia’s neighbor, NATO’s presence could be seen as a direct threat by Moscow. This could further strain the already tense relations between Russia and NATO.

Impact on NATO Countries: NATO countries will be obliged to defend Ukraine under the alliance’s mutual defense pact. This might increase tensions as these nations could potentially face a direct confrontation with Russia.

Implications for Finland and Sweden: Finland and Sweden, recently joined NATO due to the Ukrainian conflict. Ukraine’s membership could reinforce their decision, as it would strengthen the NATO’s northern flank against Russia.

Effects on the Baltic states: The Baltic states, already NATO members, would likely feel more secure with Ukraine’s inclusion. This would establish a stronger front against potential Russian aggression.

What are the major concerns related to Ukraine’s NATO membership?

Risk of armed and nuclear conflict: Ukraine’s NATO membership could risk triggering an armed conflict with Russia. Due to NATO’s commitment to defend any member under attack, a dispute involving Ukraine could draw the entire alliance into a major confrontation. Given that Russia is a nuclear power, this situation further raises the stakes by increasing the risk of a nuclear conflict. The potential for such a high-level conflict is a significant concern associated with Ukraine’s possible NATO membership.

Uncertain support for Ukraine: NATO’s refusal to offer a schedule for Ukraine’s membership signals the alliance’s hesitation. This could be due to fear of antagonizing Russia or reluctance to become directly involved in the Ukraine-Russia conflict.

Impact on Non-NATO Countries: Ukraine’s NATO membership could also affect non-NATO countries like Moldova and Georgia. It could increase their aspirations to join NATO, which could exacerbate tensions with Russia.

What should be done by India in this scenario?

India should maintain its policy of strategic autonomy, making decisions that best serve its own national interests.

It should be cautious about aligning too closely with any major power bloc such as NATO. Despite the possibility of joining a ‘NATO+’, India must remember its longstanding principle of non-alignment. This stance has served India well in the past, allowing it to maintain good relations with different countries.

India should also continue its diplomatic engagements with all parties involved, ensuring that it doesn’t compromise its sovereignty or get drawn into conflicts not of its making.

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[67. We can expect more turbulence ahead in Indian diaspora politics](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**We can expect more turbulence ahead in Indian diaspora politics**” published in **Live mint** on 17th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Indian Diaspora

News: This article discusses the increasing complexity of diaspora politics. It suggests that Indian leaders should carefully engage with the diaspora to avoid exacerbating these issues while prioritizing the interests of Indian citizens abroad.

What is the impact of immigrants?

Impact on local societies: Immigrants often maintain deep connections with their home countries' politics. For example, Indians living in the US, UK, Canada, and Australia have engaged in protests related to their homeland's issues. However, this can lead to tension with local societies. **Examples** include communal violence in Leicester and inter-group clashes in Australia.

Effects on diaspora communities: These new immigrants may also upset social dynamics within the diaspora. An example is the tension between recent immigrants and older immigrants or second and third-generation members of the diaspora. The older generations worry about social equations with local societies being disturbed.

Political impact: The influence of immigrants can lead to radical political events. For instance, a 19-year-old Indian American attempted to attack the White House, expressing extreme political beliefs. This showcases the possible political risks related to immigrant populations.

Response from host nations: Host nations have started to respond to diaspora issues. **For instance**, Seattle City Council in the US outlawed caste discrimination after advocacy from diaspora civil society groups. This shows that immigrants can influence policy in their host countries.

What are the challenges created due to immigrants?

Increasing violence and unrest: Recent immigrants, staying engaged with their home countries' politics, can cause incidents of violence and unrest in their host nations. For example, Pro-Khalistan protests in the US, UK, Canada, and Australia led to vandalism, arson, and rioting.

Inter-group conflicts: Inter-group conflicts between different generations or factions within the diaspora can occur. For instance, Hindu and Sikh communities in Australia got into fights due to political disagreements.

Potential for radicalization: There is a risk of political radicalization among immigrants. This was evident when a 19-year-old Indian American attempted an attack on the White House, showcasing the extreme ideologies he held.

Erosion of local societies: There is a concern that the actions of new immigrants may upset the social balance that older immigrants have established with local societies. This was a concern expressed by community leaders in Australia, Singapore, and the US.

Influence on host nations' policies: Immigrants can have significant influence on the policies of their host nations. This was seen when Seattle City Council outlawed caste discrimination, responding to the advocacy of diaspora civil society groups, which could potentially cause tension in local societies.

What should be done?

Avoid conflation: Indian leaders should not conflate Indian origin with loyalty to India or sectarianism. They must respect individual identities of Indian-origin individuals in their adopted countries.

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Careful engagement: Leaders engaging with the diaspora should move cautiously to avoid exacerbating community tensions.

Focus on citizens: The Indian government should prioritize the interests of its citizens abroad over any person with Indian heritage.

Awareness of risks: Leaders and civil society groups must stay alert to the potential risks involved with diaspora politics.

68. What connects India and Bangladesh

Source- The post is based on the article **“What connects India and Bangladesh”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **17th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance: India and Bangladesh bilateral relationship

News- The article discusses the areas of potential cooperation between India and Bangladesh.

What are the areas of potential cooperation between India and Bangladesh?

Political ties- Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Bangladesh in 2021 as a special guest to commemorate the centenary of Bangladesh’s founder Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

During the same year, Ram Nath Kovind, who was the President of India at the time, also visited Bangladesh to celebrate the golden jubilee of Bangladesh’s victory in its War of Independence. In September of the previous year, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh paid a visit to India.

Trade and investment- In the last financial year, there was a significant increase of **100% in Bangladesh exports** to India. It was valued at \$2 billion. India’s exports to Bangladesh have increased by **70 per cent** and are currently **at \$16 billion**.

Both countries are negotiating the **Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA)** to increase trade between the two countries.

Connectivity- Bangladesh currently **imports 1,160 MW of electricity** from India. There are ongoing discussions regarding the possibility of **importing electricity from Nepal and Bhutan through India**.

The distance of 350 miles between Kolkata and Agartala can be covered in approximately six to seven hours by passing through Bangladesh. In the coming months, the **Akhaura-Agartala rail line** will be inaugurated, and **Shahjadpur-Kulaura line** will be completed.

Experts believe that establishing **connectivity between Petropol and Benapol, Gede and Darshana, as well as Birol and Radhikapur**, will serve the interests of both countries.

Water resource management- Significant progress has been made in the field of **water resources management**. It generated hope for the **long-anticipated Teesta water-sharing agreement**.

The two nations have successfully signed a **MoU pertaining to the equitable distribution of the Feni River’s waters**.

They have also reached an agreement to **share technical information and establish a framework for an interim water-sharing arrangement** involving six rivers: Manu, Mahuri, Khowai, Gomti, Dharla, and Dudhkumar.

A MoU between India’s Ministry of Jal Shakti and Bangladesh’s Ministry of Water Resources for allowing the withdrawal of up to 153 cusecs of water by both countries from **River Kushiara during dry seasons** was signed.

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Governments from various political parties are interested in finalising the **Teesta Agreement**.

Security– The government of Bangladesh has taken significant measures to ensure that no actions within its borders pose a threat to **India’s territorial integrity or destabilise the northeastern states**.

One of the prominent leaders of the **United Liberation Front of Assam (ULFA)**, Anup Chetia, was extradited to India.

69. Eye on Emirati flows – There are both risks and benefits in the rupee-dirham settlement system

Source: The post is based on the articles

“Eye on Emirati flows – There are both risks and benefits in the rupee-dirham settlement system” published in **The Hindu** on **18th July 2023** and

“Gently Pushing Rupee – Steady steps promoting rupee-based foreign trade are pragmatic. Internationalization follows economic heft” published in **The Times of India** on **18th July 2023**

Syllabus: GS 2 – Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests

Relevance: About the MoU between India and the UAE

News: Recently, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Central Bank of the UAE agreed to establish a framework for enabling the use of their local currencies for cross-border transactions.

What is the agreement about?

As per the MoU, all current account payments, including those involving the two countries’ exporters and importers, and certain “permitted” capital account transactions could be settled using either the rupee or the dirham.

The two central banks plan to create a Local Currency Settlement System and potentially link their payments messaging systems in the future.

This would lead to the development of a rupee-dirham foreign exchange market that would help in pricing the two currencies independent of their exchange rates with other currencies, such as the dollar and the euro.

This would also eliminate exchange rate risks for Indian and Emirati businesses when quoting prices for goods and services. It will enhance the ease of doing business and boost trade between the two countries.

The establishment of the India-UAE local currency settlement system has the potential to serve as a model for other bilateral currency agreements.

What is the purpose behind such an agreement?

To promote bilateral use of their local currencies and reduce reliance on the U.S. dollar as an intermediary for settling transactions and enhancing economic ties between the two nations.

It is also a step towards [internationalizing the Indian rupee](#). This move aligns with India’s growing economy and its increasing share in global trade.

World Bank estimated that India was the first country set to receive an annual remittance flow of more than \$100 billion. Linkage of India’s digital payments systems to other central banks will provide a further boost to remittance flows.

The RBI has indicated that increased investment by UAE-based firms is one possibility for utilizing rupee payments.

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What are other measures taken by the RBI to promote rupee based international transactions?

[Click Here to Read](#)

What are the challenges associated with the agreement between India and the UAE?

The success of the agreement will depend on the level of adoption by businesses in both countries. After the bilateral [Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement](#), the UAE's trade surplus with India has increased.

As a result, Emirati businesses must identify profitable ways to use potential rupee flows if they choose to accept payments in the Indian currency.

What can be the way ahead?

Despite such possibilities, in a rapidly evolving global environment, businesses will base their decisions on economic logic. Policymakers must also remain aware of the risks arising from such moves even as they eye the opportunities.

Moreover, RBI's gradual approach is pragmatic as it allows retail transactions at a lower transaction cost and encourages rupee settlement for cross-border trades.

However, **enhanced internationalization requires GOI to revisit its** restrictive foreign trade and capital account policies.

[70. Childline has worked for suffering children – government doesn't need to take over](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“Childline has worked for suffering children – government doesn't need to take over”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **18th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population

Relevance: Issues related to children

News- The Centre has decided to take over the child helpline service operated by NGOs since its inception in 1998.

How has the government 's approach towards protection of vulnerable people changed over time?

The prevailing viewpoint was that the **care and protection of the vulnerable** was not primarily a **law-and-order issue**.

However, there was more emphasis on **law enforcement**. It ignored the fact that crime is the result of **dysfunctional society**, and **interaction between the individual and his environment**.

The report of the **All-India Committee (1980-83) on Jail Reforms** had nudged the government to evolve a correctional strategy. It led to the creation of a **Ministry of Welfare**, which was later renamed **Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment**.

The committee recommended a **holistic approach** to protecting against crime and **rehabilitating offenders through institutional and non-institutional services**. Such an approach involved the participation of both the **state and the civil society**.

The **Juvenile Justice Act 1986** superseded the various **state Children's Acts of 1956**.

The **“chota jails” for destitute children** converted into **state-run children's homes** under the new Act. Subsequent amendments allowed NGOs to set up **homes for children** under the close watch of the state.

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Why Centre's decision to take over the child helpline service operated by NGOs is not a step in the right direction?

The **Childline Foundation** was constituted with members drawn from civil society, academia and the corporate world. It was assigned the **toll-free national child helpline number 1098** by Department of Telecommunications

The NGOs working with street children have the **responsibility to operate the helpline**. Surveys indicated that children were reluctant to contact a helpline manned by government employees, especially the police.

Their peers were better positioned to receive these phone calls, comprehend the **seriousness of the issue**, and determine the exact location of the distressed child.

Over a span of 25 years, Childline emerged as the **crucial support system** for vulnerable children. It helps orphans, destitute individuals, runaway youths, and lost children.

When the police encounter an unattended child, they turn to Childline as their **initial point of contact**. Additionally, the district administration relies on **Childline's assistance** in rescuing child labourers and aiding drug addicts.

Concerned citizens can dial 1098 to report children in need of help.

71. A Bill that fences in the right to information

Source– The post is based on the article “**A Bill that fences in the right to information**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **18th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance

Relevance– Issues related to Right to Information Act

News- Union Cabinet has approved the Digital Personal Data Protection Bill. It makes some changes to the Right to Information.

What are some facts about the RTI Act?

The Indian Right to Information Act has been in existence since 2005. It **empowers citizens** and recognises them as **true rulers**.

It was the result of efforts by the **Mazdoor Kisan Shakti Sangathan**.

Its preamble states that democracy requires **informed citizens and transparency in governance** to hold government **accountable and curb corruption**.

It leads to an **efficient government** while preserving the **ideals of democracy**.

Those in power structure are threatened by this **transfer of power** to the ordinary citizen. Citizens have used this **democratic instrument** to expose wrongdoing and corruption.

What is the basis of refusal of information by public authorities in the RTI Act?

Ten categories of information have been exempted from disclosure to protect **some legitimate interests** and working of the government. These are outlined in **Section 8(1)**.

The most widely misused exemption is **Section 8(1)(j)**. It exempts personal information which is not associated with **public activity**, or which harms the **privacy of an individual**.

It has a provision which states the information, which cannot be denied to the Parliament or a State Legislature, shall not be denied to any person.

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How Section 8(1)(j) has been misused by public authorities?

Many officials refuse information by claiming that it was **personal information**, and they would not give it. It has been used to cover **arbitrary, corrupt or illegal acts** of government officials.

Some examples are denial of details of the beneficiaries of the Prime Minister's fund; bogus caste certificates, education certificates: verification of affidavits of elected representatives; unfair assessment of students and job seekers in government; file notings and minutes of meetings.

How will the proposed Data Protection Bill have an impact on the RTI Act?

The proposed Data Protection Bill plans to amend **RTI Act Section 8(1)(j)**. It will exempt **information under 8(1)(j)**, which is related to **personal information**.

If this amendment is made, all information which can be related to a person could be **legally denied**.

Most information could be shown as being **related to a person**. Whenever a PIO wants to deny information, he will be able to **link it to some person**.

The proposed Bill defines the **term 'person' very widely**. It includes individuals, companies, and the state. Most information except budgets would be linked to one of these.

Thus, the RTI would become a **Right to Deny Information**. It will be an **ineffective tool**.

[72. India, France and what keeps their ties ticking](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**India, France and what keeps their ties ticking**" published in **The Hindu** on **19th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 2 – Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests**

Relevance: **India and France relations**

News: The article explains the India and France bilateral relations.

How has India and France's relationship evolved over the years?

India and France have built a tradition of joining each other's national day parades.

French Presidents have been invited to be the chief guests at the Republic Day Parade in Delhi while the Indian PMs have been invited to France's Bastille Day parade.

French President Jacques Chirac was the first French chief guest to be invited at the Republic Day Parade in Delhi. India's first ever Strategic Partnership agreement between India and France was signed between PM I.K. Gujral and the President Chirac.

Further, both countries have held on to **three pillars in the relationship: 1) non-interference** in each other's internal affairs, **2) belief in strategic autonomy and non-alignment**, and **3) a refusal to pull the other into its own coalitions and alliances**.

India was also one of a few invitees to the preparatory committee of "**Paris Conference on International Economic Cooperation**", hosted by France.

Moreover, although French officials joined the P-5 nations in criticizing the Pokhran-II nuclear test in 1998, **France did not join the US-led effort to impose sanctions on India**.

However, when India won its waiver at the Nuclear Suppliers Group in 2008, it was France that India signed its first civil nuclear deal with.

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How has been the relationship between the Indian and France in recent years?

The relationship between the two nations has been build up so strong that **despite the violent protest over the mistreatment of immigrant communities, PM Modi did not hesitate even once in planning his visit.**

Even France did not bring up the European Parliament's criticism of India over the violence in Manipur.

Further, in March 2022, France collaborated with Mexico to co-author a UN Security Council resolution aiming to ensure unrestricted humanitarian aid in the conflict zone of Ukraine.

When the resolution reached the UN General Assembly, India abstained from voting. However, **France did not express any disappointment regarding India's abstention.**

Similarly, **India also did not have differences with France over Macron's visit to China in April this year.** France has also shown interest in traveling to South Africa for the BRICS summit in August.

Must Read: [India-France relations: significance and challenges](#)

What has been the stand of France and India over different strategic coalition groups?

France has publicly expressed its disapproval of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-plus partnership plans. India has also rejected the plans.

India-France Roadmap on the Indo-Pacific released last week further clarifies that neither side is attempting to pull the other into its other regional military coalitions.

France has also shown little enthusiasm for the "Quad-Plus" coalitions proposed in 2020, which lost momentum following the U.S.-France disagreement over the [AUKUS agreement](#).

What lies ahead?

The relationship between the two countries has grown significantly. France is the only country with which the Indian Navy has conducted joint patrols so far.

There are also plans of conduction joint military exercises to boost the relationship of both the nations.

[73. From Great Powers to Asia – India is raising its diplomatic game](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **"From Great Powers to Asia – India is raising its diplomatic game"** published in **"The Indian Express"** on **19th July 2023.**

Syllabus : GS 2- International Relations

Relevance : Indian renewed approach towards the major powers and regional geopolitics

News – The article explains the India approach towards its Asian neighbourhood in context of its relationship with major powers.

What is the current Indian approach on regional geopolitics in the context of its relationship with major powers?

There was emphasis on India's neighborhood during Modi's visit to Washington and Paris. In France, Modi and Macron issued a declaration on the **Indo-Pacific Roadmap for wide-ranging cooperation.**

First time, India agreed to work together with a former **European colonial power in the Indian Ocean.** India discarded the main principle of Indian foreign policy that **colonial and "extra-regional" powers** should be kept out of the Indian Ocean.

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Modi and Macron have expanded the **Indian Ocean regional framework** to include the Pacific. The **Indo-Pacific Roadmap** issued by the two leaders declared that Delhi and Paris will “continue to work together to extend development cooperation to countries in the region, including in Africa, the Indian Ocean Region, South Asia, Southeast Asia and the Pacific”.

Both leaders agreed for more cooperation with regional partners in **bilateral, plurilateral and multilateral arrangements** like the **Indian Ocean Rim Association, the Indian Ocean Naval Symposium, the Indian Ocean Commission**.

Ino-pacific plays a very important role in **India’s strategic partnership** with Washington today. The joint statement issued by Modi and US President Joe Biden last month talks about **strategic cooperation in the Indo-Pacific through the Quad**.

Modi and Biden agreed for closer cooperation with **regional platforms** such as the **Indian Ocean Rim Association, Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative, and ASEAN in the Indo-Pacific Region**”.

Both leaders supported the **enhanced consultations** between the two governments on regional issues including South Asia, the Indo-Pacific and East Asia.

What was India’s approach towards its Asian neighbourhood after independence?

India’s relations with its **Asian neighbourhood** since independence were treated as separate from Delhi’s **engagement with the great powers**. There was a thought among policymakers that the major powers should be kept out of the region to create an **“area of peace” in Asia**.

Delhi lacked the authority to prevent major powers from entering the region or to discourage its Asian neighbours from **aligning with external powers**.

But, India did not change its stance. Notions such as **“Asia for Asians” and “Indian Ocean security without the Superpowers”** continued to dominate Indian thinking.

Delhi insisted that the primary requirement for **membership in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)** was the absence of **foreign military bases on national territory**.

Delhi disregarded the fact that most threats to a **nation’s sovereignty** arise from issues with neighbouring countries.

India’s **unrealistic principles of regional security** were further compounded by the **economic radicalism espoused in the NAM and G-77 forums**. It pushed India further away from the realities of the Asian region.

How did India policy change after the Cold War?

There were compulsions in India to **liberalise its economy**.

Its **regional engagement** with different parts of Asia and the Indian Ocean acquired a **higher priority**.

There was renewed focus on **trade, investment and connectivity** in bilateral relations with its neighbours in Asia.

India also deviated from its earlier policy of keeping **political distance from the major powers**. It collaborated with Moscow to promote a **“multipolar world”** through the Russia-India-China (RIC) forum and later via the BRICS.

India also deviated from its earlier policy of **keeping the region and the world separate**. It acquired the membership of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation led by Russia and China to keep the US out of their backyard.

Delhi also joined the **Indo-Pacific framework and the Quad** due to its deteriorating relationship with China

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India joined forces with Israel, the United Arab Emirates, and the United States to establish the **I2U2 forum in the Western context**.

It is evident that India's **strategic partnerships with Western powers** are gaining more prominence compared to its **engagement with Russia and China**.

Delhi now adopts an **integrated approach** to its interests and pursues them through **new and overlapping forums**.

As Foreign Minister Jaishankar conveyed to Southeast Asian leaders in Jakarta recently, the **Quad complements the efforts of the ASEAN and the institutions** led by it.

74. [Express View on weaknesses in statistical system: Plug the data gaps](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“Express View on weaknesses in statistical system: Plug the data gaps”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **19th July 2023**.

Syllabus : GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance: Issues related to statistical exercise by government

News- The government has now expanded the scope of the 2019 committee on economic statistics to also advise on survey methodology, including the sampling frame and sample design.

What are issues with government statistical exercise?

There are issues related to **quality and accuracy** of the data that is collected. There are concerns regarding the **suppression of data, and political interference** in the statistical institutions.

The **NSS surveys on consumption expenditure** have consistently underestimated **household consumption expenditure** in comparison to the estimates derived from **national account statistics**.

The results of the **consumption expenditure survey** conducted for the year 2017-18 have not been made available due to **concerns regarding its quality**. This particular survey is essential for **estimating poverty and inequality levels** in India.

The survey is also utilized in **calculating various indicators** including the consumer price index, which holds significance for monetary policy considerations.

What is the way forward to improve the government statistics?

Questions raised over **survey mechanisms, overestimation of rural population and low response rate** will need to be addressed. As will issues of data quality.

There is a need to address the issues related to **collection and dissemination of data** even if they are politically uncomfortable. The lack of data only compounds the problem.

The need to address **weakness and gaps** in the country's statistical apparatus cannot be denied. But, casting doubt on the **accuracy and reliability** of data if it does not conform to a **specific narrative** is not the right thing. Policy cannot be formulated in a **data vacuum**.

75. [Black Sea Grain Initiative](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“Granny Future”** published in **“The Times of India”** and **“Food insecurity returns”** published in the **“Business Standard”** on **19th July 2023**.

Syllabus : GS2- International relations

Relevance: Issues of global importance

News- Russia has decided to pull out of the Black Sea Grain Initiative.

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What are the reasons for this Russian action?

Russia is a major wheat producer. It has ample **alternative options** for its exports. **Bumper harvest** is expected in Russia over the year, and it wants to take full advantage of any price effects.

There are **geopolitical reasons** also. Moscow says that a **parallel agreement** to help boost its **exports of food and fertilisers** hasn't been implemented.

Istanbul was carefully **balancing its relationship** with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and Russia since the invasion.

However, in recent times, the Turkish President announced **concessions to the West and Ukraine**, and undermined this **balancing act**.

He has changed his earlier position on admission of Sweden into Nato and has no objection over it. Now, he even favours the **Ukraine membership of the security alliance**.

What are some facts about Black Sea Grain Initiative?

The grain deal was partially **brokered and supervised by Turkiye**. It has **control over access to the Black Sea** through the **Bosphorus, a strait**.

As per UN, the deal has lowered **global food prices** by more than 20% since March last year. Nearly 33 million metric tonnes of grains are being exported out of the Black Sea ports.

The World Food Programme has transported more than 7,25,000 tonnes of wheat to countries hit by **wars and extreme weather** with help of the deal. Beneficiaries included **Yemen, Afghanistan, Somalia, Sudan and Kenya**.

What will be the impacts of Russia's refusal to continue the grain deal?

It will affect **food availability**. In the short term. Trade had already been effectively affected by **Russian non-cooperation** in the deal. **Odessa port** was being targeted by Russian drone attacks.

This has **minimal impact on prices** because of good wheat harvest elsewhere, including in Brazil. But in the medium to long term, **food insecurity** will increase globally.

Alternative routes for Ukrainian wheat are difficult to find. East European countries have an **obstructionist attitude** towards wheat imports and transit through the bloc.

It can lead to **tightening food markets** in developing countries. This can create **political unrest and macroeconomic instability**.

Why India needs to be worried?

In India, **domestic factors** are important in deciding the cereal prices. But, India should not be **complacent**.

The **inflation in cereals** is in double digits, with the rate touching 12.7% in June. Indian cereal stock is the lowest level since the outbreak of Covid in 2020.

If the Black Sea deal is undermined, India will have little options for **lowering domestic cereal inflation through imports**, especially in wheat. **Unpredictable monsoon** will also have impacts.

What is the way forward for India?

India should make efforts to address this issue through its **presidency of the G20 grouping**. India should not intensify the problem.

There are concerns globally that New Delhi will block rice export if there is **domestic inflationary pressure**. The **international ramifications** should also be taken into consideration.

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India can **put pressure on Russia** through India's contact with Russia for restoring the world's access to Ukrainian wheat on **humanitarian grounds**.

76. New opportunities and a few old issues as Wickremesinghe comes calling

Source: The post is based on the article "**New opportunities and a few old issues as Wickremesinghe comes calling**" published in "The Indian Express" on 19th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- IR (India and its neighborhood-relations.)

News: This article discusses Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe's upcoming visit to India, highlighting past tensions, current efforts for closer ties, and ongoing concerns regarding the Tamil issue in India-Sri Lanka relations.

What are the past tensions and ongoing concerns in India-Sri Lanka relations?

Past tensions in India-Sri Lanka relations

Commitment issues: During Wickremesinghe's previous tenure as Prime Minister, he failed to move forward with the commitments made to India. For instance, projects like the development of the Trincomalee oil tank farm remained stagnant.

Hambantota port sale: Under Wickremesinghe, the Hambantota port was sold to a state-owned Chinese company that had initially built it to settle Sri Lanka's debts.

Indian intervention in the 1980s: India trained Tamil militant groups in the 1980s, leading to the 1987 India-Sri Lanka Accord. This caused resentment in Sri Lanka when the Indian Peace Keeping Force was deployed in the northern and eastern parts of the island nation.

Ongoing Concerns in India-Sri Lanka Relations

Docking of Yuan Wang 5: Recently, a ship called Yuan Wang 5 docked in Hambantota. While Sri Lanka and China described it as a "scientific research vessel", India viewed it as a "surveillance" ship with strategic capabilities.

Financial assistance & projects: India's financial help to Sri Lanka has led to some Sri Lankans feeling that their country is paying a heavy price for India's assistance.

The Tamil question: The demand for the full implementation of the 13th Amendment, which grants provincial autonomy to the Tamil-dominated Northern Province, remains a contentious issue. The amendment, introduced under the 1987 Accord, hasn't been fully implemented, leading to continued dissatisfaction among Tamils.

How is the Tamil issue influencing the current dynamics between India and Sri Lanka?

1987 Accord obligations: As a signatory to the 1987 Accord, India is seen as a guarantor of the agreement. Tamil groups demand that India ensure Sri Lanka fully implements the 13th Amendment, granting provincial autonomy to the Tamil-majority Northern Province.

Election implications: Some believe emphasizing the 13th amendment before upcoming elections may assist the Rajapaksas by portraying it as a "separatist" amendment.

Fishery disputes: The issue of Tamil Nadu fishers poaching in Sri Lankan waters has caused friction between Tamils on both sides of the Palk Strait, affecting bilateral relations.

What will be the impact of this visit on India Sri Lanka relationship?

Strengthening economic ties: Wickremesinghe's emphasis on "economic integration" hints at possible advancements on agreements like the Economic and Technical Co-operation Agreement. His advocacy for bilateral deals and special trade areas with India's southern states also hints at future collaboration.

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Addressing controversial issues: Past concerns like the Hambantota port sale to a Chinese firm and the docking of the “surveillance” ship Yuan Wang 5 in Sri Lankan waters affected trust. The visit might provide an opportunity to address and clarify these decisions.

Rebuilding political rapport: Given the limited time of Wickremesinghe’s stay and New Delhi’s earlier reservations about him, this visit is significant in rebuilding political trust and understanding.

The Tamil issue: Tamil groups pressuring India over the 13th Amendment showcases the importance of the Tamil issue in bilateral relations. Wickremesinghe’s interactions with Tamil parties before his visit underscores this.

Future commitments: Wickremesinghe has expressed a desire for a long-term relationship “transcending individual leaders or political parties.” This visit will likely lay the groundwork for future engagements and collaborations, especially in economic sectors.

77. A job and career right the disabled cannot be denied

Source- The post is based on the article “**A job and career right the disabled cannot be denied**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **20th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population

Relevance: Issues related to disabled persons

News- The article explains the issue of reservation in promotion for people with disability.

What are the provisions related to reservation for disabled persons?

The right of the disabled person to be employed and promoted in government jobs on equal basis was first recognised by the **Persons With Disabilities Act**. It introduced a **3% reservation for the disabled** in employment.

There was reservation for disabled in **Groups C and D** before the **PwD Act**. Now, the Act extended reservation for the disabled in **Groups A and B**.

What has been the stand of the judiciary on reservation in promotion for disabled persons?

In 1998, the DoPT made an important interpretation, considering reservation for the disabled in promotions as an **essential component of the reservation system**.

But, reservation of the disabled in promotion in Groups A and B was withdrawn in 2005 by another order of DoPT. It shows the apathetic **attitude of the administration** towards the disabled.

SC in its judgement in 2016, granted **reservation in promotion in Groups A and B**. But the Government of India did not make any effort to implement the judgement.

A **case of contempt** was filed in the Supreme Court in 2017. Court challenged the decision in the Indra Sawhney judgement.

As per SC, physical disability as the **basis for providing reservation** to the disabled is **not denied under Article 16(1)**.

DoPT issued another order in 2022. Though the order made important clarifications on the reservation of seats for the disabled in recruitment.

Why does the judiciary need to be proactive in matters of reservation for disabled?

The judiciary has been instrumental in upholding justice for disabled individuals, particularly following the **implementation of the PwD Act in 1995**.

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However, in this instance, the judiciary's actions seem to have aggravated the **government's indifference** towards the **needs and aspirations of the disabled community**.

The refusal to grant reservations in promotions is an obstacle for **disabled individuals' advancement** within their respective organisations.

This hindrance undermines the larger objective of **inclusivity for the disabled** in society. It obstructs their ability to actively contribute to India's development.

78. More than court action, revisit the Indus Waters Treaty

Source– The post is based on the article “**More than court action, revisit the Indus Waters Treaty**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **20th July 2023**.

Syllabus : GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance: India and Pakistan bilateral relationship

News- The article explains the issues related to the Indus Water Treaty between India and Pakistan.

What are the issues faced by IWT?

Over the past ten years, there has been a growing trend of using the judicial route to resolve disputes arising from the construction and design aspects of **run-of-river hydroelectric projects**.

The Indus Waters Treaty permits India to construct these projects on the **tributaries of the Indus, Jhelum, and Chenab rivers** before they enter Pakistan.

In January of this year, Pakistan took the initiative to initiate **arbitration at the Permanent Court of Arbitration** based in The Hague.

The purpose of this arbitration was to address matters concerning the **certain design elements of the Kishanganga and Ratle projects**, which are located on the Chenab river.

Why is there a need for a relook at IWT?

The IWT provides only some element of **predictability and certainty** with regard to the future supplies of water to the riparian states. But, it needs to incorporate mechanisms that allow flexibility in case of changes in the quantity of water available for allocation among the parties.

Bilateral water agreements are vulnerable to climate change. These are concluded under the assumption that **future water availability** will remain the same as today.

IWT does not take into account **future water availability**. Climate change can alter the form, **intensity and timing of precipitation and runoff**. The Assumption regarding the supplies of water for agricultural purposes and industrial needs does not hold true.

What is the way forward to reconcile the differences of India and Pakistan on IWT?

Two cardinal principles of international watercourse law can be helpful. These are **equitable and reasonable utilization (ERU)** and the **principle not to cause significant harm or no harm rule (NHR)**.

ERU requires that the states need to be guided by the factors mentioned in **Article 6 of the Convention on the Law of the Non-navigational Uses of International Watercourses 1997**, including climate change.

The NHR stipulates that any riparian state planning a project on a shared watercourse, which could potentially impact other neighboring riparian states, must take necessary actions to **prevent harm**. This includes conducting a **transboundary environmental impact assessment** as part of the precautionary measures

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In a situation of conflict between different uses of water, it is suggested in **Article 10 of the 1997 Convention to lean on “vital human needs”** in the context of the ERU and the NHR.

‘**Vital human needs**’ principle is debatable but the inclusion of these principles in the IWT will help in resolving the differences.

The World Bank may forge a **transnational alliance of epistemic communities** to build **convergent state policies**. It can lead to inclusion of these two principles in the IWT.

79. Missing numbers – on statistical system

Source– The post is based on the article “**Missing numbers**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **20th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Government policies and interventions

Relevance: issues related to government statistical system

News- The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has formed a new Standing Committee on Statistics (SCoS). It will advise on official data, including the household surveys carried out by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO).

It has a broader mandate to help design surveys for all types of data, identify data gaps that must be plugged, and conduct pilot surveys for new data sets.

Why is there a need for timely conduct of Household Consumer Expenditure Survey?

The **Household Consumer Expenditure Survey** is crucial not only for **monitoring changes in people’s living standards** but also for recalibrating **essential economic indicators** like the **Consumer Price Index and the Gross Domestic Product**.

The latest survey was carried out during 2017-18. But, the government withheld the findings in November 2019, citing concerns about data quality.

What is the way forward to improve the statistical system?

The responsibility for releasing data should rest with the **National Statistical Commission**. Undermining one’s own systems might achieve temporary goals. But, it ultimately undermines the ability to demonstrate **effective governance outcomes**.

The Standing Committee on Statistics can play a proactive role in **rebuilding trust** between India’s respected statistical system and data users. This **trust deficit** has resulted in an absence of official data.

80. President Ranil Wickremesinghe in Delhi: Sri Lanka and India, five things to do

Source: This post is based on the article “**President Ranil Wickremesinghe in Delhi: Sri Lanka and India, five things to do**” published in Indian Express on 20th July.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 – India and its neighborhood

News: Sri Lanka’s President Ranil Wickremesinghe is visiting India to finalize several investments, especially in energy, infrastructure, and tourism.

What are the post crisis developments in India-Sri Lanka Relations?

After Sri Lanka’s sovereign debt default, India’s Neighborhood First policy was evident in its aid to Sri.

India provided \$5 billion in economic aid to Sri Lanka during its crisis in 2022, leading to the IMF’s \$3 billion programme in March 2023.

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Indian government has set an agenda for investing in renewable energy, infrastructure, and tourism in Sri Lanka. Indian companies, including the Adani Group and the Tata Group, are investing in Sri Lanka, according to the government's aim.

What are the opportunities in the India-Sri Lanka relations?

India's most significant concern with Sri Lanka is the **deep presence of China**, whose cumulative investments account for 18 per cent of Sri Lanka's 2021 GDP and 10.8 per cent of the country's foreign debt. Keeping Sri Lanka close will help India keep China at its periphery.

A determined Neighbourhood First policy from India **will uplift South Asia's regional attractiveness**. Strategically, the bilateral engagement could naturally extend to the Indian Ocean, and beyond it, to the Indo-Pacific.

India's aid and investments in Sri Lanka can lead **to increased trade and the building of a robust South Asian supply chain**. South Asian countries have lower hourly wages than China, therefore it can develop export processing zones and industrial clusters supplemented by a good supply chain network.

What more needs to be done?

India and Sri Lanka currently **have a give-take relationship**, with India providing aid. The goal is to make this relationship reciprocal, **turning aid into trade**, similar to the India-Japan bilateral relationship. For example, India is still the largest recipient of Japan's overseas aid, but it is also India's fifth-largest investor, with a cumulative investment of \$38.7 billion.

Currently, Indian **aid is routed via multiple ministries and agencies**. India can consolidate its fragmented aid program through a single development bank. Talks should be accelerated for a comprehensive and high-quality India-Sri Lanka free trade deal focusing on supply chains and foreign investment.

While **India's digital public infrastructure** led by UPI and open-source fintech, is being accepted globally, it has not entered in the south Asian countries. Sri Lanka should try to approach India for adaptation of its digital public infrastructure.

India and Sri Lanka should develop a mechanism **for early warnings and methods for economic crisis**. **For example**, ASEAN countries adopted a mutual monitoring mechanism after the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997.

[81. Sanjay Srivastava writes: Parliament, now, is a gated community](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“Sanjay Srivastava writes: Parliament, now, is a gated community”** published in **“The Times of India”** on **20th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance: Political institutions

News- The article explains the importance of Parliament as a process for strengthening democracy.

Why is it important to imagine Parliament both as space and process?

The **assertion of sovereignty** is not only conveyed through **symbolic displays of governance** but also through the **actual governing processes**.

Using the same parliament architecture, after independence, that once used for oppression of the people was more than just a symbol. It tells a story of **seizing control** from the previous ruling power, who justified their superiority by characterising the locals as incapable of self-rule.

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The physical space of Parliament and the **governing processes** it contains are deeply interconnected. The relationship between Parliament as a building and the processes and the people it represents has not fulfilled the promise of the early post-colonial period.

How Parliament as an institution has not fulfilled its promise?

In the Indian context, the decline of Parliament's influence in the lives of the people is primarily attributed to the **shifting concept of the nation-state**.

After gaining independence, the state had a **clear responsibility: to serve the nation and its people**. It was recognized that the interests and lives of the people were distinct from that of the state.

However, over time, there has been a shift. State itself is increasingly being **equated with the nation**. As a result, there has been a growing tendency to unquestioningly accept, whatever the state says and does. It is also justified as the **best interest of the people**.

The initial **commitment to a democracy** led by the people has been replaced by one controlled by the state. Parliament has undergone a **transformation**. It **resembles a fortress**. It has **distanced itself from society**, placing itself above rather than alongside it.

It has become akin to a **gated community**. The construction of the new Parliament House has only exacerbated this trend. It **portrays governance** as a **grand monument** disconnected from the people.

[82. Seeing forests everywhere: A cure is finally within sight](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Seeing forests everywhere: A cure is finally within sight**" published in **Live Mint** on **21st July 2023**.

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

Relevance: **About** Forest Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023

News: The Forest Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023 will be discussed in the monsoon session of the Parliament.

What are the key provisions of Forest Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023?

Read Here: [Objections overruled, Forest Bill goes to House unchanged](#)

What was the need of Forest Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023?

Delay in Approval Process: The existing Forest Conservation Act requires consent from numerous authorities at the state and national levels before engaging in any non-forest activity in an area designated as 'forest.'

This approval process was very difficult and challenging. It took almost a year even for minor requests like building access paths on the designated forest land.

Judgment Errors: The Union government, with the amendment, aims to rectify judicial errors made in the **Godavarman case** regarding the scope of forest laws in India.

The court in the case expanded the scope of the Forest Conservation Act to all land parcels recorded as forest in any government records. This led to debates and confusions about whether a piece of land was actually a forest or a fragile ecosystem.

The court decision also affected the landowners because land once classified as a forest can hardly be used for any other purpose. This created inconsistencies in land records, affecting various businesses.

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For instance, approximately 30 resorts in Karnataka became a subject of dispute between the state's revenue and forest authorities due to conflicting views on whether the land they were utilizing was classified as forest land or not.

The court judgement also discouraged state governments from reclassifying property that did not meet the criteria for forest status.

For instance, footpaths were classified as 'strip forests,' creating unnecessary hurdles for people who needed access roads to their properties.

The order further weakened property rights by extending the Forest Conservation Act to all land parcels that met the dictionary definition of 'forest,' including privately owned land.

This had implication on constructing buildings even on the land owned by an individual.

Hence, it was essential for Parliament to rectify the situation and for this it has come with the Forest Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023.

What are the concerns with the Forest Conservation (Amendment) Bill, 2023?

Read Here: [Green washing – Changes to conservation laws must be backed by scientific evidence](#) and [Trading forests for trees](#)

What can be the way ahead?

The broad definition of forests serves as a cautionary regarding policymaking falling under the control of the judiciary.

Hence, it is now crucial to rectify this situation, prioritize the well-being of both forests and non-forest land, and restore the proper balance in policymaking.

[83. India's data protection law needs refinement](#)

Source- The post is based on the article **"India's data protection law needs refinement"** published in **"The Hindu"** on **21st July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- e-governance

Relevance: Issue related to data protection

News- The government will table the Draft Data Protection Bill in the current session of the Parliament.

What are issues related to the Draft Data Protection Bill?

Scope and definition- the Bill's **scope and effectiveness** in **protecting the privacy** of Indian citizens remain limited. The DPDP Bill solely focuses on safeguarding **personal data**, which is data that can **directly or indirectly identify** an individual.

However, in the contemporary data economy, entities utilise **various types of data**, including **both personal and non-personal data**, to target, profile, predict, and monitor users.

Non-personal data typically refers to **anonymous data** that does not pertain to any specific individual. Example is **aggregated data** on products viewed by numerous users on Amazon between 9 p.m. and 11 p.m.

When combined with other datasets, this non-personal data can **potentially identify** individuals.

The **re-identification of non-personal data** poses significant **privacy risks** that are not addressed in the latest draft of the DPDP Bill.

The Bill could include a penal provision that imposes **financial penalties** on data-processing entities for **re-identifying non-personal data** as **personal data**.

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Data protection board– The Proposed data protection board cannot initiate a **proceeding of its own accord**.

According to the Bill, the board is the **designated authority** responsible for **enforcing the law**. It can initiate a proceeding for adjudication only if a complaint is filed by an affected party or if directed to do so by the government or a court.

In the data economy, users have **limited control and knowledge** about **data transfers and exchanges**. The constantly **evolving and complex nature of data** processing puts users at a disadvantage compared to the entities utilizing their data.

For instance, a food delivery app could violate sell data to data brokers, and as an individual, user might lack the resources or motivation to approach the data protection board.

However, the board could be better positioned to take action against the food delivery app on behalf of all affected users. The DPDP Bill could have provisions allowing the **data protection board** to initiate complaints on its own.

[84. Is the delimitation question settled?](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**A job and career right the disabled cannot be denied**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **21st July 2023**.

Syllabus : GS2- Polity

Relevance: Issues related to electoral matters

News- The article explains the issue of delimitation.

What are some facts about delimitation?

Delimitation is the process of **redrawing the boundaries** of Lok Sabha and State Assembly constituencies to ensure nearly **equal representation of voters in each seat**.

The most recent delimitation process took place in 1976, and the **existing boundaries** were determined based on the **2001 Census data**. However, the number of Lok Sabha and State Assembly seats remained fixed according to the **1971 Census figures**.

In 2002, a **constitutional amendment** was introduced. It froze the **delimitation exercise** until the first Census **conducted after the year 2026**.

This implies that any revision to the constituency boundaries will not occur until the **new Census data** becomes available after 2026.

Why was it decided to freeze delimitation based on decennial population data, for 25 years after the 1976 delimitation?

The delimitation carried out in 1976 was based on the **population data from 1971**. Subsequently, in 2002, delimitation was conducted, but the issue of **population imbalances** persisted.

As a result, there was a decision to refrain from **further delimitation** until after the **first Census conducted after 2026**.

The reason for this decision was the significant **disparity in population growth rates** between the northern and southern states.

Northern states such as Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, and Bihar were experiencing **decennial growth rates ranging from 12% to 15%**, while the southern states had **growth rates between 6% and 10%**.

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Despite the passage of time between 2011 and 2021, there was no **balancing effect** on the population growth rates. It is anticipated that this balancing process will take place after the Census conducted in 2026.

Why was there no redistribution of Lok Sabha seats across State boundaries in 2002?

The boundaries of Lok Sabha constituencies were redrawn in 2002. Bu, there was no change in the **total number of seats in particular States**.

The number of seats is determined by Parliament, and in cases of **State reorganisation**, it is specified in the States **Reorganisation Act**. For instance, when Uttarakhand was formed, its Assembly was allotted 70 seats.

Parliament has the **flexibility** to adjust this principle to ensure that, in certain cases, a **relatively smaller population** continues to elect a Member of Parliament. For example, in Tripura or Manipur, two seats were allocated.

What is the way forward for the next delimitation exercise to ensure the proper presentation of each region and community?

The **regional differences in population** are clearly indicating a **demographic divergence**. It may lead to violation of the principle of **'one person, one vote, one value.'**

Parliament has the **flexibility** to ensure that the number of seats does not decrease anywhere, and even if there is an overall increase in seats.

The **ratio of parliamentary representation** between northern and southern states may widen.

To address this issue, Parliament must establish a **normative proportionality** based on population, which allows for certain deviations.

There is a need to determine the **appropriate level of proportionality**. In terms of representation, the focus should not be solely on count but also on the **characteristics of representation**.

A **standard proportionality norm** should be negotiated to ensure that **marginalised voices** are not excluded when it comes to the allocation of seats.

Representation should involve a more **comprehensive accommodation of diverse characteristics**, considering **India's diversity** and the **concentration of certain groups in the population**.

[85. A race for the high seas dominion](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"A race for the high seas dominion"** published in **"Business standard"** on 21st July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 1- Distribution of key natural resources across the world & GS 2- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

News: In this article the author discusses the economic, technological, and strategic significance of the high seas, emphasizing the immense potential of marine resources and deep-sea mining. Nations, including China, the US, and India, are racing to explore and control these areas due to their value in trade, research, and strategic dominance. The piece advocates for India to enhance its capabilities and approach in this realm for future benefits.

What is the high sea?

The high seas are parts of oceans beyond national jurisdictions. They represent the global commons, shared by all of humanity.

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Covering an area 1.7 times larger than Earth's inhabited land, they make up 95% of the sea's volume.

The high seas hold immense marine resources, drive a \$2.5 trillion trade, and are rich in minerals like polymetallic nodules.

New species for medicine and biotech research are also found here.

What is the risk to high seas?

Uncontrolled activities: Increased human activity can harm ocean ecology.

Mining: The potential extraction of minerals like polymetallic nodules can damage marine environments.

Overfishing: Dominant nations, like China with its 1,900 vessels, risk depleting fish stocks.

New species threat: Exploration can disturb undiscovered species, impacting potential medical and biotech research.

Environmental concerns: Deep-sea mining, especially without sustainable methods, can harm marine ecosystems.

What are the significances of high seas?

Economic Importance:

Drives a substantial trade: The high seas contribute to a global trade valued at \$2.5 trillion, making up nearly 3% of the world's GDP.

Fishing potential: Major nations like China (with its 1,900 vessels), Taiwan, Japan, and more have significant fishing operations. Valuable species like tuna and sharks are abundant.

Treasure of new species: Besides known marine life, the high seas may harbor undiscovered species that could be vital for medical and biotechnological advancements.

Mineral wealth: They contain vast amounts of essential minerals such as polymetallic nodules, rare earth metals, and others like copper and gold.

Technological Significance:

Deep-sea exploration: Achieving depths has become a technological race. The US reached 10,925 meters in 2012, while China hit just below 10,000 meters in 2020.

Advancements needed: Sustainable mining techniques are required to protect the environment, especially to minimize plumes from mineral dust.

India's capabilities: Currently, India can only send unmanned submersibles but aims to develop technology for deeper manned missions.

Strategic Importance:

Symbol of global dominance: Controlling the high seas indicates international influence.

Security concerns: China's positioning of ships in strategic oceanic locations impacts regional marine security.

Breaking dependencies: The US views deep-sea mining as a chance to reduce dependency on China for critical minerals, given China's control over resources like gallium and germanium.

India's stake: The Indian Ocean's high seas are 19 times India's landmass, making their control strategically vital for the nation.

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What should India do?

Deep-sea Exploration: India aims to send manned submersibles to 6,000 meters but currently only has unmanned capability. This should be improved upon.

Mineral Mining: India's allotted areas in the Indian Ocean, like the 75,000 square km in the Central Indian Ocean Basin, have potential resources like nickel, copper, cobalt, and manganese. India should develop the capability to mine them.

Collaborate: Consider partnering with like-minded nations, such as the QUAD, for shared benefits and knowledge exchange.

Promote Sustainability: Champion technologies that allow for sustainable exploitation of the high seas' resources.

Strategic Presence: Ensure dominance in the Indian Ocean to counteract the influence of nations like China.

86. [Express View on Ayushman Bharat: A health warning](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Express View on Ayushman Bharat: A health warning**" published in **The Indian express** on 21st July 2023.

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

News: The author discusses the achievements and shortcomings of India's Ayushman Bharat healthcare scheme. It highlights a fraud case at Safdarjung Hospital in Delhi where a doctor deceived critically-ill patients, suggesting the need for better patient awareness and a more compassionate approach.

What is Ayushman Bharat healthcare scheme?

Read here: [Ayushman Bharat programme](#)

What are the achievements of India's Ayushman Bharat healthcare scheme?

Impact: Over 5 crore hospitalizations since its inception.

Financial Relief: Decreased out-of-pocket health expenses from 62% in 2015 to 47% in 2020.

Digital Tools: Health ministry employed AI to detect impersonation and false claims.

Benefit Outreach: Provides a solution for financially stressed families and medical migrants.

What are the shortcomings of India's Ayushman Bharat healthcare scheme?

Fraud Cases: A neurosurgeon at Safdarjung Hospital deceived critically-ill patients. Like, families of the ill are misled into choosing costlier treatments over scheme benefits.

Delayed Benefits: Some doctors mislead patients, saying scheme benefits take months.

Lack of Awareness: Patients need better understanding of scheme benefits.

Trust Issues: Some view hospitals as intimidating, especially during financial stress.

What should be done?

Strict Oversight: Address frauds, like the Safdarjung Hospital incident, through robust monitoring.

Transparent Communication: Ensure doctors provide clear information about ailments and treatments.

Digital Aids: Continue using AI and other tools to detect impersonation and false claims.

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Patient-Centric Approach: Make the system more patient-friendly to counteract fear and distrust.

[87. Mediate, Don't Litigate-Mediation Bill is a way to reduce the judicial backlog. Governments shouldn't be exempted from it](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Mediate, Don't Litigate-Mediation Bill is a way to reduce the judicial backlog. Governments shouldn't be exempted from it**” published in “Times of India” on 21st July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – dispute redressal mechanisms and institutions

News: The Mediation Bill was cleared by the Union cabinet this week for introduction in the just-started monsoon session of Parliament.

What is mediation Bill?

Mediation Bill was introduced to address the backlog of over 45 million cases in India's judicial system, where 90% are in district and subordinate courts.

Features of Mediation Bill

Nature: Non-adversarial, consent-based.

Scope: Limited to civil and commercial disputes.

Procedure: Mandatory two-session pre-litigation mediation. If it's unsatisfactory, a disputant can opt out and switch to litigation.

Duration: Maximum 180 days, extendable by another 180 days.

Outcome: Mediation agreement is binding on all involved parties.

What are the major concerns related to Mediation Bill?

Mandatory Mediation: The Mediation Bill requires mandatory mediation before litigation. There's concern this can be misused to purposely delay cases. A suggested fix is to shorten the 180-day mediation deadline.

Government Exclusion: Bill doesn't cover the government, a major litigant, from mandatory mediation.

Alignment Issues: The bill should better synchronize with the Singapore Convention for smoother cross-border dispute resolutions.

[88. India, Australia explore easing whiskey exports, form group](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**India, Australia explore easing whiskey exports, form group**” published in **Live Mint** on **22nd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: **About India Australia** mutual recognition agreement (MRA).

News: Recently, India and Australia have formed a joint working group to consider the possibility of a mutual recognition agreement (MRA).

What is mutual recognition agreement (MRA) about?

The agreement would help Indian whiskey makers to get into the Australian market, which has a significant Indian population and growth opportunity.

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The formation of the group comes after Australia got duty-free access for its high-end wines under the [Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement \(ECTA\)](#), between India and Australia.

Why was MRA needed?

Currently, **Australian rules require the spirit to be matured for two years before it can be labelled whiskey and one year for rum.** However, this rule acts as a disadvantage for Indian liquor exporters as India does not have such rules.

Further, **Indian companies claim that spirits mature faster in India's warmer climate,** and the maturation rule restricts their access to a market with a large Indian population and good growth potential.

Companies also claim that **a two-year maturation in India will cause a 10% loss due to evaporation.** Therefore, due to these differences, a joint working group has been formed to look into the issue and find a way out.

Moreover, the Indian liquor industry is pushing for similar relaxations in the UK, where the minimum maturation period is three years.

What is the way ahead?

India is fast emerging as a producer of high-quality liquor, including single malt whiskies.

Therefore, if maturation rules are eased in the UK, Canada, and Australia, it can create substantial market opportunities for Indian producers due to the significant Indian diaspora in these countries.

[89. Express View on curbs on rice exports: Against the grain](#)

Source- The post is based on the article **“Express View on curbs on rice exports: Against the grain”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **22nd July 2023.**

Syllabus: GS2- Economy

Relevance: Government policies and approach towards trade.

News- The Narendra Modi government has decided to ban all non-basmati white rice shipments. Henceforth, only two categories of rice will be allowed for export.

What can be the implication of this move by the government?

The **world's total rice exports** was 55.6 mt in 2022-23. India's share was **more than 40%.**

India has an important role in the **global rice trade.** It is similar to that of Indonesia and Malaysia in palm oil.

Rice suppliers like Thailand, Vietnam, Pakistan, US and Myanmar cannot fill the vacuum left by India. It will lead to an **increase in world prices.**

What can be the possible reasons for the government's move to ban rice exports?

There are concerns related to **domestic supply.** Current rice crops may be impacted due to the **below-average monsoon rainfall** in significant rice-growing states.

Although certain states such as Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Chhattisgarh have received adequate rainfall in the past week, the impact of **delayed plantings** on yields is yet to be observed.

Another factor contributing to uncertainty is the **El Niño phenomenon.** It can affect the **monsoon's performance** in the second half of the season. This could have repercussions on the growth of kharif rice and the upcoming rabi wheat crop.

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What are two crucial aspects related to this move that should be considered by the government?

Firstly, there is the **issue of credibility**. If India's Agriculture Ministry has reported **record-high production of wheat and rice** in 2022-23, then there is no need to ban the exports of these cereals. This raises doubts about the **reliability of the official output estimates**.

Secondly, the government should be mindful of its reputation as a **dependable global supplier**.

Establishing markets requires significant **time and effort**. It can easily be undermined by hasty decisions.

If the goal is to curb domestic inflation by discouraging exports, a more **appropriate approach** would be to **impose tariffs** or set a **minimum price** below which shipments are not allowed. Implementing **blanket export bans** can cause more harm than good.

90. The right approach – SC observations on bail system

Source– The post is based on the article **“The right approach”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **22nd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Judiciary

Relevance: Issues related to criminal justice system

News- Recently, SC granted regular bail to activist Teesta Setalvad.

What are the observations of SC in this case?

Courts should adopt a **common-sense approach** for granting bail. It should avoid the tendency to keep someone in prison solely based on **strong opposition** from the police.

The Supreme Court of India rejected the Gujarat police's argument that the **alleged seriousness of the offence** justified denying her bail.

The case relies primarily on **documentary evidence**, all of which is already included in the charge sheet. So, the Court has no reason to keep her in **judicial custody**.

What is the importance of the verdict?

The verdict reminded us that an **order of bail must be the norm**. The factors which must be taken into account are- (a) Likelihood of the accused **fleeing justice or being available for trial**. (b) **Influencing witnesses or tampering with evidence**.

Seriousness of the offence is an important aspect. But, it should not be the **sole determining factor**.

91. Express View on Rajasthan's Minimum Income Guarantee: Limits of welfare

Source– The post is based on the article **“Express View on Rajasthan's Minimum Income Guarantee: Limits of welfare”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **22nd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Social empowerment. GS2- Government policies and interventions. GS3- Inclusive growth

Relevance: Government welfarism

News- The Rajasthan government has proposed Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill 2023.

What are the main proposals of the Rajasthan Minimum Guaranteed Income Bill 2023?

The Act provides a rights-based approach towards building a social security net.

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The focus of the Act is on three areas: **(1) The right to minimum guaranteed income. (2) Right to guaranteed employment. (3) Right to guaranteed social security pension.**

A Gig Workers Welfare Act is proposed. **Gig workers welfare and development funds** would be set up under this Act.

The Rajasthan state government plans to implement a scheme. It will ensure a **minimum income and employment** for eligible individuals in both rural and urban areas through various **employment guarantee programs.**

The government aims to offer **125 days of work** in each region. There are special provisions for those who cannot participate in the workforce, such as the specially disabled, widows, and elders. The government intends to **provide a pension** as part of this initiative.

What are issues related to the scheme?

The approach of implementing it through an **urban employment guarantee scheme** is not the most suitable method. It could encounter several challenges.

Unlike the rural areas served by MGNREGA, the demand for work in urban regions is **not seasonal.** It makes the **scheme's design more complex.**

There are concerns regarding the **availability of suitable public works projects** in urban areas. Urban bodies have **capacity limitations** to manage such initiatives effectively.

Moreover, there are **fiscal constraints** in executing this plan. Rajasthan has a **high debt burden.** The state tends to allocate less towards more productive forms of expenditure.

A report by the RBI revealed that in 2022-23, the state announced **freebies equivalent to 8.6 percent of its own tax revenue.**

Way forward-

Greater employment opportunities at the low end of the skill spectrum.

Access to health and education and provide paths for **upward mobility.**

[92. Publisher-platform imbalances need fixing](#)

Source- The post is based on the article **"Publisher-platform imbalances need fixing"** published in **"The Hindu"** on **22nd July 2023.**

Syllabus: GS2- Governance

Relevance: Regulation of digital news media

News- The article explains the disadvantages faced by news publishers on technology platforms and the approach of various countries to regulate the interaction between them.

What are issues faced by news publishers on technology platforms?

Absence of Fair Valuation- **Digital advertising revenues** are the result of a **collaborative effort** between publishers and platforms. Publishers don't get a fair proportion of these revenues that stem from their journalism.

There are concerns related to **reliance of publishers on platforms.** These platforms often operate under **monopolistic or duopolistic conditions.**

This dependence arises due to platforms taking on **various roles in digital news markets.** They act as **intermediaries** in the search for online news content and provide the **necessary infrastructure for publishers** to engage in the online advertising market.

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Enumerative Accountability– Platforms unilaterally define the measures of the **quality and popularity** of online news. They arbitrarily change measures to suit their own priorities.

Further, they refuse to share relevant **data on advertising and viewership** with stakeholders in the news economy.

What are approaches followed by countries across the world to regulate the relationship between digital platforms and publishers?

In 2021, Australia proposed a mechanism to govern the **interaction between publishers and platforms**. But the platforms retaliated.

Facebook blocked its Australian users from accessing thousands of news sites, which included vital sources of **public information**. Ultimately, the Australian government provided some **concessions**.

Last month, **Canada's Online News Act** provided for **fair compensation** for publishers and the **sustainability of local news**. The United Kingdom is planning to **introduce legislation to regulate the relationship** between big tech and news outlets.

Brazil and South Africa are also taking steps in that direction. Indonesia has proposed **Digital Platform Responsibilities for Quality Journalism**. The United States has not taken any action.

What is the importance of these regulations?

The primary objective is to guarantee that news outlets receive a **just portion of digital advertising revenues** and have **access to the data** generated by platforms through the **sale and distribution** of online news.

Without these measures, news publishers may be compelled to accept **unfair and potentially unsustainable terms** set by platforms.

This could lead to a reluctance to invest in producing **high-quality journalism and on-the-ground reporting**. It will result in an increasing presence of **propagators of misinformation and disinformation** in the digital public sphere.

What is the Indian government approach in this regard?

Unfortunately, India has been slow in **thinking and acting** on mitigating these **twin imbalances**.

In December 2021, the Union Minister of State for Electronics and Technology said that the government has no intention to make big tech pay for news.

He has revised his positions and now acknowledges the disadvantages faced by news publishers in their **dealings with platforms**.

In 2021, the **Digital News Publishers Association** had filed a plea against Google in the Competition Commission of India. It accused Google of **unfairly valuing their digital advertising share**.

In February 2022, The **Indian Newspaper Society (INS)** filed a similar plea. It also highlighted Google's search results are not based on the **relevance of news content**. So, it creates an **uneven playing field** among various publishers.

The report issued by the **Standing Committee on Finance in December 2022**, titled '**Anti-Competitive Practices by Big Tech Companies**,' mirrored the concerns raised by the DNPA and the INS.

It emphasised that certain digital markets are **susceptible to domination** by only one or two major players. It made recommendations for **evaluating competitive behaviour** before digital markets become **monopolised**.

93. [Why India-Pakistan needs a nuclear dialogue](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Arun Prakash writes: Why India-Pakistan needs a nuclear dialogue — whatever the political situation**” published in “**The Indian express**” on 24th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- India and its neighborhood-relations.

News: The article discusses the implications of Pakistan’s nuclear policies and comments made by Lt. General Khalid Kidwai. Kidwai speaks about Pakistan’s Full Spectrum Deterrence and its nuclear capabilities, which are aimed at India. The article highlights the potential dangers of this stance and compares it to Cold War-era strategies. It also touches on India’s response and its nuclear policy. The author emphasizes the importance of a nuclear dialogue between India and Pakistan to reduce tensions.

About India-Pakistan nuclear status

India’s Nuclear Status

Conducted “Shakti” nuclear tests in 1998.

Has a “no first use” policy.

India’s 2003 Nuclear Doctrine espoused a “credible minimum deterrent” and promised “massive retaliation” in response to a nuclear first strike.

Pakistan’s Nuclear Status

Celebrated 1998 tests as “Yom-e-Taqbir”.

Developed Full Spectrum Deterrence against India’s Cold Start Doctrine.

It has weapons ranging from “zero meters” to 2,750 km.

Has capability to directly target India’s nuclear arsenal.

Why India-Pakistan needs a nuclear dialogue?

Past Actions: Both nations conducted significant nuclear tests in 1998, increasing tensions. These tests moved the Doomsday Clock closer to midnight, indicating global concern.

New Policies: Pakistan introduced the Full Spectrum Deterrence, specifically against India’s Cold Start Doctrine.

Changing Weaponry: Pakistan’s mention of weapons ranging from “zero meters” hints at development of tactical nuclear weapons, increasing the risk of a nuclear confrontation.

Cold War Resemblance: Pakistan’s nuclear approach mirrors the risky Cold War tactics of “flexible response”, which had potential for rapid escalation.

Counter Claims: Kidwai suggests that Pakistan can respond equally, if not more severely, to India’s “massive retaliation” strategy.

Direct Threats: Kidwai’s assertion that Pakistan can target India’s nuclear arsenal directly adds a dangerous dimension to their rivalry.

India’s Unchanged Stance: Despite regional nuclear advancements, India has maintained its nuclear doctrine, potentially requiring reevaluation.

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Preventing Escalation: Given the ever-changing nuclear dynamics, dialogue can prevent misunderstandings, reduce tensions, and deter potential confrontations.

Transparency and Trust: Engaging in talks can foster mutual trust, leading to transparency about intentions, reducing chances of unwarranted aggression.

Why is there a need to “revise and update” India’s nuclear doctrine?

Pakistan’s Shift: Pakistan’s Full Spectrum Deterrence contrasts with India’s existing doctrine.

Tactical Weapons: Pakistan hints at developing tactical nuclear weapons, challenging India’s stance.

Counter Claims: Pakistan can match India’s “massive retaliation”.

Regional Advancements: Both China and Pakistan have modernized their nuclear arsenals.

Doctrine Stagnation: India’s doctrine has remained unchanged since 2003, potentially outdated.

Updating India’s doctrine ensures alignment with current regional threats and nuclear dynamics.

94. In The Wrong Court – Judges cannot decide sports selections. Sports bodies must develop grievance forums

Source: The post is based on an article “**In The Wrong Court – Judges cannot decide sports selections. Sports bodies must develop grievance forums**” published in **The Times of India** on 24th July 2023.

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

Relevance: concerns associated with sports bodies in India

News: Recently, the Delhi High Court has rejected a petition by two professional wrestlers.

They challenged the exemption granted to Vinesh Phogat and Bajrang Punia from Asian Games by Indian Olympic Association’s (IOA) ad hoc committee.

What did the court observe while rejecting the petition?

First, the court found that the IOA’s ad hoc committee’s decision to grant the exemption was not arbitrary or illegal but reasonable.

It was based on genuine concerns about potential injuries to the medal contenders and due to that insufficient time was provided for recovery before the tournament.

Second, the court noted that dismissing the request did not reflect on the talents and achievements of the petitioner-grapplers, who had also succeeded in wrestling.

Must Read: [Sports sector in India: Issues and challenges – Explained](#)

What are the problems with sports bodies in India?

Sports bodies in India lacks committees to handle conflicts and address complaints by the sportspeople.

The wrestlers’ protest against the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) chief Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh highlighted the inadequacy of Prevention of Sexual Harassment Committee (**POSH**) committees within sports bodies in India.

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POSH committees are not present in even half of India's 30-odd sports bodies.

Due to the absence and ineffectiveness of these committees, **sportspersons often choose to move towards courts**. However, they hardly know the procedure to file the cases and are unaware of the litigation mechanism.

Therefore, **there is a need for sports bodies to develop grievance forums and address the complaint of the sportspeople** as court is not a right forum to address their concerns.

95. [ASEAN, a persistence with dialogue, on a trodden path](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**ASEAN, a persistence with dialogue, on a trodden path**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **25th July 2023**.

Syllabus : GS 2- Regional groupings and agreements

Relevance: ASEAN

News- The 56th Foreign Ministers Meeting of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the post-ministerial conferences and other related regional meetings, held in Jakarta, Indonesia in mid-July, 2023.

What is the vision of ASEAN?

Political community that ensures **regional peace and a just, democratic and harmonious environment**.

Economic community focused on achieving a **well-integrated and connected regional economy** within the **global economic system**.

Socio-cultural community to enhance the quality of life of ASEAN's citizens as well as **sustainable development** of the region.

What are the challenges faced by ASEAN?

China has close **political and economic ties** with ASEAN member states. Laos, Cambodia, and Myanmar are considered as virtual dependencies.

But, the Philippines has recently become **more assertive** in its claims in the **South China Sea**.

Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, and Thailand hold **favourable attitudes** towards Beijing. None of these countries raises objections to China's **delaying tactics** in negotiating an **enforceable code of conduct for the South China Sea**.

The **strained relationship between the U.S. and China** is a cause of worry for ASEAN.

As per China, the U.S. is solely responsible for poor relations. It is not willing to accept and accommodate itself to **China's 'peaceful rise'**. The U.S is against the **Chinese aggressiveness and coercion in the Indo-Pacific and beyond**.

ASEAN prefers the **ASEAN Outlook on the Indo-Pacific (AOIP)**. Its four identified areas are **maritime cooperation, connectivity, UN Sustainable Development Goals 2030 and economic cooperation**. But, its **actual implementation** remains a worry.

ASEAN does not have a **united position on the Myanmar situation**. ASEAN has barred Myanmar from all its **political-level discussions**. But, Thailand has its own **political dialogue** with the military government.

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What shows the importance of ASEAN for India?

The significance of the ASEAN meetings for India becomes evident in the decision of External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar to represent India at the **post-ministerial conference** and other regional dialogues.

He emphasised the importance of a **“strong and unified” ASEAN** in the **emerging Indo-Pacific dynamics** and highlighted the **alignment between the AOIP and India’s Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative**.

He has proposed exploring “newer areas such as **cyber, financial, and maritime security domains** to enhance the **comprehensive strategic partnership** between India and ASEAN.

96. [Achieve road efficiency at minimal privacy risk](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“Achieve road efficiency at minimal privacy risk”** published in the **“mint”** on **25th July 2023**.

Syllabus : GS2- Government policies and interventions. GS3- Infrastructure

Relevance: Issues related to road transport

News – The ministry of road transport and highways is planning to implement a toll collection system that uses satellite GPS tracking.

Why does the government want to introduce a toll collection system that uses satellite GPS tracking?

India adopted **FASTag system**. It eased **traffic bottlenecks** at toll plazas across the Country. But, **toll snarls** still persist on busy routes. It took away the **pricing flexibility** at the booth level.

The users have to pay the same charges for **partial road use**. There is a need for **adjustable road pricing** to meet the market demand.

With a network of **multiple road options**, toll prices that adjust according to varying traffic density can effectively **attract or discourage users**. It can lead to **smoother overall traffic flow**. Ultimately, it will save both time and fuel.

What are issues related to the toll collection system that uses satellite GPS tracking?

There are concerns regarding **cybersecurity vulnerabilities** in the current system. It relies on **special wallets** that require online money refills.

If the new system allows cars to directly access funds from our bank accounts, it would create a **new weakness in our cyber defences** due to a policy decision.

Under the proposed system, our personal location data would be transformed into a **real-time GPS feed** to facilitate toll charges. However, the misuse or **unauthorised disclosure** of this aerial data poses a **significant risk to privacy** of individuals.

Way forward

To ensure the tracking of road users, their **explicit consent** should be obtained upfront as part of the agreement.

Additional safeguards must be implemented. **Strict time limits** should be set on how long individually identifiable data can be retained once its stated purpose has been fulfilled.

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The main objective of the ministry should be to align highway pricing with the **fundamental principles of data protection**. To avoid potential legal challenges in the future, **clarity on privacy measures** is essential.

[97. Is there a rural bias in national surveys](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Is there a rural bias in national surveys?”** published in **The Hindu** on **25th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 2 – Government Policies and Interventions**

Relevance: **concerns associated with national surveys**

News: A panel headed by **Pronab Sen**, a former chief statistician of India, was recently formed by the Indian government to review the National Statistical Organization’s (NSO) methodology.

Why did the government form the panel?

The government has formed a panel after the shortcomings highlighted by Shamika Ravi and Bibek Debroy in their articles.

They argue that outdated survey methodology used by the National Sample Survey (NSS), National Family Health Survey (NFHS), and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) have consistently underestimated India’s progress.

They believe the Indian economy has been dynamic in the last 30 years, and the current methodology fails to capture this reality.

Must Read: [It is unfair to blame survey methodology when results disagree with a view point](#) and [Numbers Game – on data collection methods for surveys](#)

Why is it important to review the methodology used by the National Statistical Organization (NSO)?

National level data are essential for research, policies, and development. Therefore, it is crucial to thoroughly review and assess the assertions made by various specialists regarding the accuracy of this data.

Moreover, in order to analyze the claims, the article tries to focus on NFHS data.

Does the NFHS have a rural bias?

Ms. Ravi and Mr. Debroy have argued that NFHS which depend heavily on the last Census data, **systematically overestimates the rural population**.

However, **an examination of five rounds of NFHS data contradicts this claim**, showing no systematic bias towards the rural population.

When the NFHS estimates of urban population are compared to World Bank estimates and urban percentage projections from Census statistics from 1991, 2001, and 2011, **no indication of systemic rural bias can be found**.

On the other hand, it has been found that NFHS-3 underestimated the rural population, while NFHS-2 and NFHS-5 may have overestimated it. However, **these errors appear to be random rather than systematic**.

How can these errors be minimized?

Urban areas tend to have higher percentages of no-response compared to rural areas. However, this is not related to either rural or urban bias in estimation.

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An analysis of the percentages of the urban sample in the unweighted sample suggests that giving proper weights may assist in significantly addressing the errors.

Hence, **by appropriately assigning sample weights after considering all potential sources of error**, the underrepresentation of rural or urban areas can be significantly rectified.

What can be the way ahead?

The Pronab Sen Committee should prioritize addressing concerns regarding sample representation rather than completely overhauling the survey methodology. Otherwise, there is a risk of introducing a systematic urban bias in policymaking, planning, and financing.

98. On Manipur video, where Women's Commission went wrong

Source: The post is based on the article **“On Manipur video, where Women's Commission went wrong”** published in “The Indian express” on 25th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Statutory, regulatory and various quasi-judicial bodies

News: The author discusses the ineffectiveness of women's commissions in India, especially in addressing women's issues in Manipur. The commissions focus more on paperwork than on fieldwork. Political appointments impact their neutrality. The author suggests reforms like transparent appointments and regular audits. They urge commissions to actively address ground issues.

About women's commissions in India

Women's commissions were set up in India to address women's issues.

The National Commission for Women was established in 1992, as per the National Commission for Women Act 1990.

Each state, like Manipur, has its own commission.

Manipur State Commission for Women was formed in 2006.

They are meant to investigate women's rights violations.

Why is the women's commission of India ineffective in addressing women's issues in Manipur?

Lack of Proactive Action

The national commission received numerous complaints from Manipur.

Instead of addressing them, they merely forwarded complaints to the state. This led to neglect and no action.

Over-Reliance on Paperwork

The commissions focus heavily on paperwork, neglecting fieldwork.

Actual on-ground issues remain unattended, as members prioritize files over field visits.

Political Appointments

Members are nominated by the ruling political party.

This makes them hesitant to criticize the government, affecting their objectivity.

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They might favor states ruled by the opposition, creating bias in their work.

Absence of Real-World Engagement

Commission members often stay in their offices instead of visiting problem areas.

For example, despite numerous complaints from Manipur, there were no extensive field visits to understand the situation.

Recommendations Ignored

Even when they take action, their recommendations might be ignored by state agencies, as seen in Manipur.

What steps should be taken to enhance its effectiveness?

Prioritize Fieldwork

Shift focus from excessive paperwork to direct involvement in problem areas.

As seen in Manipur, numerous complaints demand in-person assessment and not just forwarding issues.

Reform Appointment Process

Move away from political appointments to ensure objectivity.

Advertise roles for chairpersons and members, selecting candidates based on capability, not political affiliations.

Engage External Audits

Conduct regular social audits by competent agencies.

Taxpayers deserve to know if their money is used effectively, and external reviews can provide this insight.

Encourage Real-World Engagement

Commission members should frequently visit areas of concern.

Long-duration stays can help understand the gravity of situations, as in Manipur.

Strengthen Collaboration

Work closely with law enforcement agencies.

Instead of an adversarial approach, support these agencies to address women's issues effectively.

Transparent Reporting

Regularly share the commission's activities and achievements with the public.

Transparency will build trust and keep members accountable to their mandate.

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99. [Welcome happening: Robust institutional mechanisms must be in place for human challenge studies](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Welcome happening: Robust institutional mechanisms must be in place for human challenge studies**” published in “The Hindu” on 26th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education & GS4- compassion towards the weaker-sections.

News: The author discusses the need for strong institutional mechanisms and ethical considerations before conducting human challenge studies (CHIS) in India.

What are Human Challenge Studies (CHIS)?

Definition of CHIS: Human Challenge Studies (CHIS) involve intentionally exposing healthy volunteers to disease-causing microbes in a controlled environment for research purposes.

Purpose of CHIS: CHIS aims to study various facets of infections and diseases, test medical interventions, and accelerate vaccine development.

What are the benefits of CHIS?

Faster Vaccine Development: CHIS can accelerate vaccine development by providing critical data on immune responses and safety, reducing the need for large phase-3 trials.

Understanding Infections: CHIS helps researchers gain valuable insights into the various facets of infections and diseases, aiding in the development of effective treatments.

Controlled Environment: CHIS allows for the study of diseases in a controlled and monitored setting, minimizing risks to the wider population.

Cost-Effectiveness: CHIS can potentially reduce the cost and time required for vaccine development.

What are the challenges of CHIS?

Ethical Concerns: CHIS raises ethical issues related to the intentional exposure of healthy volunteers to disease-causing microbes.

Potential for Exploitation: Monetary incentives involved in CHIS may lead to the exploitation of volunteers.

Robust Institutional Mechanisms: Conducting CHIS requires well-trained personnel and strong institutional structures.

Previous Ethical Violations: Instances like the HPV vaccine trial in Andhra Pradesh (2010) highlight the importance of stringent oversight.

Limited Medical Intervention: CHIS may be unsuitable for studying novel diseases with limited medical interventions.

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100. [Child, law, and consensual sex](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Child, law, and consensual sex**” published in “The Hindu” on 26th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2- Mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections

News: The author discusses the recent High Court judgements related to the POCSO Act of 2012. It highlights issues with interpreting the age of consent in cases involving minors and suggests the need for clearer guidelines and potential amendments to the act.

About POCSO Act, 2012

Read here: [What is the POCSO Act?](#)

What is the issue with the recent High Court judgement related to the POCSO Act of 2012?

Ignoring Age of Consent: The High Courts, in certain cases, overlooked the set age of consent. For instance, the Delhi High Court released an accused citing the 15-year-old girl’s willful involvement.

Consent Complexity: Judgments have given weight to the “consent” argument, even when involved parties were minors, like the Bombay High Court quashing a conviction involving a 17-year-old.

Not Prioritizing Vulnerability: The courts didn’t emphasize the vulnerability of minors or the potential power imbalances in relationships with significant age gaps.

Overlooking Consequences: In some judgments, the repercussions faced by the minors, such as early pregnancies, weren’t adequately examined.

Potential Precedent Issues: These varied judgments might set diverse precedents, leading to inconsistency in future case rulings.

Contrary to POCSO’s Objective: Some rulings might soften the act’s primary objective, which is to protect children from sexual offenses.

What should be done?

Clarity from Supreme Court: There’s a need for a clear directive or guideline from the Supreme Court to ensure uniformity in judgments.

Re-evaluate Age of Consent: Consider recommendations on reducing the age of consent from 18 to 16 but ensure this doesn’t expose adolescents to potential harm.

Data-driven Approach: The Bureau of Police Research and Development should analyze cases of consensual sex across states to help the Central government make informed decisions.

Best Interest of Child: Prioritize the ‘best interest of the child’ in all judgments.

Balanced Punishments: Re-examine the severe punishments under POCSO, ensuring they are deterrents but not excessively harsh.

Educate Judiciary: Conduct regular training sessions for the judiciary on the nuances of the POCSO Act.

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101. [Moving away from the 'take-make-dispose' model](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Moving away from the 'take-make-dispose' model**” published in “The Hindu” on 26th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests & GS3- Economy and Environment conservation

News: India prioritizes the circular economy and resource efficiency during its G-20 presidency. They've introduced themes like circularity in the steel sector; Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR); circular bioeconomy and establishing an industry-led resource efficiency and circular economy industry coalition.

What are the needs of circular economy?

1. Circularity in the Steel Sector:

Reduction in Emissions: Steel production accounts for about 7% of global energy sector emissions. Adopting a circular model can drastically reduce this.

Resource Optimization: As the demand for steel rises, especially in growing economies like India, it's essential to use steel efficiently to avoid wastage.

2. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR):

Waste Management: Over 20,000 Producers, Importers, and Brand Owners are registered under India's EPR framework, managing over 3.07 million tons of waste.

Promotion of Recycling: EPR promotes the growth of recycling infrastructure and a streamlined waste collection system.

3. Circular Bioeconomy:

Addressing Biowaste: G-20 countries have seen 2.5 times increase in biowaste since 1970.

Alternative Resources: India uses biowaste as raw materials, turning agricultural residue into bioethanol. This reduces the extraction of virgin resources.

4. Industry-led Resource Efficiency and Circular Economy Coalition:

Collaborative Effort: Industries play a pivotal role in advancing the circular economy.

Technological Advancement: This coalition focuses on technological collaboration and finance mobilization.

Engaging Private Sector: By involving the private sector, the transition to a circular economy can be accelerated.

What are the government initiatives towards circular economy?

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR):

India boasts a large Extended Producer Responsibility system.

Over 20,000 entities registered, managing 3.07 million tons of waste.

Bioeconomy and Biofuels:

Launched the **Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana** to support bio-ethanol projects using waste like crop residues.

Mandated power plants to blend 5% biomass pellets with coal.

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GOBAR Dhan Scheme:

Converts cattle dung and organic waste into compost, biogas, and biofuels.

Over 500 functional biogas plants were established.

Alternative Fuels:

SATAT Scheme launched in 2018 promotes Compressed BioGas (CBG) as green transportation fuel.

Helps in infrastructure development for CBG production and distribution.

102. [C Raja Mohan writes: Why India may not be averse to UAE rescuing Pakistan's economy](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**C Raja Mohan writes: Why India may not be averse to UAE rescuing Pakistan's economy**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **26th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance: triangular dynamics between Middle east, India and Pakistan

News- According to media reports, the United Arab Emirates has offered to bring significant new investments that could help pull Pakistan out of its unending cycle of economic crises and bailout packages.

How has the relationship between Pakistan and the Gulf evolved over time?

The Arab Gulf enjoyed **closer partnership** with Pakistan. It was based on **religious solidarity, regular economic assistance, concessional oil facilities**, as well as cooperation on **regional security**.

Due to being a **major Islamic nation**, Pakistan enjoyed **much goodwill** in the Gulf. The Gulf rulers enjoyed **exclusive privileges** in sovereign Pakistan.

The **balance between Pakistan and the Gulf** has altered in the 21st century. The Gulf has become richer and Pakistan is becoming poorer by the day.

Pakistan's per capita GDP today is less than that of Bangladesh.

Pakistan's continuing **relative economic decline** has expanded the **Gulf's leverage** over Islamabad and Rawalpindi.

Why is there scepticism that the current round of reforms advocated by the IMF will not be implemented by Pakistan?

Pakistan has a lack of **political will for structural transformation** of its economy. The Pakistani elite is not interested in **economic reform**. This is because of their confidence in extracting **geopolitical rent from the US, China, and the Gulf**.

The rental value of Pakistan is coming down. Pakistan is less important for Washington after the US withdrawal from Afghanistan.

China remains **deeply invested** in Pakistan. But, Islamabad is no longer in a **strong position** to keep a check on India. It has never been as generous as Washington.

The Gulf is not interested in giving freebies to Pakistan. It wants substantive return.

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Why is it not possible for Pakistan to continue with its business as usual approach?

The US, in the past, persuaded international financial institutions to have a **soft approach** towards Pakistan. But, this time it wants the IMF to **apply maximum pressure**.

The Gulf states and China want Pakistan to get support from the IMF before they can provide **financial assistance**. Pakistan had no option but to submit to the **IMF conditions**.

The IMF wanted to ensure it had solid reform commitments from Islamabad.

How is the Gulf capital becoming important?

UAE, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia have emerged as **powerful financial actors** in the region due to oil wealth.

It has increased the **political and strategic influence** of the gulf across the **Greater Middle East, Africa, the Indian Ocean and beyond**.

South Asia is no exception. Emirati and Saudi capital is flowing into India. UAE and Saudi Arabia at the top of India's **most valued strategic partners**.

What is the current status of the triangular relationship between India, Pakistan and the Gulf?

There has been significant change in the **triangular dynamic** involving India, Pakistan, and the Gulf countries.

In the past, Pakistan held stronger ties with the Gulf nations compared to India. However, the current scenario shows a **shift in favour of India**. India's engagement with the UAE and Saudi Arabia has gained prominence. It has **overshadowed Pakistan's influence**.

Despite Pakistan's objections, the UAE invited India's Foreign Minister Sushma Swaraj to address a **meeting of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** in March 2019.

Moreover, the UAE has refrained from **criticising India's decision** to change the **constitutional status of Kashmir** in August 2019.

The UAE seems to have played a role in facilitating **back-channel dialogues** between India and Pakistan. It led to a **ceasefire agreement** in February 2021.

103. [What is a no confidence motion?](#)

Source- The post is based on the article

"What is a no confidence motion?" published in **"The Indian Express"** on **27th July 2023**.

"A Parliament floor test would serve democracy" published in **"Livemint"** on **27th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Parliament- Conduct of Business

Relevance: Parliamentary procedures

News- Recently, Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla accepted the Opposition's no confidence motion against the Government earlier.

What are some facts about no confidence motion?

In a parliamentary democracy, a government should have a **majority in Lok Sabha** to continue in power. As per **Article 75(3)** of our Constitution, the Council of Ministers are **collectively responsible to the Lok Sabha**.

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For testing this collective responsibility, the rules of Lok Sabha provide for **motion of no-confidence**.

Any Lok Sabha MP having **support of 50 MPs** can introduce a motion of no-confidence against the Council of Ministers.

Thereafter, a **discussion on the motion** takes place. MPs who support the motion highlight the government's shortcomings, and the Treasury Benches respond to the issues.

Finally, a **vote on motion** takes place. If the motion is passed, the government will have to resign.

A no confidence motion can **only be moved in the Lok Sabha**.

How has this motion been used by opposition?

Historically, the **no confidence motion** has been employed as an instrument to compel a **discussion on a particular topic or matter**.

The Opposition does not have numbers. But, still it has moved the motion to force the government to have a discussion on the situation in Manipur.

During the third Lok Sabha in 1963, the **first motion of no confidence** was moved by Acharya J B Kripalani against the Nehru led government. The debate on the motion lasted for 21 hours over four days. 40 MPs participated in the debate.

Nehru remarked that the **purpose of the no-confidence motion** is to remove the party in government. It is not expected in this instance. I have welcomed this motion and this debate.

Periodical tests of the government is a good thing.

104. [BYDing Time – on India's decision to reject Chinese companys' investment](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“BYDing Time”** published in **“The Times of India”** on **27th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance: India and China bilateral relationship

News- Indian government has decided to reject Chinese EV giant BYD's \$1 billion investment plan for a car and battery manufacturing plant.

What compelled India to take this step?

The approach of using **market access and economic cooperation** to encourage positive behaviour from China has proven ineffective.

Under the leadership of Xi Jinping, China's actions are different from previous expectations. The Chinese Communist Party has even targeted successful Chinese businesses that do not align with its **political goals**.

The situation along the LAC since 2020 has led to a trust deficit with China.

What is the current Chinese approach towards India?

The Chinese government continues to separate the border dispute from the **overall relationship**. It insists that both sides should consider the **broader context**.

However, Beijing should acknowledge that the border issue is indicative of a **larger problem affecting India-China relations**.

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China has adopted an **extremely authoritarian approach**. It is determined to **challenge democracies** and reshape the **rules-based international order**.

In China's perspective, India is viewed merely as a country that needs periodic reminders of its **subordinate position in Asia**.

As a result, China shows little interest in addressing Indian interests. It is evident in its ongoing support for a belligerent but **financially troubled Pakistan**.

105. [The SCO is a success story that can get better](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**The SCO is a success story that can get better**" published in "The Hindu" on 27th July 2023.

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

News: In this article author talks about recent important changes in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO). The author calls for unity, security, and cooperation to face global issues. They stress the need for multilateralism and fair global governance. They also mention China's commitment to these principles.

About recent SCO Meeting

India hosted the 23rd SCO Meeting.

Leaders signed the New Delhi Declaration.

Iran became a full SCO member.

Belarus is on track to join SCO.

SCO's economic plan for 2030 was adopted.

What are the achievements of SCO over the years?

Shared Future Vision: SCO promotes a vision of a shared future for mankind.

Mutual Support: Member-states have consistently backed each other in upholding their core interests.

Synergized Development: They've integrated their national development strategies and regional cooperation initiatives.

Promotion of Friendship: SCO countries have embraced the spirit of good neighbourliness and friendship.

Partnerships: They've formed partnerships based on dialogue, opting for cooperation over alliance.

Guardians of Peace: The organization has actively contributed to regional peace, stability, and prosperity. For instance, the New Delhi Declaration was a significant step towards collective security and development.

Role Model: SCO's efforts reflect the broader aspiration for global peace, development, and win-win cooperation.

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What should be done?

Strengthen Unity: SCO member-states should enhance strategic communication and support each other's growth.

Security Cooperation: Upgrade collaboration to counter threats like terrorism, separatism, and extremism. For example, vigilantly address developments pushing for a new Cold War.

Digital & Space Security: Pursue cooperation in digital, biological, and outer space domains.

Economic Collaboration: Push against protectionism and promote trade, investment, and technology ties.

Currency Initiatives: Encourage local currency settlement among SCO members and consider forming an SCO development bank.

Promote Multilateralism: Engage more with entities like the UN to uphold international order.

Act against Unilateralism: Stand united against hegemony, unilateralism, and Cold War mentality, rejecting unfair sanctions.

106. [On carbon burden, Europe's glaring hypocrisy](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "[On carbon burden, Europe's glaring hypocrisy](#)" published in "The Indian express" on 27th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests. & GS3- Environment conservation

News: The European Union (EU) is starting a carbon tax on imports to fight climate change. This may hurt trade with countries like India. Big companies can adapt, but it may raise prices for consumers. India should create its own system to price carbon and protect its interests. The EU's approach seems unfair, and India needs to respond strategically.

How will India be impacted by the European Union's carbon tax?

Trade Concerns:

EU is a big trading partner for India.

26.4% of India's exports could be affected by the carbon tax.

Products like steel, which India exports to the EU, will face this tax.

Business Implications:

Large Indian companies, like Tata Steel, may have to adapt quickly.

Tata Steel is already transitioning to green steel for the EU market.

Cost Implications:

The carbon tax might raise product costs.

Tata Steel suggests these costs could lead to higher steel prices or require subsidies.

Competitive Pressures:

Bigger companies might manage, but smaller ones could struggle.

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This might change the structure of India's manufacturing sector.

What actions should be taken in response?

Actions in Response to the EU's Carbon Tax:

Challenge at WTO: India can contest the carbon tax at the World Trade Organization as being discriminatory.

Internal Carbon Pricing: India could develop its own system to price carbon. This would align with its developmental needs and global responsibilities.

Support for Businesses:

Help companies like Tata Steel that are already transitioning, using their experience as a model.

Consider incentives to encourage green transitions within the business sector.

Consumer Protection: Implement mechanisms to prevent high costs from being passed onto Indian consumers.

Negotiate with the EU:

Engage with the EU to find an agreeable middle ground on carbon pricing.

Emphasize "common but differentiated responsibility", meaning India can price carbon based on its developmental stage.

107. [Pratap Bhanu Mehta writes: In Israel's floundering, their future, and ours](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "**Pratap Bhanu Mehta writes: In Israel's floundering, their future, and ours**" published in "**The Indian Express**" on **27th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- International politics

Relevance: The state of Israel and nationalism

News- The Israeli Knesset has voted 64-0 on a bill to limit judicial power. One of the objectives of the Bill is to limit the use of "reasonableness" as a standard to be used in judicial review.

What is criticism against the Israeli state?

The State of Israel came into being in the aftermath of the **Holocaust**. There are contradictions between **being a Jewish State and being a liberal democracy**.

Israel had some of the features of **European nationalism** that was responsible for Jewish flight from Europe.

It denied Palestinians all **legitimate rights** and **occupied its territory**. Its goal is subjugation of the Palestinians and annexation of all Palestinian territory.

Why is the Israeli government curbing the power of the judiciary?

Some view this crisis as simply a consequence of Benjamin Netanyahu's **will to power**.

Israel's judiciary has withstood **wars and security challenges**. Israel lacks **federalism or a bicameral legislature** to **counterbalance executive authority**. So, the judiciary is a **critical pillar** of the system.

Despite its significance, the judiciary has been unable to prevent the **continuation of the Occupation**.

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Nonetheless, there are concerns that the judiciary's emphasis on upholding a **regime of rights** might impede the government's **comprehensive right-wing agenda**.

How has Netanyahu strengthened his position through right-wing agenda?

The collapse of the peace accords had **detrimental effects on the political Left** in Israel. It diminished its **ideological influence**.

Israel's social fabric is **intricate**. Netanyahu capitalised on this by rallying support against the established elites. He painted them as **soft, culturally disconnected, and disdainful of orthodoxy**.

Netanyahu also harnessed the **resentment of the orthodox community** against **secular and Jewish immigrants** from other Arab countries. This approach justified the **dismantling of institutions** under the guise of **anti-elitism**.

How does this instance provide some valuable lessons about nationalism?

At first glance, **ultra-nationalism** may seem like a minor faction. It is believed that we can keep it in check. However, its impact is **far-reaching**.

It gradually **infects the political system**. **Economic growth and security measures** do not curb its growth. Instead, it exploits these factors to strengthen its grip until it becomes too powerful to contain.

When **culture intertwined with politics**, it often leads to **reactionary consequences**. In current times, the **flaws and inadequacies of liberal nationalism** have been exposed. It is accused of **not being liberal or nationalist enough**.

The lesson is clear: **Nationalism will perpetually demand more from liberalism than liberalism can extract from nationalism**.

108. [Manipur internet shutdowns: Forgetting the lessons from Kashmir](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Manipur internet shutdowns: Forgetting the lessons from Kashmir**" published in "The Indian express" on 29th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- fundamental rights & Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability,

News: In this article author discusses how the Manipur government's internet shutdown harms citizens by limiting their fundamental rights to expression and information, deepening the digital divide, and causing economic losses, and criticizes India's frequent use of internet shutdowns, comparing it to past incidents like in Jammu and Kashmir.

What are the impacts of internet shutdown in Manipur?

Limited Access: Over 90% of users, especially in rural areas, rely on mobile internet which remains suspended.

Digital Divide: The majority can't access the internet, while a small urban section can, deepening inequalities.

Economic Losses: Past shutdowns in India caused significant economic losses, e.g., Kashmir's 2019 blockade resulted in over five lakh unemployed people.

Decreased Information Flow: People can't share or verify information due to the social media ban.

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Surveillance Concerns: Internet access is tied to MAC Address binding, static IPs, and a ban on VPNs, enabling greater monitoring.

Violation of Rights: The restrictions infringe on rights to free expression, freedom of assembly, and privacy.

Economic Costs: Internet shutdowns lead to financial damage. In 2023, estimated losses reached Rs 2,091 crore in India.

Informal Sector Impact: The unorganized sector, often unreported, is hit hard, affecting sections like women more.

What is the judicial view on internet shutdown?

Fundamental Rights: The Supreme Court recognized the right to free expression and privacy through the internet as fundamental.

Limitations: Rights can only be limited in a reasonable and proportionate manner.

Anuradha Bhasin Judgment: Shutdowns violate fundamental rights. They must be proportional, reasonable, necessary, and the least restrictive.

No Indefinite Ban: Internet shutdowns can never be indefinite.

Court Intervention: The gradual lifting of suspensions in Jammu and Kashmir came after a court intervention.

State Accountability: Shutdowns often imposed by state authorities must be accountable.

109. [A new national foundation and the ease of doing research](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**A new national foundation and the ease of doing research**” published in “The Indian express” on 29th July 2023.

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

News: Recently, the Union Cabinet approved a bill that paves the way for the establishment of the National Research Foundation (NRF). The foundation will have a corpus of Rs 50,000 crore and will be presented in Parliament during the Monsoon Session.

About National Research Foundation (NRF):

The NRF is a proposed initiative by the Indian government to enhance research and development in the country.

What are the areas of concern?

Ease of Research: India should simplify research processes. There is a need to reduce bureaucratic restrictions and unfavorable financial policies.

Functioning and Structure: It's unclear how the board and the executive council will handle the vast responsibilities of the NRF.

Financial Autonomy: The NRF needs flexibility in managing its finances.

Coordination: Ensuring synergy among existing research funding institutions is crucial.

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Implementation: The challenge of translating the broad objectives of the NRF into actionable results.

110. [Prolific In Pacific: Small islands, big powers & an Indo-French option](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Prolific In Pacific: Small islands, big powers & an Indo-French option**” published in “Times of India” on 29th July 2023.

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

News: The author discusses how France’s strong presence in the Indo-Pacific can partner with India’s interests and ties in the region to offer an alternative to China’s influence, benefiting development, security, and regional balance.

About French territories within the Indo-Pacific

France has the **second-largest maritime domain in the world.**

Seven of its 13 overseas territories are in the Indo-Pacific.

An example is Clipperton Island in the north Pacific.

This island gives France an Exclusive Economic Zone as big as Sweden.

1.6 million French citizens live in these Indo-Pacific territories.

France’s presence in the region offers a different perspective on the China threat.

How will India benefit from France’s presence in the Indo-Pacific?

France’s presence in the Indo-Pacific can help balance China’s growing influence.

France and India’s similar approach towards the region synchronizes well for collaborations.

India can enhance its engagement with Pacific islands without forcing them to choose sides.

France’s historical links with the Pacific islands and Indian diaspora in nations like Fiji can be leveraged.

Together, they can offer an alternative to China’s development practices, especially in infrastructure, healthcare, and IT.

Strong India-France defence relations could bolster regional security.

The two countries could jointly respond to security threats if needed.

111. [Needless move – On ED Director Tenure Extension](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Needless move**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **29th July 2023.**

Syllabus: GS2- Statutory, Regulatory bodies

Relevance: Issues related to external trade

News- The SC in his order allowed Sanjay Kumar Mishra, head of the Enforcement Directorate, to continue till September 15 at the Centre’s request.

Court has invoked “larger national interest” to allow him to go on up to September 15.

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What are the arguments presented by the central government to extend the tenure of ED director?

As per the government, his leadership is necessary for the country to demonstrate that **its framework** is effective to combat **money laundering and terrorist financing** during a **review by the FATF**.

FATF uses a **mutual evaluation system**. It is currently conducting a **comprehensive assessment** of India's measures. This review is expected to continue until June 2024.

The extension is required to ensure that the country's agencies and institutions are adequately prepared for an **on-site visit by an FATF delegation**.

Why is government reasoning flawed?

The Enforcement Directorate may play a crucial role in preparing the **country's presentation for countering money laundering**. But, it is hard to believe that the **entire process** relies solely on one individual.

Additionally, **multiple agencies and authorities** are involved in formulating the country's policies on money laundering and terrorism financing.

The claim that not extending Mr. Mishra's tenure might lead to a **"negative image"** is difficult to comprehend. India's reputation will be evaluated based on its **laws, systems, and adherence to global standards**, not solely on who prepared the report.

112. [Turning the tide on brain drain](#)

Source: The post is based on an article **"Turning the tide on brain drain"** published in **Business Standard** on 29th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Indian Diaspora

Relevance: reasons behind Indian citizens migrating abroad

News: The article discusses the causes behind Indians going overseas and the actions required to retain them in India.

What are the key highlights of the data regarding people moving abroad?

Around 32 million Indians prefer to live in other countries. Around 18 million have gained citizenship abroad, while 14 million are non-resident Indians (NRIs).

Over half of every batch of Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) graduates end up overseas. Even large corporations are establishing themselves abroad.

What are the concerns with this migration?

The 32 million people, which is roughly 2.2 per cent of India's population, represent a significant opportunity cost for the country.

Their remittances have contributed to a growth in the GDP of India. However, **if they lived and worked here, they might have added several multiples of that to GDP**.

There are also young people looking to move abroad every year, whose skills and earning capacity will be lost if the brain drain continues.

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What are the reasons for migration?

Lack of Opportunity: There is a lack of opportunity in India for highly educated people, businesses, research and for professionals.

Weakness of Indian passport: Obtaining visas for First World countries is a challenging process for Indian citizens. Hence, there has been a rush for golden visas and for 10-year US visas as alternative options.

Moreover, Indian passports also leads to difficulties for Indian passport holders in accessing various countries.

Tax and License Regime: A lot of requirements need to be fulfilled before setting up a business in India. Similarly, managing tax filing and accounting are also challenging in India.

Further, contractual issues in India are known for their slow resolution, and cross-border transactions add to the complexities.

Must Read: [What are the implications of Emigration of India's brightest youth?](#)

What measures can be adopted to control migration?

First, India currently has a low ratio of domestic investment in research, both from government budgets and private institutions

Therefore, there is a need to promote research institutions and high-tech businesses in the country to create opportunities for highly educated individuals in India. There is also a need for relaxing investment rules and providing tax breaks for R&D initiatives.

Second, simplifying tax processes and paperwork in India would benefit not only new entrepreneurs but also existing businesses already operating within India.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of July 2023

General

Studies

Paper –3

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General Studies - 3

1. [Hydrogen will help decarbonize our commercial vehicle traffic](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Hydrogen will help decarbonize our commercial vehicle traffic**” published in “**Live mint**” on **3rd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Climate Change – Decarbonization

News: The article discusses the potential of hydrogen-fueled internal combustion engine vehicles for commercial transport in decarbonization of transport sector.

India, despite having per capita greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions less than half the global average, is the world’s third-largest emitter. India also ranks eighth worst on air quality.

Road transport contributes to about 10% of India’s emissions, with over a third coming from medium and heavy commercial vehicles.

What is the suitability of the available options to decarbonize the vehicle fleet in India?

1) Battery-electric vehicles – These vehicles are not economically viable suitable for commercial transport in India due to factors, like;

- Unlike European trucks, Indian commercial vehicles do not carry heavy payloads. Therefore, it becomes difficult to justify the high purchase cost of battery powered vehicles, which is twice as much as diesel vehicle.
- Battery weight will reduce the payload capacity of a truck.

2) Hydrogen-fueled vehicles – These vehicles can be powered by either fuel cells or conventional internal combustion engines.

Hydrogen fuel-cell electric vehicles are even more expensive, and they are suitable for long-distance usage(400-500km), which is not usual for India’s usual commercial vehicles. Also, fuel cells require pure hydrogen, which adds complexity to the supply chain.

Hydrogen-Fuelled Internal Combustion Engine Vehicles are far more suitable for India’s conditions. **1)** These vehicles are 20-40% more expensive than diesel carriers, which is much less compared to other low-emissions alternatives. **2)** They can carry almost the same load as a diesel truck and suit Indian conditions, characterized by variable loads and travel of 250-300km per day. **3)** Such vehicles also do not have stringent requirements of hydrogen purity and can be refueled in 15-30 minutes, compared to hours for battery-run electric vehicles.

What are the measures required to promote adoption in Hydrogen-Fueled Internal Combustion Engine?

First, this technology needs to be given priority in the Indian automotive sector. This assistance can be in the form of technology partnerships, research and development grants, and regulatory support.

Second, there is a need to reduce the cost of hydrogen to about \$2.5-\$3 per kilogram.

Third, adapting existing fuel stations to dispense hydrogen.

Fourth, extending existing production-linked incentive schemes for local Electrolyzer manufacturing beyond the current 2027 expiration.

The transition to hydrogen-fuelled internal combustion engine vehicles could be a great opportunity for India as the hydrogen economy is still nascent globally.

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2. [Nothing Fishy – on India’s fisheries sector](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Nothing Fishy**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **3rd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Industries and industrial Policies – Agriculture and allied activities

News: A recent study by the Central Marine Fisheries Institute has provided some promising data that can be beneficial for the fisheries sector India.

What is the study?

A recent study by the Central Marine Fisheries Institute found that 91% of the 70 species evaluated had healthy numbers.

What is the potential of fisheries sector in India?

India boasts over 1,500 marine species and 900 freshwater ones, along with ‘exotic’ and brackish water varieties, totaling over 2,800 species on record.

India is the **world’s third-largest fish producer and fourth-largest exporter**.

Fish is a solution to the **country’s nutritional needs**, being a rich, sustainable source of protein.

This study will provide a **boost to the livelihood** of 2.8 crore people, depending upon fishing.

The report findings are **important considering the changes to the marine ecosystem** due to rise in sea-levels, increased intensity of cyclones even on the west coast, and warming of the Indian Ocean.

Fish production has a significantly **lower climate impact than meat production**. Some estimates suggest that it emits six times lower carbon per kilo than meat.

What should be done to promote the fisheries sector?

The Government of India plans to invest ₹30,572 crore (2015-2025) to improve the sector. However, significant work is needed in terms of infrastructure, regulation, oversight, insurance, and policies by both state governments and the Centre.

Issues like the use of [purse seine fishing gear](#) should be resolved amicably.

3. [Competition notice in aviation](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Competition notice in aviation**” published in “**Business Standard**” on **3rd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Liberalization of Indian Industry

News: The Competition Commission of India (CCI) has raised concerns over the proposed merger of Air India, which was acquired by Tata Group in 2022, and Vistara, a joint venture of the group and Singapore Airlines.

The CCI has issued a notice to Air India asking why its merger with Vistara should not be investigated from the perspective of antitrust norms.

The latest notice has come in response to the Tatas’ proposal in April for a merger of Air India and Vistara. After the merger, Singapore Airlines’ stake in Vistara would come down to 25.1 per cent from 49 per cent now.

What are the possible concerns of CCI?

CCI might be of concern that this dilution would make the Tatas a stronger player in aviation industry.

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The market share of the merged Air India entity is estimated at a little over 25 percent, which is way below market leader IndiGo's 55.7 percent. However, on the busiest routes, the entity will hold a substantial market share, i.e., between 38 to 53 percent.

What are the potential Implications of the CCI notices for aviation sector?

First, the CCI's decision to review the merger could potentially delay the deal and set a precedent for defining what constitutes anti-competitive behavior in the aviation sector.

Second, the outcome of this investigation could have significant implications for future mergers and acquisitions in the aviation sector.

Third, the CCI's decision could also impact the market dynamics in the Indian aviation sector, potentially leading to changes in market shares and competition levels.

4. What the Indian economy needs to complete with China

Source: The post is based on the article **"What the Indian economy needs to complete with China"** published in **The Indian Express** on **3rd July 2023**.

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

Relevance: **A comparison of India's and China's growth rates.**

News: The India of today in some ways is similar to China of 2007. China, in terms of per capita income had \$2,694 in 2007, while the IMF has also projected India's per capita income to rise from \$2,379 in 2022 to \$2,601 in 2023.

However, there are significant divergences between the two countries.

What are the areas of divergence?

Investments: China maintained an investment to GDP ratio around 40 percent between 2003 to 2011. In comparison, even during this high growth phase, the investment ratio in India averaged only around 33 percent.

During the period from 2012 to 2021, the Chinese economy continued to increase, with its investment ratio increasing to almost 43 percent, while India's investment ratio fell around 29 percent.

Exports: In 2022-23, India's exports of goods and services surpassed \$770 billion, while imports were around \$890 billion. In 2007, when the Chinese economy was of comparable size, its exports had crossed \$1.2 trillion while imports stood at \$950 billion.

Between 2007 and 2021, **China's exports averaged around 24 percent of its GDP, while India's exports averaged roughly 21 percent during the same period.**

Tariff reduction: The reduction of tariffs has made China as the hub of the global supply chains. Its tariff rate declined from 10.69 percent in 2003 to 8.93 percent in 2007, and further dropped to 5.32 percent in 2020.

In contrast, India's tariff rate declined from 25.63 percent in 2003 to 8.88 percent in 2017 but has risen thereafter.

Labour force participation: China has consistently maintained a higher labor force participation rate compared to India. In 2007, China's labor force participation rate was nearly 73 percent, but it has declined to 67 percent since then.

Whereas, In India, the estimated participation rate was around 50 percent in 2022, although it is higher according to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS).

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The difference in labor force participation rates between the two countries is mainly due to female participation.

In China, the female labor force participation rate was 66 percent in 2007, which declined to 61 percent by 2022. Whereas, in India, the rate was at 30 percent in 2007 and has further decreased to 24 percent in 2022.

However, in terms of the sectoral deployment of their labour forces, there are some similarities.

For instance, China in 2007, had 41% of the labour force engaged in agriculture, 27% in industry and 32% in services. Whereas in India, in 2021, it was 44%, 25% and 31% respectively

What are the challenges present with India's growth?

In India, most of the job creation has occurred in construction, trade, and transport sectors, rather than in manufacturing.

However, **estimates from the economic survey suggest that manufacturing has higher productivity than trade and construction.** Hence, the lack of employment generation in the manufacturing sector remains India's biggest growth challenge.

What can be the way ahead?

It may be challenging for India to witness a rapid growth like that of China, which averaged 8 percent annual growth between 2007 and 2021.

However, **in order to achieve such growth, India needs to** boost investment activity, enhance exports (especially in goods), increase female labor force participation, and promote low and semi-skilled employment in formal manufacturing.

5. [Greedflation and its counter arguments: how consumers ultimately decide prices](#)

Source: This article has been framed based on India Express article "**Clearing the water**", published on 4th July.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 – Indian Economy – Pricing and Inflation

News: The article discusses the concept of "greedflation," which refers to price inflation caused by corporate greed for high profits.

The US is facing the record high inflation, since the pandemic. It has given birth to the theory of greedflation.

What are the arguments of theorists favoring greedflation theory?

Proponents of the greedflation theory argue that corporate profit margins have risen significantly since the pandemic, contributing to high inflation.

U.S. corporations have allegedly increased the prices of their goods by more than what was necessary to compensate for higher input costs caused by supply-chain bottlenecks.

As per this theory, market power of large corporations should be controlled and price hikes should be banned to prevent "profiteering".

What are the arguments of theorists opposing greedflation theory?

Critics of the greedflation theory argue that businesses cannot arbitrarily set prices. Prices are set based on what consumers are willing to pay for products.

Businesses cannot force consumers to pay a certain price for their goods.

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The best explanation behind U. S's inflation is U.S. Federal Reserve's expansionary monetary policy during the pandemic. Which has increased the money supply, leading to expansion of purchasing power of users.

It might also be a "cost-push" inflation which is due to inflation to a rise in input costs. **For example**, in the past, a rise in the wages demanded by workers has been blamed for the rise in the prices of goods and services.

6. [A rising tide – Govt should revive disinvestment](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "A rising tide – Govt should revive disinvestment" published in **Business Standard** on 4th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Capital Market

Relevance: About the rising stock market indices and its implications for India

News: In the past few days, the stock market indices have reached record highs with a broad movement across various sectors.

What are the reasons behind high stock market indices?

The surge in the stock market has been primarily driven by foreign portfolio investors (FPIs), who have purchased over Rs 1.14 trillion worth of equities in the 2023-24 period.

There has also been strong buying from retail investors, both directly as well as via mutual funds, and domestic institutions have also been net positive.

Most sectors have witnessed double-digit returns over the past year, including underperforming sectors like the Nifty IT index and oil & gas, which have seen gains of 5.3% and 3.5% respectively.

Sectors like fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), banks, realty, and metals have all returned over 30 percent and the automobile index 29 percent. However, the biggest winner is the public sector bank index, which is up 67.9 percent.

Credit growth indicates that businesses and consumers are borrowing again. This is supported by the fact that FMCG revenues have grown in Q4 FY23, and so have two-wheeler sales. However, other concerns are still present.

What are the concerns present?

Despite the stock market indices reaching record highs, valuations remain moderate. For instance, the Nifty is currently trading at a price-to-earnings (PE) ratio, which is significantly lower than its early 2021 PE ratio of over 40.

Similarly, the mid-caps and small-caps are also trading at lower valuations than they had hit earlier. **The implication is that the markets could sustain higher prices and valuations.**

What can be the way ahead?

A revival in activity across the primary markets is very likely, due to the optimism across secondary markets.

This presents an opportune moment for the government to revive its disinvestment plans, which have been on hold for some time.

If investors are willing to buy Indian stocks, the government should take advantage of the market conditions and push disinvestment. **This additional revenue can be used to push capital expenditure.**

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7. [A stocktake before the Global Stocktake](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**A stocktake before the Global Stocktake**” published in **The Hindu** on **4th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3-Environment

Relevance: Climate change-related issues

News- The Bonn Climate Change Conference was the last big milestone in climate negotiations before the first Global Stocktake under the Paris Agreement at COP28 (Conference of the Parties 28) in Dubai.

What is the progress and challenges in global stocktake?

The Global Stocktake assess collective progress towards long-term global goals. This includes progress on greenhouse gas reduction, building resilience to climate impacts, and securing finance to address climate crisis.

In 2015, under the Paris Agreement, countries had agreed to “pursue efforts” to **limit global temperature rise to 1.5°C** and introduced ‘**just transition pathways**’ at COP27. It means that the **transformational pathways** need to be carried out in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible to everyone concerned.

The outcome of Bonn Conference was that developing countries were able to strengthen the ‘**just transition pathways**’ as opposed to the developed countries which laid more emphasis on mitigation.

First challenge is that **Climate finance** flows are not aligned with the priorities identified by countries in their **nationally determined contributions**. Many observers say that only a fraction of the \$100 billion has actually been realised .

Another challenge **Adaptation finance has lagged behind mitigation finance**, probably due to the absence of universally agreed-upon metrics.

What is the way forward?

In the efforts towards **aligning climate finance with the Paris Agreement** temperature goals, it is important to **integrate the World Bank in climate change negotiations** and hold it accountable as it is making huge investments in fossil fuels.

India also underlined the need for “**financing**” a ‘**just transition**’ in sectors such as energy and transport in order to reach **net zero emissions by 2070**.

Therefore, the pursuance of the Global Stocktake as per the Paris Agreement needs to comply with the **principle of equity, justice and fairness**.

8. [Explore every possible solar shield we can use:](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Explore every possible solar shield we can use**” published in “**Live mint**” on **4th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Climate Change – solar radiation modification.

News: Recently, the US White House released a report on “solar radiation modification” (SRM).

Why SRM is important?

According to the latest update, the Earth’s temperature may rise beyond 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels earlier than anticipated. Additionally, the risks of surpassing this temperature threshold could be more severe than previously estimated in 2015.

Additionally, progress on climate action has been slow.

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SRM has the potential to reduce the effects of increased temperatures and provide time for better solutions.

What is SRM?

The basic objective of SRM is to **reflect solar heat back**, for which two methods are under consideration.

One is **aerosol injection of the stratosphere**. The second is **marine cloud brightening**. Both can achieve a similar effect by acting as a reflector.

What are the risks of SRM?

There are risks of ecological disruption associated with both methods. For example, aerosols could cause ozone depletion and even hurt biodiversity.

The potential impacts on rainfall and other unknown indirect effects of solar geo-engineering would have global ramifications.

What does the report say?

The report advocates **in-depth research** on SRM to assess all its risks and potential benefits.

The report suggests the adoption of a **'risk versus risk' framework** to assist policymakers in understanding the risks associated with SRM in comparison to the risks posed by the current pace of climate action.

What should be done?

The potential of **space-based solutions**, such as mirror lattices, should also be explored. They could offer more precise control over cooling by directly influencing solar radiation without affecting the air.

Including space-based solutions in official research programs in the US would also encourage other space-faring nations, like India, to enhance their own research.

There should be **transparency** in any intervention efforts, and it is important to thoroughly examine all available options on a global scale.

9. [A macro view of the fiscal health of States](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"A macro view of the fiscal health of States"** published in "The Hindu" on 5th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Government Budgeting

News: The article discusses the fiscal operations of the Indian states and highlights the importance of understanding state finances to improve country's fiscal situation.

Indian states mobilize over a third of total revenue, spend 60% of combined government expenditure, and have around 40% share in government borrowing. The basis of this analysis relies on the data collected from the budgets (2023-24) of 17 major States in India.

What are the major findings of this analysis?

The general government deficit and debt, which increased during the COVID-19 pandemic, has started to recede.

The Union level fiscal deficit declined from 9.1% of GDP in 2020-21 to 5.9% in 2023-24 (BE).

All-State fiscal deficit was 4.1% of GDP in 2020-21, and it is expected to be 2.9% of GDP for the major States in 2023-24 (BE).

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These 17 major States contained their fiscal deficits despite revenue contraction during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Factors that led the improvement in the fiscal situation

1. Union-State fiscal coordination during Covid,
2. Expenditure-side adjustments,
3. improved GST collection,
4. higher tax devolution, and
5. recovery in non-GST revenues.

What are the remaining Fiscal challenges?

The reduction in the fiscal deficit has not been accompanied by a corresponding reduction in revenue deficit. Out of 17 major states, 13 states have a deficit in the revenue account in 2023-24 (BE).

The all-State share of revenue deficit in fiscal deficit for the same year is expected to be 27%.

The 12th Finance Commission identified three States, as fiscally stressed States, in term of revenue deficit. This number has increased to seven.

What should be done?

The focus should be brought back to the management of the revenue deficit. Following are some suggested measures:

Linking interest-free loans to States with a reduction in revenue deficit can prevent diversion of borrowed resources and incentivize fiscal discipline.

Implementing performance incentive grants based on revenue deficit reduction can further encourage fiscal balance and quality expenditure.

10. Carbon credit trading scheme: Waiting to exhale

Source: The post is based on the article “Carbon credit trading scheme: Waiting to exhale” published in “Business Standard” on 5th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment pollution and degradation

News: India is starting a Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS), to help local businesses adjust to the European Carbon Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM). The CBAM, which begins this October, sets stricter standards for the export of carbon-heavy goods such as cement, steel, aluminium, and fertilisers.

What is India’s Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)?

India’s CCTS is a program designed to allow companies to trade carbon credits. These credits represent a reduction in greenhouse gas emissions. If a company emits less than its allowable limit, it can sell its surplus credits to a company that exceeds its limit. This scheme helps India manage and reduce its overall carbon emissions.

What is the regulatory structure of India’s CCTS?

The regulatory structure of the CCTS is overseen by a **National Steering Committee**. This committee is made up of 18 ministries and departments, providing comprehensive oversight over the scheme.

The Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) is identified as the only regulator in the scheme.

Additionally, the **Bureau of Energy Efficiency** acts as the market’s administrator, with the Grid Controller of India handling registrations of market players.

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Despite traditionally being overseen by the **Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi)**, the carbon credit market's regulation falls under the CERC in this scheme.

What are the various challenges?

Regulatory challenges: In October 2021, the Supreme Court stated that the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (CERC) would regulate the spot market for power, but only for immediate deliveries up to eleven days. Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) would oversee the futures and options market. However, the CCTS is to be regulated by CERC. However, carbon credit is essentially a financial market, so as per the SC order SEBI should be the regulator.

Complexity in market structure: The market structure of CCTS is complex, involving multiple agencies and oversight bodies. Companies might struggle with compliance due to the complicated structure, potentially increasing the cost of obtaining carbon credits.

Unclear validity of international certificates: The framework does not clearly indicate if international carbon abatement certificates will be accepted alongside domestic ones in the new scheme. This could cause confusion and difficulties for companies looking to comply with emission norms.

Fungibility of Carbon Certificates: There are concerns about whether the carbon certificates should be interchangeable across different platforms and tenors. While financial markets often benefit from subdividing certificates to create more value, the carbon market might be more efficient with a standard, fungible product. The current notification is silent on this matter, causing uncertainty among market players.

[11. Navigating the carbon-tax era in trade](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Navigating the carbon-tax era in trade**” published in **Business standard** on **5th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3-Environment

Relevance: Climate change related policy

News- The process for the **EU's Border Carbon Adjustment Tax (Border-CAT)** is set to start this year and will kick in from January 2026, initially covering steel, aluminum, cement, fertilizers, hydrogen, and electricity.

This tax could cause trade disruptions, as developed countries, accounting for 65% of global trade, may charge a carbon tax of 20-35% over import duties.

What are the impacts of the EU's Border Carbon Adjustment Tax?

Firstly, World Trade Organization (WTO) commitments on tariffs **will become meaningless** for countries charging a carbon tax. Free trade agreements (FTAs) with developed countries, which are charging carbon tax, will **become one-sided**.

Secondly, the EU's exports may become expensive. While China may become the lowest-cost supplier of clean energy-compliant products. It will do so through a combination of hydroelectric and green hydrogen-led production of steel, aluminium, cars, and other industrial products.

Thirdly, the world will be divided into countries charging carbon tax and the rest of the world (RoW).

Fourthly, it may reduce the EU's exports to RoW markets, where cheaper products will be available from countries that do not charge a carbon tax.

Finally, the tax will not stop dirty imports; it will just tax them. So, the carbon tax will have an insignificant impact on the reduction of global emissions.

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What should be the actions taken by Indian government and industry?

Set up a **carbon trading mechanism and re-designate customs**, excise duty, and cesses charged on petroleum, coal and other items as carbon tax. This will reduce the amount of tax to be paid to the EU.

The government must devise a WTO compatible **carbon tax retaliation mechanism**. It should sign new FTAs with developed countries after resolving the carbon tax issues.

The government may consider a **new PLI for low carbon trial projects** and must create a **cadre of energy auditors** to help firms with emissions data, ensuring their accreditation by the EU system.

Each firm must know its unit's **current state of baseline emissions** and calculate the monetary impact associated with them.

They should **set internal targets to decarbonize** and evaluate the costs of adopting renewables.

Large firms may consider setting up two production lines — one for carbon tax markets, and the other for the RoW and develop strategies to enhance their competitiveness in the new trade regime.

12. What explains the resilience of Indian manufacturing?

Source: The post is based on the article “**What explains the resilience of Indian manufacturing?**” published in **Live Mint** on **5th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development, Industrial Policy**

Relevance: **About the improving manufacturing sector in India**

News: The Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) shows India as the only large economy whose factory output is growing significantly.

What is Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI)?

Read Here: [What is Purchasing Managers Index PMI?](#) and [Purchasing Managers Index \(PMI\) for manufacturing slipped to two years low](#)

PMI involves surveys of purchasing managers in 500 manufacturing companies across 19 industries in India.

It helps analysts and economists to correctly anticipate the changing economic trends in GDP, inflation, employment and industrial production.

How is India's manufacturing faring?

The PMI was at 57.8 in June, slightly lower than 58.7 in May. A PMI above 50 indicates expansion or growth compared to the previous month, while a value below 50 signifies contraction.

India's manufacturing PMI is indicating the resilience of the country's factory sector.

The first three months of FY24 also saw a high manufacturing PMI, indicating a rebound in manufacturing, after a contraction of 1.3% in FY23.

This has led to an increase in business confidence and optimism around future business activity among the industry.

What has caused the manufacturing sector to revive?

Strong demand from both domestic and international markets led to significant enhancements in production, sourcing, and hiring.

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As per the experts, this positive trend has been due to **the government's increased spending, especially in capital expenditure**, and due to the **increasing demand for private consumption**, which grew by 7.5% in FY23.

What does this mean for the economy?

Strong manufacturing performance is crucial for India to achieve high GDP growth.

However, **this growth is accompanied by higher inflation and wage costs**. Despite this, since demand is high, it will allow companies to pass on the increased costs to consumers.

How are other economies faring?

Major economies worldwide are facing challenges in their manufacturing sectors.

China's June PMI of 50.5 was lower than May's 50.9, and manufacturing business confidence has reached an eight-month low. **China is also struggling with** declining export demand and falling employment.

Even the Eurozone saw a PMI of 43.4 in June, indicating further contraction compared to May's 44.8. Similarly, **the United States recorded** a PMI of 46.3 in June, marking a six-month low compared to May's 48.4.

The contraction in the UK's manufacturing sector has also worsened.

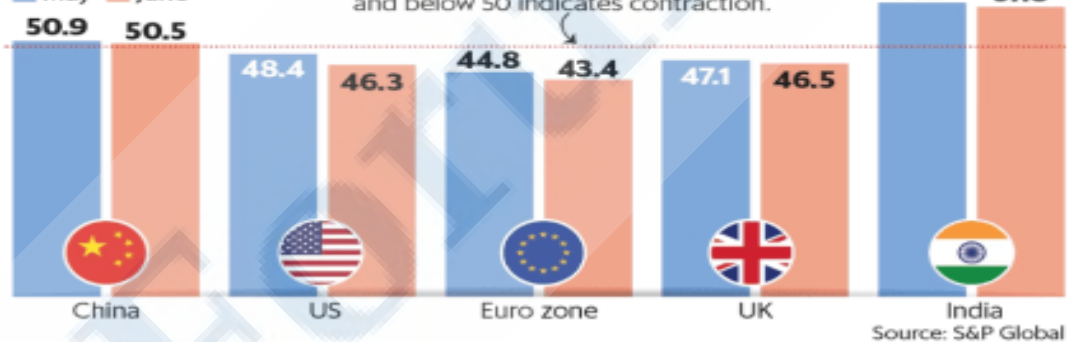
State of global manufacturing

At a time when most large economies are struggling, India's PMI was at 57.8 in June, slightly lower than 58.7 in May.

Manufacturing PMI

■ May ■ June

A PMI above 50 indicates growth and below 50 indicates contraction.



Graphic: Mint

Source: Mint

13. [Next steps for GST – Administrative and policy interventions needed](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Next steps for GST – Administrative and policy interventions needed**” published in **Business Standard** on 5th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Fiscal Policy, Growth and Development

Relevance: concerns present with the GST system and measures needed to address them

News: After six years of implementation, the goods and services tax (GST) system seems to have stabilized, with monthly revenues of at least ~1.5 trillion.

A number of interventions over the years, such as the introduction of e-way bills, the use of e-invoice and technology, have improved efficiency.

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However, despite the achievements of the past six years, there are still concerns present with the GST system.

What are the concerns present with the GST system?

In a recent special drive conducted by tax officials, approximately 60,000 suspicious entities were identified. After verifying 50,000 of them, it was **discovered that about 25% were bogus**.

Hence, **to strengthen the system, the administration is planning to introduce biometric authentication along with geo-tagging**.

The tax authorities have also found a number of instances of **fake input tax credit claims**. For **example**, GST officials in recent months have busted over 300 syndicates with estimated fake input tax credit claims of about ~25,000 crore.

Hence, in this regard, it is important for new systems or changes in tax administration **to minimize compliance burdens** and allow registered entities to focus on their businesses.

Must Read: [The unsung hero – After five years, it seems GST has begun to show sustained growth even as it has many weaknesses and policy challenges](#)

What can be the way ahead?

First, there is a need for **strengthening supervision in a sustained manner** to check tax evasion and fraudulent claims of input tax credit.

Second, the GST Council must also make necessary interventions. For instance, although there has been an improvement in revenue collection in recent years, the system still falls short of the initial expectations.

The estimated GST collection in 2022-23 was 6.65% of the GDP, only slightly better than the 6.3% collected in 2016-17. Also, collection may be affected when the extended compensation cess expires.

Therefore, **it is important that the GST Council addresses the long-pending issue of rationalising both rates and slabs**. Reducing the number of slabs, along with adjustments in rates, will improve efficiency and collection.

14. [Pro-Khalistan 'freedom rally' in Toronto: Ramping up noise](#)

Source: This post is based on the article "**Let Them Think**", published in The Times of India on 5th July, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3, Internal Security, external threats to internal security

News: The article discusses the resurgence of radical pro-Khalistan propaganda in Canada, which is a cause for concern for India.

What are some of the examples of rise of pro-khalistan activities in Canada?

The perpetrators of June 1985 bombing of Kanishka, Air India's Flight 182 were reported to be the members of the Babbar Khalsa International. However, they went unpunished due to a sloppy investigation by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

No action has been taken against the radical groups such as Sikhs for Justice, who are escalating their activities in Canada.

A planned pro-Khalistan "freedom rally" in Toronto was organised on July 8, which openly threatens violence against Indian diplomats posted in Canada.

A month ago, a parade was held in Toronto by pro-khalistani figures, depicting the assassination of Indira Gandhi.

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What is the reason behind inaction against pro-Khalistani figures in Canada?

Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government is dependent on Jagmeet Singh, a known Khalistani propagandist and leader of the New Democratic Party.

Why is it an internal security matter for India?

Since the initiation of the **"Referendum 2020" campaign** about five years ago in countries with large Sikh diasporas (Canada, the US, Australia, and the UK), the pro-Khalistan activities in Punjab have increased. The sudden emergence of khalistani leader Amritpal Singh is an example. The referendum is aimed at separation of Punjab from India.

The developments in Canada are exacerbating security concerns in Punjab.

However, it is also true that several failures of Punjab's political elites to address economic and social challenges has also contributed to this problem.

15. It will take nuclear energy for global shipping to hit net zero

Source: The post is based on the article **"It will take nuclear energy for global shipping to hit net zero"** published in **Live Mint** on **6th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure, Environment

Relevance: measures needed to achieve net zero in the maritime sector.

News: Shipping industry, which consumes about 5% of the world's oil and emits about 3% of its greenhouse gases, is moving towards a net-zero target.

How is the shipping industry moving towards a net-zero target?

The International Maritime Organization (IMO), a United Nations body responsible for regulating the maritime industry, is meeting in London to strengthen measures to reduce maritime carbon footprint.

A draft is being prepared that **would commit the maritime sector to achieving net-zero emissions by 2050**.

Rich countries along with Marshall Islands (operating one of the largest ship registries globally) are also supporting a carbon tax on shipping.

Whereas, China, a major global exporter, is working to rally developing nations to resist stricter measures on carbon emissions in the shipping industry.

What are the issues involved with the shipping industry in achieving a net zero?

The size and duration of ships' journeys make it difficult to adopt the same technologies used in green power plants and cars. **Only smaller ferries with short routes have the potential** to operate on batteries or solar power.

Wind power is also unpredictable and scarce to meet the needs of the shipping industry. **Even wind-assisted ships currently under construction are unlikely to** have a significant impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

This means that there is a need for some sort of fuel for the shipping industry. Out of the various options being explored, **nuclear power has the capability to make the shipping industry achieve a net zero**.

How is nuclear power a suitable form of energy for the shipping industry?

Nuclear energy is already being used in powering numerous military submarines and aircraft carriers. This offers an established zero-carbon solution for the maritime sector.

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Further, nuclear power would not be needed for all the merchant ships. Only about 17,000 large ships are responsible for around 80% of the sector's greenhouse emissions.

According to a study, atomic ships were found to cost more by only 19% compared to the conventional vessels.

This makes them more competitive than other low-carbon fuel options and potentially cheaper than the current diesel-heavy fuel mix used in conventional vessels. However, there are also challenges present with nuclear energy.

What are the challenges present with adopting nuclear energy in the shipping industry?

Nuclear energy faces a significant challenge from the people, especially when it is related to oceans. **For example**, a protest emerged in Japan during the planned release of wastewater from Japan's Fukushima Daiichi atomic plant into the ocean.

Further, **many countries restrict nuclear power on their territory. For instance, Italy and Denmark have strong anti-nuclear regulation.**

Moreover, **piracy risks for uranium reactors are also present because** merchant ships don't carry the arsenal that military vessels use to deter piracy. There are also **issues with the leakage of the reactors**, if any accidents happen.

What can be the way ahead?

There has been adoption of nuclear-powered ships which operate only on main routes between major ports. However, **if achieving net-zero emissions in the shipping industry is a priority, nuclear energy needs to be adopted at large scale.**

16. The universe's hum and an opportunity to explore

Source: The post is based on the article **"The universe's hum and an opportunity to explore"** published in **"The Indian Express"** on 6th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Awareness in the field of space

News: Recently, astronomers from various initiatives have reported the detection of ultra-low frequency gravitational waves, allowing to probe previously unseen parts of the universe.

What are gravitational waves?

Read here: What is LIGO-India, the Indian node in the global network of labs to probe the universe

How are scientists trying to detect gravitational waves?

Scientists are using a network of millisecond pulsars distributed across our galaxy as a giant detector of gravitational waves. Millisecond pulsars are very dense stars that rotate rapidly, emitting extremely regular pulses of radio waves. Scientists record the timing of these pulses over many years. If a gravitational wave passes through the space between the Earth and a pulsar, it will slightly change the time it takes for the pulses to reach us. By analyzing changes in these timing patterns, scientists hope to detect the presence of gravitational waves.

What is LISA and how does it work?

LISA, short for Laser Interferometer Space Antenna, is a future project (scheduled to be launched in the early 2030s) by the European Space Agency. It's designed to detect gravitational waves from space.

LISA will work using three spacecraft. They will be arranged in a triangle, millions of kilometers apart. Each spacecraft will shoot a laser beam at the other two, forming three 'arms' of laser light.

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If a gravitational wave comes through, the distances between the spacecraft change slightly. This makes the laser beams take a little longer or shorter to reach each other.

Scientists can measure these changes in time to detect the gravitational waves. LISA's large size will help it in finding lower-frequency waves, possibly revealing new space events.

What is the significance and origin of “Nanohertz Waves”?

Nanohertz waves are ultra-low frequency gravitational waves. They are believed to originate from supermassive black holes orbiting each other, typically found at the center of galaxies. When these galaxies collide or merge, the black holes could pair off and produce these waves.

These waves could also come from other exotic events like cosmic strings or early universal expansion, known as inflation.

The detection of nanohertz waves, often referred to as the “hum” of the universe, could give us a way to study the earliest events in the universe and uncover mysteries of its formation and evolution.

What are the Challenges with Detecting Low Frequency Waves, like nanohertz waves?

Detecting low frequency gravitational waves like nanohertz waves presents unique challenges:

Need for larger detectors: Low frequency waves require larger detectors to be detected. For instance, to pick up nanohertz waves, a detector as big as a galaxy would be needed, which is practically impossible to build.

Complex data analysis: It is not easy to identify the tiny signal from the background noise. It involves collecting data over several years and performing intricate statistical analyses to confidently confirm the detection of a gravitational wave.

Compensation for variables: Other factors, like varying pulsar timings, have to be accounted for, making the detection process more complex.

Requirement of long-term observations: Patience is key. It takes meticulous long-term observations and massive collaborative efforts to confidently detect these elusive waves.

17. In Manipur, Army's leadership has experience and ability to do its job

Source: The post is based on the article “Syed Ata Hasnain writes: In Manipur, Army's leadership has experience and ability to do its job” published in “The Indian Express ” on 6th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Security challenges and their management in border areas

News: The Spear Corps of the Indian Army recently shared a video on social media that drew both praise and criticism. The video showed a group of activists, primarily women, blocking and surrounding Indian Army personnel during an operation. This incident highlights the challenges faced by the security forces in carrying out their duties amid local interferences.

Why is Manipur witnessing turmoil?

Manipur is witnessing turmoil due to rising tensions between two ethnic communities, **the Meiteis and the Kukis**.

Historical grievances have escalated, threatening the peaceful coexistence of these communities.

Additionally, segments of the local population, primarily women and children, are obstructing security forces in their attempts to maintain stability and order.

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This method is causing significant concerns, as it hinders timely response during critical situations. The situation's complexity requires careful handling to avoid it escalating into large-scale conflict.

What are the lessons from history?

The lessons learned from past conflicts in Rwanda, Jammu and Kashmir, and Sri Lanka are

- a) From Rwanda (1994), the ethnic conflict between Hutus and Tutsis illustrates how majorities can oppress minorities, leading to long-lasting discord,
- b) In Jammu and Kashmir (1989), the forced migration of Kashmiri Pandits warns us about the enduring wounds of ethnic cleansing,
- c) Sri Lanka's Tamil-Sinhala conflict highlights how ignoring minority sentiments can lead to protracted strife.

All these historical instances underscore that military victories alone can't resolve deep-rooted issues. Achieving peace requires people-to-people understanding and reconciliation, as demonstrated by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

What should be done to overcome this issue?

Building bridges: It's essential to encourage dialogue between the Meiteis and Kukis to understand and address their grievances. Communication is crucial to prevent misunderstandings from escalating into full-blown conflicts.

Promoting reconciliation: Inspired by South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, similar initiatives could be considered. These platforms can help foster understanding and promote healing between conflicting groups.

Supporting security forces: Finally, it's vital to ensure that security forces can perform their duties effectively. This includes preventing obstruction from sections of the population and providing necessary resources. The Indian Army's balanced approach, respecting local sensibilities while maintaining order, should be upheld. Trust in their experience and wisdom can guide the region towards stability.

[18. Should Internet shutdowns be used to maintain public order?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Should Internet shutdowns be used to maintain public order?**" published in "The Hindu" on 7th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

News: Between 2016 and 2022, 60% of Internet shutdowns across the world took place in India.

Why India has more Internet shutdowns than any other country?

Around 40-50% of these shutdowns are implemented due to communal tensions.

Many shutdowns are enforced during protests to curb dissent and maintain public order.

Some are even imposed to prevent cheating during exams, and many during religious processions.

What is the constitutional and judicial view on the internet shutdown?

India's Constitution does not directly address the issue of Internet shutdowns, but various provisions indirectly relate to it and have been interpreted by the judiciary in several important rulings.

Article 19 (Freedom of Speech and Profession): Article 19 of the Indian Constitution guarantees all citizens the right to freedom of speech and expression, and the right to practise

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any profession. These rights have been interpreted to encompass the freedom to access the Internet. In several rulings, the Indian Supreme Court has held that the right to access the Internet falls under the scope of Article 19.

Article 21(Right to Life and Liberty): Article 21 protects the right to life and personal liberty. Over the years, this has been interpreted by the courts to include the right to education and the right to access the Internet, among others. The Supreme Court, in the Anuradha Bhasin and Faheema Shirin rulings, has underscored the importance of preserving Internet access as an extension of the rights under Article 21.

Judicial interpretation and guidelines: The Supreme Court has ruled that Internet shutdowns should be temporary, limited in scope, lawful, and proportionate. These guidelines aim to balance the need for maintaining law and order and preserving individuals' rights to freedom of speech, profession, and personal liberty.

What are the legal provisions related to internet shutdown in India?

India's legislation does not directly address Internet shutdowns, but several legal frameworks are used to govern the practice.

Section 144 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC): This section allows district authorities to issue orders in urgent cases of nuisance or apprehended danger. However, after Anuradha Bhasin judgment by the Supreme Court, there has been a shift towards imposing Internet shutdowns under the more specific Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017, rather than the broader and more general Section 144.

The Information Technology Act, 2000: The law allows for the blocking of websites that present threats to national sovereignty, integrity, or defence. This Act is often invoked as a legal basis for some Internet shutdowns, though the Act itself was designed for website blocking rather than entire network shutdowns.

Temporary Suspension of Telecom Services (Public Emergency or Public Safety) Rules, 2017: It is the primary piece of legislation that governs Internet shutdowns in India. According to these rules, Internet services can be temporarily suspended in cases of public emergency or for public safety. The order for a shutdown must come from a government official not below the rank of a Joint Secretary to the Government of India, and a review committee must assess the situation within five working days.

Read more: [Internet shutdowns in India: impacts and way forward](#)

What are the impacts of the internet shut down?

Economically, they can be devastating. Many businesses, particularly those reliant on the Internet, can be severely impacted, leading to lost revenues and potentially, job losses.

In terms of education, prolonged shutdowns can hinder students' access to online learning materials and opportunities, potentially costing them scholarships or even academic years. This impact has become even more pronounced with the rise of digital education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Healthcare services can also be affected, as telemedicine and online health information become inaccessible during a shutdown. Additionally, **essential services** like food delivery or digital payments can be disrupted, affecting people's everyday lives.

Moreover, the restriction on the free flow of information can **curtail freedom of speech and expression, affecting democratic processes and potentially leading to human rights violations.**

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19. [Express View on Yamuna status report: River abandoned](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Express View on Yamuna status report: River abandoned” published in “Indian Express” on 8th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment

News: In January, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) established a panel led by Delhi’s lieutenant governor to find way to rejuvenate the Yamuna river in the capital. However, a six-month status report by the Delhi government reveals minimal reduction in pollution levels.

What are the major findings of the status report on the Yamuna river rejuvenation?

Major finding are as follows:

- The pollution levels in Yamuna river have barely decreased despite interventions.
- The sewage treatment plants in Delhi are not fully utilized, causing untreated sewage to flow into the river.
- Many poor communities lack access to the sewage pipe network.
- Despite expanding the sewerage network to some unauthorized areas, around 245 million gallons of sewage remain untreated daily.
- A 15-year old project designed to trap sewage has failed to meet deadlines and didn’t account for Delhi’s growing population.
- City authorities like the DDA, municipal corporation, and pollution control agencies aren’t collaborating effectively.
- More than 70% of Yamuna’s pollution comes from Delhi, making it crucial to improve the city’s pollution control.
- Much of the Yamuna River in Delhi is so polluted that it’s unfit for bathing.

This underlines the critical need for effective pollution control measures in the capital.

20. [Internationalisation of Indian currency: The rupee challenge](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Internationalisation of Indian currency: The rupee challenge**” published in **The Indian Express** on **8th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Monetary Policy, Growth & Development

Relevance: About the benefits and challenges associated with Internationalization of rupee.

News: Reserve Bank of India’s (RBI) Inter-Departmental Group (IDG) has recommended several measures for Internationalization of rupee.

What is internationalization of rupee?

[Click Here to Read](#)

What are the benefits of internationalization of rupee?

[Click Here to Read](#)

It also protects the economy from sudden stops and reversals of capital flows.

What are the different measures recommended by the IDG?

Read Here: [Internationalization of the Rupee: Explained](#)

What are the challenges with the internationalization of the rupee?

As per reports, even though the central bank had allowed banks in July last year to settle international trade in rupees with 18 countries, **there has been little progress in adopting this facility.**

For example, Russia favors the yuan or the dirham as transaction mediums, even though there has been a significant increase in oil imports from India.

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What can be the way ahead?

The process of internationalising the Indian rupee **requires permitting easier and more unconstrained transactions in the rupee.**

The development of financial and foreign exchange markets will also play a critical role in determining the pace of internationalization of the currency.

Further, as the Indian economy grows in size and as its trade linkages with other countries grow stronger, more space will be created for using the rupee in international transactions.

21. Tomato challenge: Hoarding is not as bad as it sounds

Source– The post is based on the article **“Tomato challenge: Hoarding is not as bad as it sounds”** published in the **“mint”** on **10th July 2023.**

Syllabus: GS3- Economy – Pricing and inflation

Relevance: Issues related to inflation

News- The ministry of consumer affairs announced a **‘Tomato Grand Challenge’** with the objective to ensure the availability of tomatoes at fair prices.

What is the popular perception about hoarding?

There is perception is that **holding back supply causes the price to rise.** People form an opinion based on what is visible today and ignore what is likely to happen tomorrow.

People cannot make much sense of **year- on-year price changes.** They tend to have a **recency bias.** People compare today’s prices with those of goods when last purchased.

What are impacts of high inflation on food items?

Relatively low-income families face the brunt of it in terms of household expenditure when these prices shoot up, and without notice.

In contrast, farmers face distress when prices collapse suddenly, resulting in severe losses.

Why hoarding is essential for producers?

Farmers have destroyed excess produce to **avoid a price collapse.** They should have an option to stock the extra produce.

The demand for food products is relatively stable. Variations in supply cause dramatic changes in these prices. Hoarding tends to reduce price volatility.

The release of hoarded produce also lowers tomorrow’s prices when tomorrow comes. This is called **‘invisible’ trade-offs** because what happens tomorrow cannot be seen today.

What is the way forward?

There is need to develop cold storage options for cultivators. These should be **accessible at reasonable** prices. Cultivators should be allowed to decide when to bring their supply to the market.

There is need for creative ideas for developing **integrated supply chain.** Innovative solutions to achieve low-cost cold storage of farm produce and develop an **efficient food processing sector** can be helpful.

22. [Who can dethrone the US dollar?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Who can dethrone the US dollar?” published in **Business Standard** on 10th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development

Relevance: concerns associated with adopting alternatives payments system against dollars.

News: Countries around the world are taking measures for dedollarization and coming up with alternative transaction mechanisms. However, the factors that make the dollar an international currency must be considered.

What are the factors that make dollars an international currency?

Read – [De-dollarisation of Trade](#)

What have been the previous attempts to dethrone the dollar?

Japan: During the 1990s, Japan was the second-largest economy in the world, had good institutions, and it commanded confidence from the world on inflation, taxation, and capital controls.

It tried a big “industrial policy” push to establish the Japanese yen as a major international currency. However, the attempt failed.

Euro: After the failure of Japan, the euro emerged as a significant currency and the European Union (EU) began to rival the US as an economic powerhouse.

This gave the euro recognition as an international currency. However, the euro remains a minor player compared to the dominant position of the US dollar.

What measures are being taken by China?

The Chinese government is making efforts **to promote the renminbi as a global currency.** However, China faces more challenges compared to Japan.

China has strict capital controls, similar to India, which restrict the flow of money in and out of the country. The Chinese central bank primarily pegs the renminbi to the US dollar, which means it is not truly an independent exchange rate.

Further, **China lacks confidence in managing inflation and taxation** and it also does not have an appealing financial system that attracts non-resident investors or fundraisers Hence, this ambition of the Chinese state is likely to go unfulfilled.

What can be the way ahead for India?

First, India has the potential to become a major producer of internationalized financial services.

This can be achieved by implementing the recommendations of the Percy Mistry report on making Mumbai an international financial center and the Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission report by Justice Srikrishna.

Second, policymakers should aim to restore the pre-independence era where the rupee was widely trusted and used across South Asia, Southeast Asia, West Asia, and East Africa.

This requires maintaining good institutions over a period of 50 years, particularly regarding inflation, taxation, capital controls, and demonetization. **In terms of inflation,** the goal should be to sustain the 4 percent inflation target consistently over a 50-year period.

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23. Express view on extreme weather: Heat is on

Source: The post is based on the article “**Express view on extreme weather: Heat is on**” published in **Indian Express** on 10th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Environment (Climate change)

News: Last week saw global average daily temperatures in a range never seen before. Last Monday, it reached above 17 degrees Celsius. This was the hottest day recorded in history. The record was beaten again on Tuesday, and then on Thursday. More records are expected to be broken in the coming days and weeks. 2023 is likely to be one of the hottest years ever.

How is climate change progressing?

Climate change is happening as predicted by scientists, but maybe a bit faster. It's not just heat, but also heavy rain, floods, droughts, and wildfires. While these cannot be stopped instantly, governments can act to reduce their impact.

What can be done to tackle heat waves?

Simple interventions can significantly reduce deaths from heat waves. However, many local governments don't have a heat action plan. No area can consider itself safe from heat waves due to their unpredictable nature.

How has heat wave exposure increased over the years?

In 2015, nine states experienced heat waves. By 2020, 23 states were affected. The number of **heat wave days per year increased from seven in 2015 to 33 in 2020.** Last month, eastern UP saw many people hospitalized, and several died due to heat-related diseases. These are the shocks that may repeat if local governments are not prepared.

Why heat waves in the rainy season?

It may seem strange to discuss heat waves during the rainy season. However, **July is one of the four months when heat waves are expected.** Recent trends suggest that heat waves could occur in subsequent months as well. Therefore, it's an ideal time for local governments to prepare for heat emergencies.

24. The problem with battery electric vehicles

Source: The post is based on the article “**The problem with battery electric vehicles**” published in “Indian Express” on 10th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life. & Environmental pollution.

News: Rowan Atkinson, known for his love of cars, expressed his skepticism about the push for electric vehicles (EVs). In a Guardian article, he raised concerns about the environmental impact of manufacturing EVs and the state support for them. He believes this focus on EVs could be problematic if replicated in India.

What are EVs?

Electric Vehicles (EVs) are vehicles that are powered by electricity, instead of traditional fuel sources like gasoline or diesel. They utilize an electric motor for propulsion, and the electricity that powers them is stored in rechargeable batteries. There are several types of EVs, including: Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs), Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEVs), Plug-in Hybrid Electric Vehicles (PHEVs), and Fuel Cell Vehicles (FCVs)

What are the Issues in promoting the adoption of Battery Electric Vehicles (BEVs)?

Upfront subsidy: The effectiveness of state subsidies for BEVs is debated. While they have worked in some markets like Norway, the U.S, and China, they primarily benefit middle and upper-middle classes, who are the typical buyers of BEVs.

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Charging network: According to World Bank, Charging infrastructure plays a critical role in EV adoption. India currently has a limited number of public charging stations, making it difficult for BEV owners to find convenient charging options. For instances, as of mid-2022, India has only about 2,000 public charging stations, despite having over a million EVs.

Electricity source: In many countries, electricity for EVs is generated from renewable sources, like, Norway has 99% hydroelectric power. In India, most electricity is still generated from coal-fired thermal plants. Therefore, while BEVs may reduce emissions in cities, they still contribute to pollution at the power generation stage.

Value chain: India relies heavily on imports for the lithium required to produce Li-ion batteries for BEVs. This dependency presents supply chain risks and could impact the country's ability to meet growing demand for BEVs. For example, demand for Li-ion batteries from India is projected to grow at a CAGR of more than 30% by volume up to 2030.

Note: More than 90% of the global Li production is concentrated in Chile, Argentina, and Bolivia alongside Australia and China, and other key inputs such as cobalt and nickel are mined in the Congo and Indonesia

Variety of technologies: There are other efficient vehicle technologies available apart from BEVs. Focusing too heavily on one technology might limit innovation and the potential benefits from other promising technologies.

What are the new technologies that would be helpful in the push for battery electric vehicles (BEVs)?

Hybrid vehicles: Hybrid technology, which combines an internal combustion engine (ICE) with an electric powertrain, can improve fuel efficiency and doesn't require extensive charging infrastructure like BEVs. However, they still use Li-ion batteries, and their efficiency can drop when using air conditioning, which is often needed in India.

Ethanol and Flex Fuels: Flex fuel vehicles can run on more than one type of fuel, or a mixture of fuels like petrol and ethanol. This technology is currently under commercial deployment in countries like Brazil, Canada, and the US.

Hydrogen Fuel Cell Electric Vehicles (FCEVs) and Hydrogen ICE: [Read here](#)

Synthetic fuels: Porsche is developing a synthetic fuel made from carbon dioxide and hydrogen using renewable energy. This approach could extend the lifespan of ICE cars while making them virtually CO₂-neutral. The fuel production is being tested in Chile. From 2026, Formula One will also use synthetic fuel.

What should be done?

To facilitate the transition to EVs, governments must focus on fair subsidy distribution, investing in charging infrastructure, and promoting local battery production. Researching alternative technologies, implementing robust policies, and raising public awareness are crucial. Intermediate technologies can bridge the gap, ensuring safety standards are met, while government and automaker partnerships can incentivize wider EV adoption.

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[25. AI's disruptive economic impact, an India check](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**AI's disruptive economic impact, an India check**” published in “The Hindu” on 11th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – science and technology (awareness in the fields of computer)

News:

How has Artificial Intelligence (AI) influenced daily life and business operations?

AI has emerged as an indispensable tool in our daily lives and businesses, contributing to authoring poems, devising pickup lines, and solving complex problems. Large language models and generative AI have spurred global interest in AI advancement. The application of AI extends across various fields, with an increased adoption of AI systems such as ChatGPT.

Are there positive impacts from AI adoption?

Several studies indicate a positive correlation between AI adoption and increased productivity.

A study by MIT demonstrated how AI tools enhanced worker productivity by 14% and improved consumer satisfaction. It is suggested that AI may not replace employees, but workers using AI may substitute those not skilled enough.

A LinkedIn survey found that 70% of employees in top US companies perceived AI as beneficial to their productivity. Further investments and business restructuring are required to fully utilize AI's potential.

How will AI impact economic growth?

A study by PricewaterhouseCoopers predicts a **global GDP increase of 14% or \$15.7 trillion by 2030 due to AI advancements.**

The Kent A. Clark Center for Global Markets survey showed 44% of US experts and 34% of European experts expect a substantial increase in GDP per capita due to AI.

However, some experts like Professor Nicholas Bloom suggest that AI might not significantly impact per capita GDP.

Could AI Negatively Impact Employment?

Despite its benefits, AI also poses risks, such as labour replacement. Research by Daron Acemoglu and Pascual Restrepo indicates that robot adoption negatively affects employment and wages, particularly for blue-collar workers and those with lower education levels. Automation is associated with wage inequality, particularly in industries undergoing rapid automation.

What are the Prospects for India in the AI era?

India, given its vast population, needs to consider the possible negative impact of AI on employment.

Regulation of AI could deter investments and opportunities, but India can potentially leverage its demographic dividend by focusing on AI education and training, especially as online education gains traction after the COVID-19 pandemic.

What is the Overall Impact of AI?

While the impact of AI on productivity and economic growth is largely positive, its effect on the labour market and societal implications can be challenging.

Many experts agree that AI may bring about significant societal challenges in the labour market, politics, data privacy, crime, and warfare.

There is a need for robust cyber regulations and potentially tax capital to balance the returns from capital and labor and mitigate the displacement effects. Adapting to the ever-evolving AI

advancements is crucial to progress.

26. The strange particle that holds the key to 'quantum supercomputer

Source: The post is based on the article “**The strange particle that holds the key to quantum supercomputer**” published in “The Hindu” on 11th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – science and technology (awareness in the fields of computer)

News: Researchers from Microsoft reported engineering a topological superconductor made of an aluminum superconductor and an indium arsenide semiconductor.

What does the term ‘Majorana’ mean?

‘Majorana’ refers to fermions that are their own antiparticles, as proposed by the Italian physicist Ettore Majorana in 1937. These particles satisfy certain conditions under the Dirac equation, originally developed by the British physicist Paul Dirac in 1928 to incorporate quantum mechanics with special relativity. The equation predicts that each particle has a corresponding antiparticle, and Majorana discovered that certain particles could serve as their own antiparticles.

What is Majorana Zero Mode?

Majorana zero modes are a unique kind of particle, a bound state of fermions that are their own antiparticles. These particles have distinct quantum numbers, including quantum spin with half-integer values, such as $1/2$, $3/2$, $5/2$, and so on. The rules applicable to single fermions also apply to these bound pairs. If these bound states encounter each other, they annihilate, justifying their title as Majorana fermions.

What are the benefits of Majorana Zero Mode for Quantum Computing?

Majorana zero modes offer significant benefits to quantum computing. They act as stable qubits, with the unique ability to exist in two states simultaneously, providing a basis for quantum superposition. By encoding information into these modes, quantum computers can be shielded from decoherence, a typical challenge with these machines. Additionally, these zero modes employ non-Abelian statistics, offering an extra degree of freedom and potentially different outcomes, depending on the order of operations. Consequently, Majorana zero modes could unlock superior quantum computing capabilities, from increased resilience to expanded computational possibilities.

What does ‘Topological’ mean?

“Topological” refers to properties of a system that remain unchanged even when the system is continuously deformed, such as stretching or twisting, without tearing or gluing. Topological degeneracy is a state in quantum mechanics where multiple configurations can exist at the system’s lowest energy. In context of quantum computing, Majorana zero modes can store information across different topological properties and, due to this topological nature, they are more robust to disturbances, making them ideal candidates for qubits in quantum computing.

What are the challenges in realizing Majorana Zero Modes?

First, isolating Majorana zero modes experimentally is extremely challenging due to the precise conditions required. They are expected to exist only in certain types of superconductors, under very specific conditions.

Second, even if isolated, verifying their existence is difficult. Majorana zero modes leave a minimal experimental footprint, making their detection and confirmation problematic.

Third, there’s a challenge in maintaining the stability of Majorana zero modes. The stability of these states is extremely sensitive to environmental influences, which could easily disrupt them.

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Fourth, the manipulation of Majorana zero modes is not straightforward. It requires highly advanced and controlled experimental techniques, which are currently not fully developed.

Lastly, scaling up from individual Majorana zero modes to a fully functional quantum computer architecture is a monumental task, involving numerous technical and conceptual obstacles.

What new discovery has Microsoft made?

Researchers at Microsoft have reported the engineering of a topological superconductor from an aluminium superconductor and an indium arsenide semiconductor. They claim that their device passed the “topological gap protocol,” which suggests a high probability of hosting Majorana zero modes. Microsoft’s VP of advanced quantum development stated that the company believes that a quantum supercomputer using these qubits could be built within 10 years and could perform a reliable one million quantum operations per second. Despite this, many experts remain cautious and believe that independent confirmation of the results is required, and that topological quantum computing could still be at least a century away.

[27. Second moonshot – On Chandrayaan-3 mission](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Second moonshot**” published in **The Hindu** on **11th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science & Technology

Relevance: Significance of Chandrayaan-3 mission

News: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is set to launch the Chandrayaan-3 mission to the moon on July 14.

About Chandrayaan-3 Mission

Read Here: [Chandrayaan-3 successfully completes crucial test and Chandrayaan-3 integrated with launch vehicle LVM3](#)

The mission has six scientific payloads to study the various features of the moon.

ISRO has strengthened the lander’s legs, lowered its minimum thrust, enhanced the availability of power, and upgraded the landing sequence to increase the chances of a successful mission.

What is the significance of Chandrayaan-3 Mission?

First, a successful mission will demonstrate the country’s capabilities in relevant technologies.

Second, a successful mission would also position India as the second country to achieve a soft moon landing.

Third, the mission holds significant importance, as establishing permanent moon bases has become a geopolitical goal worldwide.

Fourth, the success of Chandrayaan-3 will also make it the first surface mission closest to the lunar south pole, a region of the moon that has been found to be geologically unique.

Fifth, a seventh instrument, on the propulsion module, will profile the signs of life on earth to help scientists look for similar signs on planets beyond the solar system.

Sixth, on the eve of the [Artemis Accord](#), where the US is leading lunar research missions while China and Russia collaborating on an ‘International Lunar Research Station,’ Chandrayaan-3 is critical for India’s recognition globally.

Overall, Chandrayaan-3 provides India with an opportunity to lead the global response to the moon’s increasing scientific and political significance.

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[28. Improving Pensions](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Improving Pensions**” published in the “**Business Standard**” on **11th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3-Economy

Relevance: Issues related to financial system

News- The article explains the issues related to pension funds in India.

What are the issues related to pension funds in India?

Return on investment– The majority of the funds are composed of **investment returns**. But, **long-term real returns** on debt instruments are relatively low.

There are two primary reasons for this. Firstly, banks in India are required to maintain a **statutory liquidity ratio**. As a result, the demand for these bonds is high. It drives up their prices and consequently **lowering yields**.

Secondly, in order to stimulate economic growth, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) maintains a **low real repo rate**. This has an impact on overall **returns on investment**.

Risk on investment– Investment returns also come with **certain risks**. **Inflation risk** is the first one. It can diminish the **real value of the corpus** held by pension funds. The second risk is **interest rate risk**. It can cause **significant fluctuations in bond and equity prices**, affecting pension funds.

Another risk is the potential change in **market sentiment**. Both **equity and bond prices** can fluctuate for prolonged periods. This poses risks to pension funds.

Dependence on authorities– The risks associated with investments depend on the **actions of public authorities**. Asset markets do not operate independently.

They function within a **macroeconomic policy and regulatory framework**. If these policies and regulations are not appropriate, investment risks can be very high.

Suitable changes in **policy and regulations** can help **mitigate risks** and improve the **gains for pension funds**.

Furthermore, the **repo rate** is a **key policy tool** used by the RBI to maintain **macroeconomic stability**. This rate undergoes significant changes over an economic cycle.

It affects interest rates in the broader economy. However, there is often an **overreaction in asset markets**, posing risks to pension funds.

Regulatory framework– There are also concerns related to the **regulatory framework governing investments**. One key issue is the **absence of regulations** addressing the **pervasive role of market sentiment**.

[29. Floods in India](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Express view on monsoon-battered India: Weathering it out**” published in “**The Indian Express**” and “**Fury of floods**” published in the “**Business Standard**” on **12th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Disaster management

News- The article explains the issue of increasing flooding events in India in recent years.

How rainfall patterns during the monsoon season have shown a distinct change in recent years?

Most parts of the country have witnessed **intense bursts of rain, with relatively dry spells**.

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After the Uttarakhand disaster of 2013, India is experiencing at least **one intense rainfall event** that has resulted in **large-scale flooding**.

Examples are floods in Chennai in 2015, Kerala in 2018, Bihar in 2019, Bengaluru last year, Assam almost every year.

What are some facts about flood vulnerable areas in India?

As per **National Flood Commission in its 1980 report**, the country's overall **flood-prone area** is **40 million hectares, or 12 percent of the total geographical area**. It has since expanded to over **50 million hectares**.

Flash floods are now common in places that were earlier not considered **flood-prone earlier**. The **arid zones in Rajasthan and parts of Gujarat** are typical examples.

The **“flood vulnerability index” of the National Disaster Management Authority** has identified Punjab, Haryana, West Bengal, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala, Assam, Gujarat and Odisha as the states most susceptible to floods.

As per the **National Remote Sensing Centre of the Indian Space Research Organisation**, there exist several new stretches in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha and West Bengal that are **prone to flooding** after heavy rain.

The hilly states in Himalayan range are **susceptible to floods** due to **landslides, subsidence, and re-routing of the natural course of rivers and water channels**.

What are the reasons behind the increase in flooding events?

As India's cities expanded, there was **encroachment of natural water sinks** such as wetlands, marshes and lakes.

In most of the country, **storm water drains** that were planned decades ago are still **locked in networks**. **Inadequate municipal administration** worsens the situation and drains are **almost always blocked**.

This means that too much rainwater gets **trapped within a city's borders**. For example, the **storm water drains in Delhi** can't handle the 153 mm of rain that Delhi received over the past weekend.

There is a lack of **pre-emptive moves** to mitigate the floods. Flood control by **multipurpose irrigation-cum-hydro-power projects** and other water management programmes in the past is not in practice. No new projects were started in the recent past.

Existing dams have become **bane** due to **unregulated and uncoordinated water releases** from these structures. It leads to flooding in many areas in **central and peninsular India**.

Deforestation and global warming have led to cloudbursts, cyclones, and have aggravated the **flood risk**.

Soil erosion lowers its capacity to **soak rainwater**. Besides, there is **denudation of vegetative cover** in river catchments. It has increased the **load of sediments** in riverbeds and reduced their **water-carrying capacity**.

There is **encroachment of natural floodplains** of rivers. It has lowered their ability to act as **natural buffers against floods**.

Unplanned expansion of habitation, and indiscriminate disposal of garbage and other urban waste is also responsible for flooding.

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What is the way forward for flood management?

Relief efforts need to be stepped up. There is a need for a **proactive policy against climate vagaries**.

There are requirements for **different strategies for urban floods**.

There is a need for a **holistic approach** to address the menace of recurring floods. The government can set up an **experts' panel to prepare a national flood control plan**.

[30. The rise of revenue department](#)

Source: This post has been created based on the article "The rise of revenue department", published in Business Standard on 12th July, 2023.

Syllabus topic: GS Paper 3 – Mobilization of resources and associated issues

News: The recent multiple changes made by the Indian government to the Tax Collection at Source (TCS) system depicts a troubling shift in the revenue department's approach to tax initiatives.

Although India's tax system needs a more transparency, minimized discretion, and improved ease for taxpayers, it seems revenue department is returning to pre-reform practices. It is imposing unfriendly tax laws.

What are the recent changes made to the taxation system by the government?

on February 1, government announced all Liberalised Remittance Scheme (LRS) remittances would be subject to the tax collection at source (TCS). TCS rate was increased from 5% to 20% for both LRS remittances and overseas tour packages.

On May, government announced removal of differential treatment for credit cards for international transactions. This meant that credit card payments for foreign exchange bills would also attract a 20% TCS.

The third change announced last month rolled back the changes. For all remittances under the LRS and overseas tour packages, the TCS rate became zero for amounts up to ₹7 lakh per individual per year. It also exempted overseas credit card transactions from the LRS.

What are the critical arguments against these moves?

TCS rate was initially justified as a means for the government to monitor transactions. However, Banking records could already provide a trail for the tax department to monitor for tax evasion.

It shows that revenue department has been experimenting with unfriendly tax initiatives.

It also indicates returning to old practices that had been reduced after the economic reforms of the 1990s. These reforms included significant cuts in import duties, reduction and rationalization of direct taxes, and the implementation of the goods and services tax (GST).

The changes to the TCS for LRS remittances suggest a return to pre-reform practices.

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31. [It is unfair to blame survey methodology when results disagree with a view point](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**It is unfair to blame survey methodology when results disagree with a view point**” published in **The Indian Express** on **12th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Growth & Development, Planning

Relevance: concerns associated with various surveys conducted in India

News: In a recent article titled “The sample is wrong,” **Shamika Ravi, a member of the PM’s Economic Advisory Council**, expressed concerns about national surveys in India. However, it is not a correct picture.

What concerns were highlighted by Shamika Ravi?

Under-Representation: She argued that indicators used by the National Sample Survey (NSS) and the World Health Organization (WHO) have failed to capture the true progress of India, and they express concerns about the deterioration of the official statistical system.

The overestimation of the rural population in national surveys conducted by NSS and NFHS (National Family Health Survey) is cited as an example of this shortcoming.

However, the national data gathering system has gone to great lengths to make the samples statistically representative.

For instance, separate samples are drawn for rural and urban areas, and any excluded geographical regions are clearly specified for reasons beyond the organization’s control.

Moreover, the population estimates derived from the NSS have consistently been lower than the numbers reported by the Census or its projected figures.

Although this disparity has been investigated in the past, **no specific faults in the survey methodology have been identified.**

Share of the Rural Population: Shamika Ravi further argued that the share of rural population estimated by NSS/NFHS post 2011 Census is much higher than the projected share of rural population from the Census.

However, **population projection is based on assumptions on** fertility, mortality and migration using appropriate statistical models.

The urban population is projected using the urban-rural growth differential (**URGD**) from the period 2001-2011, which implicitly takes into account increases both in statutory and Census towns.

Moreover, **the primary objective of the NSS and other survey agencies is to generate statistically valid estimates separately for rural and urban areas.**

They typically report percentage values rather than absolute numbers across different categories. **Their methodologies are not designed to estimate the population size in the survey year.**

Conservative in Urban Projections: Shamika Ravi argues that the Census has been conservative in its urban projections as India achieved the urbanisation level projected for 2016 in 2011.

However, using the method of URGD, even the United Nations (UN) has projected a much higher share of urban population in India.

It is also worth noting that the last Census data is over 13 years old, and despite several representations, the Registrar General of India (RGI) has not made efforts to reassess its urban projections.

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Response Deficits: Shamika Ravi observes a relationship between response deficits in surveys and wealth levels. It is true that household surveys are becoming difficult due to non-cooperation of households and non-access to richer households in urban areas.

However, the NSS utilizes a substitution method for non-cooperating households, ensuring a near 100 percent response rate. Hence, the observation that the response rate of men falls significantly with wealth needs investigation.

What is the way ahead?

Sampling theory and practice is a scientific discipline. Even some of the surveys conducted by MOSPI have also been found to be of indifferent quality due to engagement of outside agencies.

Hence, it is unjust to solely blame the survey methodology when survey estimates diverge from a particular narrative.

32. How the CPI basket conceals the inflation picture

Source: The post is based on an article **“How the CPI basket conceals the inflation picture”** published in **The Hindu** on **13th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Growth & Development, Monetary Policy**

Relevance: **concerns associated with the calculation of CPI**

News The article discusses the issues present in calculating the Consumer Price Index (CPI).

What are the issues present with the CPI basket?

Inclusion of Outdated Items: The CPI still monitors a wide range of items, including outdated technologies like torches, radios, tape recorders, CDs, DVDs, etc.

These items have minimal significance in the overall CPI calculation and no longer reflect our current consumption patterns.

Over-reliance on Food Inflation: The weightage of food in the CPI basket has decreased from 60.9 (in 1960) to 57.0 (in 1982) and to 46.2 (in 2001). This gradual decline indicates that as the economy/income grows, the proportion of income spent on food decreases. **This trend is known as Engel’s Law.**

However, India still has a significant weightage of food in the CPI. This over-reliance on food inflation distinguishes Indian inflation from many other developed countries where the food weight is much smaller.

This shift in the developed countries imply that as people’s income rises, they tend to allocate a larger proportion of their spending towards non-food items such as housing, education, healthcare, personal care, etc.

Excessive Weightage to Cereals: Cereals are assigned excessively high weight of 9.67 in the CPI basket. This raises two issues –

- as economies grow and societies evolve, people’s eating habits diversify. This includes moving towards a broader range of nutrient-rich options beyond cereals. This shift in food consumption patterns would have naturally occurred over the past decade, reducing the relative expenditure on cereals.
- the **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana** has significantly decreased cereal expenses for a large segment of the population, potentially modifying consumption patterns and further reducing the relative expenditure on cereals.

Despite these changes, cereals still have excessive weightage in the CPI basket.

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However, even though current evolving pattern of consumptions are included in the CPI, challenges would still remain.

What are the challenges present with updating CPI?

Weights for CPI can only undergo a significant shift after data from the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (**CES**) is available.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (**MoSPI**) is currently conducting the CES, with the first round scheduled to conclude in July 2023 and the second round a year later in July 2024.

However, **even when the CES results are published around December 2024, creating a new CPI based on this fresh data will take several more months.**

Therefore, till then we will continue to rely on outdated parameters to assess inflation. **This affects the accuracy of measuring the cost of living and economic well-being.**

Moreover, **the lack of the CES data has resulted in various issues such as – a)** it has become difficult to determine the population under the poverty line accurately, and **b)** tracking inflation effectively.

What can be the way ahead?

It is crucial for the MoSPI to address these gaps promptly. **Efficient data processing should be prioritized without compromise.**

33. Needed: Alert systems for the growing threat of humid heat

Source: The post is based on an article “Needed: Alert systems for the growing threat of humid heat” published in **Live Mint** on **13th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Disaster Management**

Relevance: **concerns over rising heat related deaths**

News: June was the Earth’s hottest month ever recorded. This has raised concerns over rising heat and its implications.

What are the concerns over rising temperatures?

Due to the rising temperature, heat related deaths have increased. **According to a 2021 paper in the Lancet**, about 469,000 people worldwide died from overheating.

Why do people die from heat?

Heat can be deadly because our bodies are composed of cells protected by membranes that can melt under extreme temperatures. Moreover, despite being warm-blooded, our bodies need to maintain a core temperature of around 36.6° C.

Our bodies cool down by sending blood to the skin, where it releases heat into the air. However, **this process becomes less effective when the air temperature reaches around 35° C**, and sweating becomes necessary to cool off.

The evaporation of sweat cools us down. **However, when humidity is too high, sweat fails to evaporate, causing sweat drips and preventing effective cooling.**

Furthermore, with 100% humidity and an air temperature of 35° C, humans can begin to experience the effects of their own body heat, and individuals who are more vulnerable can suffer from heatstroke at lower temperatures.

Moreover, the elderly and individuals with heart conditions are at greater risk of heart attacks as the body’s cooling mechanisms can create cardiovascular stress if pushed too hard.

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Further, once the core body temperature rises above 40° C, the situation becomes dangerous, and if it goes above 41° C, heatstroke can be fatal.

People can adapt to heat over time by spending a few days in a hot environment. However, prolonged exposure to extreme heat can overpower these adaptive responses.

Moreover, factors such as humidity, wind velocity and direct exposure to sunlight, a person's level of exertion, body size and clothes determine the severity of heat.

Must Read: [Heat strokes in India: Reasons and Impacts – Explained](#)

What preventive measures can be adopted to prevent heat related deaths?

Ollie Jay, a health researcher in Australia has developed a five-level 'heat stress' warning scale to notify people about the danger of heat.

This scale takes into account factors such as temperature, wind, sun exposure, and humidity to warn individuals when these conditions combine to create a deadly situation. **Alerts could be sent to phones and sent out on television.**

Adopting a science-based heat-risk scale can also inform workers about dangerous conditions and require employers to provide breaks for outdoor workers when their lives are at risk.

Jay further suggested that providing air conditioning for everyone is not a viable solution, as it contributes to heat generation in crowded cities, consumes significant energy, and emits carbon emissions.

Therefore, **ACs should be established in common spaces** like libraries and develop systems to transport vulnerable people to these locations during heatwaves.

What can be the way ahead?

Due to the rising global warming, city officials will need to adopt heat warning systems, establish public cooling centers, and enforce science-based regulations to prevent heat-related fatalities.

34. [The China traps](#)

Source- The post is based on the article **"The China traps"** published in the **"Business Standard"** on **13th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance: Chinese growth story and lessons for India

News- There is some disconnect between how China's position as an economic power is portrayed and its actual trajectory.

What is the current economic scenario in China?

The Chinese economy's recovery from the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic has been weak. Retail inflation had fallen monthly. The Chinese economy is facing deflation, driven by low demand and shrinking manufacturing output.

Over 20 percent of the mainland's workers under the age of 24 in China were unemployed. This is a higher rate than in most comparable economies.

What are simultaneous and interlinked economic traps faced by the Chinese economy?

One of these is the **deflationary trap**, where the economy struggles with declining prices and a lack of consumer spending.

Another challenge is the **investment trap**. Policymakers have limited options to stimulate growth and employment. They are mainly relying on increasing public investment.

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However, the returns on additional investment are diminishing, and the country already has a high level of public debt.

To address these challenges, it would require a significant structural shift in the economy, such as promoting private consumption over fixed investment. However, the Communist Party is hesitant to undertake such changes due to the political implications they may entail.

China also faces the hurdle known as the **“middle-income trap,”**. It occurs when a country reaches a certain level of income and development but struggles to progress further.

The mainland’s youth unemployment problem is a manifestation of this trap. Tech and start-up sector, which could have provided opportunities for young people, is not growing at the required pace.

What are lessons for India?

The current scenario is a result of deliberate decisions made by Beijing. It holds significant policy implications for New Delhi.

The decline of China’s tech sector due to a crackdown enforced by Party officials serves as a reminder of the risks associated with politically motivated and arbitrary regulations.

India must exert greater efforts to establish its regulatory framework as independent and impartial.

It is crucial for India’s economy not to become overly reliant on public investment decisions. Maintaining fiscal responsibility and actively working towards reducing debt should also remain key priorities for India.

35. Unfair taxation in the name of climate action

Source: The post is based on the article **“Unfair taxation in the name of climate action”** published in **Business Standard** on **14th July 2023**.

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

Relevance: **concerns associated with levying emission related taxes**

News: Rich countries have proposed global tax and tariff to mobilize finance for climate change. These taxes will harm the developing countries.

What are some of the taxation measures being adopted by rich countries?

Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM): There are many flaws with CBAM –

- In the short run, this will generate more revenue for the EU and/or force exporters to squeeze their profit margins and wages to reduce costs.
- A tariff on an externality only alleviates if it is applied at the source of the externality, but the tariff in this case is imposed at the point of sale.
- The data needed to accurately assess and compare emissions is also contentious.
- CBAM mainly targets raw materials rather than finished goods. It will disproportionately affect countries in Africa and the European neighborhood that are not significant historical or present-day polluters.

A proposed tax on Carbon Emissions from Shipping: It is based on the argument that shipping services are underpriced as no account is taken of their carbon emissions. Therefore, the tax can reduce emissions either by reducing shipping movements or by promoting switching to alternative low-carbon shipping technologies.

However, the immediate impact of the tax will depend on the demand elasticity for shipping.

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If demand is inelastic, there will be no significant short-term reduction in emissions. Instead, it will increase the cost of shipping goods, and the burden of this tax will be passed on to consumers.

Moreover, the tax will discriminate against island states and importers of bulk goods, including fuels, agricultural goods, and essential minerals. It will also discriminate against countries seeking to industrialize through export-led growth.

The tax revenues will primarily only benefit the top 10 shipping countries, which are predominantly high-income economies.

What measures are being adopted by rich countries to mitigate the effect of such taxes on developing countries?

First, rich countries have proposed measures of giving developing countries some of the money raised from these taxes.

However, **it is the poorer countries themselves that will bear the burden of these taxes as well as be part of financing such transfers.**

Second, the other proposal adopted by rich countries involves **subsidizing the transition of these countries to lower carbon technologies.**

However, if this transition were fully supported through grant finance, there would be no need for these tariffs.

What can be the way ahead?

Rich countries are neither willing to take retroactive responsibility for carbon emissions nor provide grant and concessional finance in substantial measure to tackle the problem in contemporary times.

Hence, **by adopting such taxation measures they only tend to hinder the development of poor countries.**

[36. Protect rural incomes to tackle the current food security threat](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Protect rural incomes to tackle the current food security threat**” published in **Live Mint** on **14th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Agriculture – Issues of Buffer Stocks & Food Security

Relevance: concerns with rising food inflation

News: Recently, the National Statistical Office has released the retail inflation data.

What are the key highlights of the retail inflation data?

The data shows a moderate rise in inflation to 4.81% in June from 4.3% last month. However, despite the increase, this rate is within India’s tolerance band.

Further, **food inflation has climbed to 4.49% from 2.96%, which is a cause for concern for the government.**

What has caused the rise in food inflation?

Analysis of consumer price index (CPI) data shows that **the foodgrain group contributed the most to the rise in food inflation.**

For instance, cereal inflation stands at 13%, with both rice and wheat experiencing 12% inflation. Arhar (tur), the dominant pulse item also shows inflation of 27%.

Therefore, the concern lies with the rising foodgrain inflation, particularly for cereals and pulses.

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What are the concerns present with food grains?

Wheat: Wheat inflation has remained in double digits for over a year. The government was able to procure only 26 million tonnes of wheat against a target of 34 million tonnes, which shows less wheat supply in the market.

Wheat prices have remained high despite massive open market operations by the government before the procurement season. This brings concern that wheat supply may not be as high as projected.

As a result of low procurement this year and the last, **wheat stocks are barely sufficient to meet the needs of the Public Distribution System (PDS)**. It leaves little scope for further market intervention.

Rice: Despite the government holding sufficient stocks, **regional spread of the monsoon has raised concerns**.

While there has been above-average rainfall in north-west India, there is a deficit in the rest of the country. This excess rainfall in northwestern India has caused floods which may affect rice crops.

Whereas a deficit in rainfall in eastern and peninsular India may result in lower output of rice in the kharif season.

Pulses: There are problems with pulses. Arhar sowing this year is lower by almost 10%. Even oilseeds sowing is down by more than 10%, with soybean sowing falling 14%.

What can be the implications of inflation in food grains?

The inflation in food grains **may affect other food items like milk**.

Further, as food grains have a significant weight in the consumption basket, the **rising prices are likely to squeeze demand for other commodities**. Therefore, government intervention is necessary to protect the income of farmers.

What measures can be taken by the government?

While food security interventions, such as the Public Distribution System (PDS), can provide some relief, a more comprehensive strategy is required to protect the rural economy.

This will require the government to step up public spending to generate demand in the economy, raise incomes and create non-farm employment.

[37. Express View on Chandrayaan-3: To moon, with love](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Express View on Chandrayaan-3: To moon, with love**” published in “India Express” on 14th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Awareness in the field of space

News: India is preparing for its second moon landing mission, Chandrayaan-3. This mission comes after the first attempt with Chandrayaan-2 in 2019, which ended in a crash-landing. The ISRO team has made improvements to prevent a similar outcome.

What is the significance of Chandrayaan-3?

The hope and expectations of a nation: Over a billion Indians are following Chandrayaan-3's journey with hope and optimism. They are tracking its path to the moon and the planned soft-landing in late August. This mission carries the dreams of a nation aiming for space success.

A rebound from past disappointments: Chandrayaan-3 is significant as it represents a comeback after the disappointment of Chandrayaan-2. This mission is a chance for ISRO to learn from past failures and make advancements in space exploration.

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A stepping stone to greater achievements: The Chandrayaan-3 mission is not just about reaching the moon. It's a stepping stone to bigger space adventures. Successful landing on the moon would unlock new opportunities for ISRO and pave the way for future missions like Gaganyaan, and others to the Sun and Venus.

Boost to India's space status: A successful Chandrayaan-3 mission would reaffirm India's position among top space-faring nations. It could lead to increased collaboration with other international space agencies, bolstering ISRO's global standing.

What's the role of private sector in India's space ambitions?

Private sector's new role in India's space industry: The Indian government has opened up the space sector for private companies. This marks a new phase for the country's space ambitions.

Allowing ISRO to focus on research and exploration: By involving private companies, ISRO can focus more on space research and exploration. This way, ISRO can dedicate its resources to significant missions like Chandrayaan-3 and others in the future.

Providing routine services in space sector: Private companies will take care of routine services in the space sector. These services could include launching satellites and other operations.

Creating a space technology ecosystem: The entry of private companies helps to create a broader space technology ecosystem. This ecosystem can support the development and growth of India's space ambitions.

Boosting talent and resource base: With private sector involvement, there's a chance to expand the talent and resource base in the space sector. More people and resources can aid ISRO in its future missions.

How can Chandrayaan-3 impact the future of ISRO?

Potential for learning and growth: [Chandrayaan-3](#) can offer ISRO valuable experience and lessons, helping it to grow. Learning from the mission can aid future endeavors like the Gaganyaan project or missions to study the Sun and Venus.

Reaffirming India's place in space: The success of Chandrayaan-3 would confirm India's place among top space-faring nations. It could encourage more global collaborations, like with NASA or the European Space Agency.

Boosting confidence in future missions: If successful, Chandrayaan-3 can build confidence for future ISRO missions. A successful moon landing can reassure the team and the nation about the feasibility of future ambitious projects.

Attracting more support: Success with Chandrayaan-3 could attract more support, including funding and talent, for ISRO's future missions.

[38. Waiting For Another Gamble – on taxing gambling industry](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "Waiting For Another Gamble" published in "The Times of India" on 14th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian Economy – Mobilisation of Resources

Relevance- Taxation issues related to gaming industry

News- The government has proposed a tax rate of 28% on gaming industry.

What is the policy approach of the government to activities that are not regulated but are emerging very fast?

Except for Goa and Sikkim, where casinos are established as tourist attractions, there appears to be an **unspoken policy consensus** across states and political parties.

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If an activity cannot be **effectively regulated**, excessively **high taxation rates** are applied. This approach has been observed for **cryptocurrency trading** and is now being applied to **online gaming**.

What will be the impact of the government's decision to tax the gaming industry?

Presently, cryptocurrency traders are resorting to **offshore online exchanges**. Gamers are likely to find **similar means**. This will result in a **loss of foreign exchange** and hinder the enforcement of **anti-money laundering regulations**.

Multiple high court rulings have addressed the **debate between skill and chance in gaming**, and **taxation methods** applicable to online games. Despite these rulings, the gaming ecosystem is still **facing uncertainty**.

The proposed tax changes will not impact **horse racing**. Casinos will be adversely affected. State governments may attempt to alleviate the blow by reducing the state component of the tax.

Online games that involve prize money, such as rummy, will be **heavily impacted**, even though the courts had classified them as games of skill.

Games like **"teen patti" and casual games funded through advertising revenue** are expected to remain **largely unaffected**.

Many gaming companies will face **financial challenges** and could become unviable.

What could have been a better approach?

To mitigate the detrimental effects of gambling, it would have been suitable to implement measures such as **setting betting limits** based on gamers' income proofs and **conducting ID verifications**.

Additionally, systems could be established to **exclude gamers with substantial losses**.

The regulation of gambling falls under the jurisdiction of state governments. According to the regulations, games that are primarily based on **chance and involve cash rewards** are **generally prohibited** unless expressly permitted by a state government.

Skill-based games receive some level of protection. It would be unfair to **impose heavy taxation** on these games. Taxation should not be imposed on the full-face value of these games.

[39. Back to the new-old: West wind, East wind, or the warnings of a storm?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **"Back to the new-old: West wind, East wind, or the warnings of a storm?"** published in **Business Standard** on **15th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Growth & Development, Industrial Policy

Relevance: concerns associated with protectionist measures adopted by countries against China.

News: India implemented economic reforms in 1991. It was influenced by the **Reagan-Thatcher era**, which focused on reduced governmental role in the economy.

What were the results of implementing the 1991 reforms?

The reforms of 1991 were driven by the principles of liberalization, privatization, and globalization (**LPG**).

The aim was to increase market orientation and stimulate economic growth, lower inflation, improve the trade balance, and ensure external economic viability. **The reform was successful in achieving these objectives.**

However, **the reform has not been able to boost manufacturing.**

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What are the consequences of the failure of reforms in boosting the manufacturing sector?

It has resulted in a lack of quality jobs, increased inequality and **made India vulnerable to China** by depending on it for strategic material imports.

To reduce its vulnerability, **India has adopted a more restrictive approach to trade** by implementing tariff hikes, non-tariff barriers, and restrictions on Chinese products.

This has given re-birth of government-directed industrial investment through policy tools like Investment subsidies, production incentives, tariff protection, etc.

How is the situation of manufacturing in the US and in the Western countries?

The US and countries in the West have also faced similar outcomes due to their incapability in reviving the manufacturing sector.

Hence, to decrease their vulnerability to China, **companies in the West have started investing in the US and establishing their plants.**

The US has also imposed import barriers against Chinese goods and restricted the transfer of strategic technologies to China.

In response, China has imposed export bans on gallium and germanium, essential materials in the electronic, electric vehicle, and telecom sectors.

Further, governments in the West are allocating significant sums of money to avoid reliance on Chinese imports.

For instance, subsidies per electric vehicle in the US and Europe amount to around \$7,500. Companies like General Electric, which had de-emphasised manufacturing, are getting back into the sector.

What can be the implications of the measures adopted by countries against China?

These policies raise concern over the possibility of trade wars. Tariff hikes could also result in increased product prices and contribute to inflation.

Although the talks have now shifted from decoupling from China towards de-risking and diversification, the risks remain over retaliatory actions and beggar-thy-neighbor subsidies from China.

This may lead to an increase in the government debt of the Western countries.

Must Read: [De-risking, not decoupling: What's this G7 strategy against China?](#)

What can be the way ahead for India?

While de-risking and diversification are being taken up by other countries, India can focus on creating jobs in the manufacturing sector.

However, India has chosen to follow other countries, focusing only on import substitution rather than creating jobs.

40. [Accelerating India's energy transition](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Accelerating India's energy transition**" published in **Business standard** on 15th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure (Energy)

News: In this article, the author discusses India's heavy reliance on imported energy, its need for energy security, and how diversifying energy sources like increasing natural gas usage can help. A proposed five-pronged strategy for India's gas policy is also highlighted.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of July 2023

About India current and future energy scenario

- India heavily relies on imported energy, particularly oil and gas.
- Over 50% of India's energy needs are imported, posing economic and supply risks.
- Renewable energy deployment has increased significantly in India.
- Despite progress, India's gas consumption is just 6-7%, below the global average of 25%.

5. Diversifying energy sources, including increasing natural gas use, is crucial for India's future.

6. A proposed sub-sea gas corridor could enhance India's energy security.

What is the significance of energy security for India?

India's economic health: The energy imports in India, especially oil and gas, consistently exceed 50%, according to estimates from the International Energy Agency. This high dependence on imported energy exposes the Indian economy to uncertainties like fluctuating international prices and supply disruptions. Energy security can therefore stabilize the Indian economy by reducing its vulnerability to these risks.

Foundation for superpower status: For India to become a superpower, energy independence is a key policy goal. Energy security, thus, is integral to India's national security. It ensures self-reliance and reduces geopolitical risks associated with energy imports.

Energy security and renewable energy: Over the past two decades, India has made significant progress in deploying renewable energy. While renewable energy is a part of the energy security solution, India should not rely solely on it. Diversifying the energy mix with low-carbon intensity options, like natural gas, can further enhance energy security.

Energy security and gas policies: Currently, natural gas makes up only 6-7% of India's total energy consumption, much lower than the global average of 25%. A revised policy approach towards gas, as suggested by a five-pronged strategy, can help increase this share, further strengthening India's energy security.

India's global commitments: Improving energy security aligns with India's commitments under the Paris Accord, making it both an economic and moral imperative.

What is the proposed "Five-Pronged Strategy" for India's gas policy?

First, India needs to **switch to a production sharing contractual system.** This can help bring in the much-needed risk capital and expertise to explore and develop our basins, especially for gas.

Second, a time-bound programme should be adopted to dismantle administered pricing controls. This will provide a transparent and market-driven signal to both producers and consumers, allowing market dynamics to dictate pricing.

Third, unbundling transportation and marketing in the natural gas sector is essential. It will allow consumers to benefit from a liberalised marketing environment and enhance security of supply.

Fourth, policy reforms are needed in the electricity markets to ensure the viability of gas-based power. Creating instruments like time-of-day pricing and non-linear pricing can allow markets to absorb more flexible gas-based power.

Fifth, the implementation of gas-based micro-grids should be promoted. These are efficient and environmentally responsible, while also decentralising policymaking.

Finally, the creation of a sub-sea gas corridor linking the Gulf region and India could enhance energy security and contribute to regional stability.

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41. A water crisis In slow motion

Source: The post is based on the article “**A water crisis In slow motion**” published in “Business standard” on 15th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster management

News: In this article, the author discusses the growing problem of urban water management in India, highlighting issues like rapid urbanization, deteriorating infrastructure, and loss of natural water bodies, which contribute to increased flood disasters.

Why is urban water management a growing concern in India?

Rapid urbanization adds pressure: Over **150 million people have migrated to Indian cities in the past 30 years.** This escalates the demand for water in urban areas.

Infrastructure problems: Poor water treatment and sewage disposal capacities struggle to meet this high demand. **Delhi and Bengaluru lose 40% and 29% of their water supply, respectively, due to leaks and theft.**

Loss of Natural water bodies: Which essential for water supply and drainage, are being drained for construction, exacerbating flood risk.

Climate change: It exacerbates the problem, bringing extreme weather events that challenge already weak municipal infrastructure and urban planning.

Short-term financial priorities: Immediate financial benefits from projects like building construction are often prioritized over sustainable planning. This short-term focus, as seen in the construction of a mall on a drained lake, intensifies long-term flood risks.

Political priorities: Political decisions often favor actions that provide immediate popularity, potentially overlooking sustainable flood management strategies. This can contribute to the intensifying cycle of flood disasters.

What should be done?

Infrastructure improvement: Upgrade the water supply and sewage systems to reduce losses. For example, Delhi could aim to significantly reduce its 40% water loss due to leaks and pilferage.

Enhance water treatment: Improve water treatment and sewage disposal capacity to meet increased urban demand.

Preserve natural water bodies: Prevent draining of lakes, rivers, and canals for construction purposes. For instance, halt practices like the construction of malls on former lake sites in Bengaluru.

Water body restoration: Undertake desilting of canals and rivers, similar to the river cleanups in Europe and the US that took over 20 years but ultimately improved water flow and quality.

Control pollution: Implement strict regulations to stop untreated sewage and industrial effluent from entering water bodies.

Mandatory water harvesting: Make water harvesting systems that can recharge falling water tables mandatory across the country.

Long-term planning: Prioritize sustainable long-term planning over short-term financial gains. Politicians should focus on initiatives with lasting environmental benefits, even if results are not immediate.

Climate change adaptation: Implement strategies to adapt to climate change, such as building resilience against extreme weather events to prevent urban flooding.

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42. Discoms still an area of darkness

Source: The post is based on the article “ **Discoms still an area of darkness** ” published in “ Business standard” on 15th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure (Energy)

News: The revenues of electricity distribution companies (Discoms) in India have declined over a 12-year period, from 75% of total revenues in FY10 to 71% in FY22. This is despite government interventions to improve financial and operational efficiencies.

What are reasons for decline in the revenues of Indian Discoms?

Reduced consumer payment: According to a study by Prabhat Barnwal and Nicholas Ryan, the revenues collected from bill-paying consumers have declined from 75% of total revenues in FY10 to 71% in FY22.

Free or subsidized power: To cater to lower-income groups, several states are providing free or subsidized power. This has led to lesser revenue collection from consumers.

Less incentive for loss reduction: Power Finance Corporation data notes that there is little incentive for discoms to reduce losses as their primary focus is ensuring power supply across their grid.

What are the impacts of decline in the revenues of Indian Discoms?

Increased government subsidies: As consumer revenues decline, discoms have become heavily reliant on government subsidies and grants. This led to a lack of financial discipline. For example, profits reported by two of Rajasthan’s discoms in FY22 were largely due to state subsidies and grants from the Ujjwal Discom Assurance Yojana (UDAY).

Pressure on industrial sector: The shortfall in consumer payments is often compensated by increasing the price of electricity for the industrial sector. This increases operational costs for industries.

Potential for service instability: With lower revenues, discoms face challenges in managing their operating expenses, servicing debts, and investing in infrastructure. This can potentially affect the quality and reliability of power supply.

Economic sustainability: The continuous decline in revenues and dependence on government support questions the fiscal sustainability of the power sector in the long run.

What are possible solutions for improving the finances of Discoms?

Open Access: Introduce competition among discoms. Allow consumers to choose their power provider, similar to the telecom sector.

Smart Metering: Implement smart meters across the country. As of June 2023, only 3% of consumers have a smart meter, but installation is increasing in states like Bihar, Assam, and Haryana.

Time-of-Day Metering: Encourage consumers to use power during non-peak hours by offering lower bills, thus balancing demand and reducing costs.

Reform measures: Implement various reform measures including fuel & power purchase adjustment surcharge (FPPAS) rules and ensure timely recovery of Government dues to improve the financial health of discoms.

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43. Roiling resurgence – on inflation level

Source: The post is based on the article “Roiling resurgence” published in “The Hindu” on 15th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian economy

News: In this article, the author is discussing the recent rise in inflation in India, particularly in food prices, driven by factors such as erratic monsoon rains and lower crop sowing. They emphasize the need for policymakers to control prices to support economic recovery.

About the current inflation scenario

1. The recent Consumer Price Index (CPI) data shows a rise in inflation with June's CPI reaching a three-month high of 4.81%.
2. Food prices are leading this surge, especially in the food and beverages sector, which makes up almost 46% of the CPI's weight.
3. Specifically, cereals witnessed a 12.7% price gain, eggs rose by 7%, dairy by 8.56%, pulses by 10.5%, and spices by a sharp 19%.
4. Vegetable prices, though still in the disinflation zone, rose significantly in June, with tomatoes increasing by 64% from May.
5. Despite inflation being at 7.01% in June 2022, current trends indicate a resurgence in price pressures.
6. Erratic monsoon rains and lower sowing of the kharif crop could potentially lead to further inflationary pressures.
7. Policymakers must therefore tighten control over prices to support economic recovery.

What are the reasons for the rising inflation?

1. Rising food prices are a major cause of inflation, with the food and beverages group's inflation reaching 4.63%.
2. Specific food items like cereals and spices saw significant price increases, at 12.7% and 19% respectively.
3. Even vegetable prices, despite being in the disinflation zone, witnessed a sharp rise in June.
4. Core inflation (excluding food and fuel) remains steady but high at 5.16%.
5. Agricultural trends such as erratic monsoons and lower kharif sowing have resulted in potential crop output uncertainties, which may further fuel inflation.

What is the impact of agricultural trends on inflation?

Impact of monsoon trends on inflation: Erratic monsoon trends are causing uncertainties in the agricultural sector. These uncertainties may disrupt crop outputs, leading to price increases and thus influencing inflation rates.

Impact of sowing trends on inflation: As of July 7, overall kharif sowing was 8.7% lower than the previous year. This shortfall, especially a 24% drop in rice sowing and a 26% drop in pulses, could reduce crop availability, pushing prices and consequently inflation upwards.

Impact of oilseeds deficiency on inflation: With oilseeds reflecting a 14% deficiency compared to 2022 levels, there's a potential risk for inflation increase due to higher cooking oil prices.

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44. [How to prevent disruptions by flood and extreme weather events](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**How to prevent disruptions by flood and extreme weather events**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on 15th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster management

News- North-western India and Delhi are facing floods.

Why is there a need for focussed attention on extreme weather events?

Global warming is increasing. If cities are warmed beyond 2 degrees, **climatic-impact drivers** like extreme rain and heat will increase in intensity. **Frequency and intensity of extreme weather** will also increase.

The IPCC has shown that this could **grow exponentially**. It can be much faster than the **capacity of our current governance, planning and infrastructure systems**.

Massive future disruptions across urban India like **flooding, water scarcity and heat waves** will increase.

Why are climate impacts and risks like flooding felt intensely in our cities?

One-third of our people and two-third of our economic output is concentrated in densely built-up areas. There is **poor water, sanitation, drainage and wastewater infrastructure**.

Irrational land use and planning systems exacerbate these challenges and amplify the **vulnerability of people** who are forced to live in informal settlements and slums.

Cities in **sensitive regions** along the coast, rivers and hills face even worse impacts, due to **higher exposure and locational vulnerability**.

What is the way forward for flood management in cities?

Ensuring drainage exists and works: A **monsoon audit** is done by civic bodies ahead of the season. It ensures that storm water drains, tanks and lakes exist and work properly, and are not choked by **construction debris, silt, garbage or blocked by encroachments**.

Planning throughout the year and **adequate financial and human resources** is needed for it, which is not prioritised by civic bodies.

The medium-term solution is the **integration of drainage, water supply and wastewater systems** to store the intense rain that may come over a short period.

Drainage systems should have enough capacity to deal with the greater intensity of rain caused by changing climate.

Improving roads: The **rapid expansion of urban areas** has outpaced the development of **drainage systems**. It has led to many roads functioning as **stormwater drains**.

It is necessary to enhance the **construction and repair practices** of city roads to mitigate local flooding.

Currently, when a tar road is repaired, new layers of tar are added. Over time, this leads to an **elevated road level** compared to the surrounding areas, buildings, and drains. Consequently, these areas and drainage systems become **overwhelmed** during heavy rainfall.

The situation worsens due to **construction of flyovers, underpasses, and sometimes metro lines**. It disrupts the existing **drainage infrastructure**, resulting in significant **traffic congestion following floods**.

This issue requires **effective coordination and infrastructure planning** among all relevant agencies.

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Greening cities and using blue-green-grey infrastructure: As urban areas expand into **concrete landscapes**, the capacity for **water percolation and flow** decreases.

Preserving and safeguarding urban forests, wetlands, rivers, and lakes are crucial in addressing **climate change-induced flooding, water scarcity**.

China, aims to transform 30 of its megacities into **“sponge cities”**. It is focussing on **green roofs** to slow down runoff, urban forests to **facilitate percolation and groundwater recharge**, and wetlands to **absorb and reuse** a significant portion of their water resources.

The **East Kolkata wetlands** have served as an **effective flood defence mechanism** for over a century. It treats a substantial portion of the **city’s sewage**.

Practical nature-based blue-green-grey infrastructure initiatives like these are important for climate adaptation for many cities in India.

Reducing flood vulnerability: India possesses the **technological capabilities** to conduct **comprehensive mapping** of all its cities and towns, utilising **high-resolution satellite imagery and local topographical data** to identify areas most **susceptible to flooding**.

However, the challenge lies in **addressing the vulnerability** of people residing along river banks, low-lying areas, and unstable slopes.

Significant progress has been made in terms of **evacuation and protecting lives**. But, a lot needs to be done for establishing **genuine community-based resilience**.

One area where notable improvements have been observed is in **enhancing forecasting, early warning systems, and evacuation protocols** in major cities.

The next step is to extend these measures to all **at-risk locations**. There is a need for **strengthening critical services** such as cell phones, power supply, and water infrastructure to ensure their **resilience from extreme events**.

It is essential to provide all urban residents with access to **basic environmental services** for safeguarding cities from floods. This includes ensuring **reliable water supply, sanitation facilities, effective drainage systems, and proper management of solid waste**.

[45. Back to the new-old: West wind, East wind, or the warnings of a storm?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Back to the new-old: West wind, East wind, or the warnings of a storm?”** published in **Business Standard** on **15th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Growth & Development, Industrial Policy

Relevance: concerns associated with protectionist measures adopted by countries against China.

News: India implemented economic reforms in 1991. It was influenced by the **Reagan-Thatcher era**, which focused on reduced governmental role in the economy.

What were the results of implementing 1991 reforms?

The reforms of 1991 were driven by the principles of liberalization, privatization, and globalization (LPG).

The aim was to increase market orientation and stimulate economic growth, lower inflation, improve the trade balance, and ensure external economic viability. **The reform was successful in achieving these objectives.**

However, **the reform has not been able to boost manufacturing.**

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What are the consequences of the failure of reforms in boosting the manufacturing sector?

It has resulted in a lack of quality jobs, increased inequality and **made India vulnerable to China** by depending on it for strategic material imports.

In order to reduce its vulnerability, **India has adopted a more restrictive approach to trade** by implementing tariff hikes, non-tariff barriers, and restrictions on Chinese products.

This has given re-birth of government-directed industrial investment through policy tools like Investment subsidies, production incentives, tariff protection, etc.

How is the situation of manufacturing in the US and in the Western countries?

The US and countries in the West have also faced similar outcomes due to their incapability in reviving the manufacturing sector.

Hence, to decrease their vulnerability to China, **companies in the West have started investing in the US and establishing their plants.**

The US has also imposed import barriers against Chinese goods and restricted the transfer of strategic technologies to China.

In response, China has imposed export bans on gallium and germanium, essential materials in the electronic, electric vehicle, and telecom sectors.

Further, governments in the West are allocating significant sums of money to avoid reliance on Chinese imports.

For instance, subsidies per electric vehicle in the US and Europe amount to around \$7,500. Companies like General Electric, which had de-emphasised manufacturing, are getting back into the sector.

What can be the implications of the measures adopted by countries against China?

These policies raise concern over the possibility of trade wars. Tariff hikes could also result in increased product prices and contribute to inflation.

Although the talks have now shifted from decoupling from China towards de-risking and diversification, the risks still remain over retaliatory actions and beggar-thy-neighbour subsidies from China.

This may lead to an increase in the government debt of the Western countries.

Must Read: [De-risking, not decoupling: What's this G7 strategy against China?](#)

What can be the way ahead for India?

While de-risking and diversification are being taken up by other countries, India can focus on creating jobs in the manufacturing sector.

However, India has chosen to follow other countries, focusing only on import substitution rather than creating jobs.

[46. Why the govt has more cash, less grain to give](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Why the govt has more cash, less grain to give”** published in **The Indian Express** on **17th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Agriculture – Issues of Buffer Stocks and Food Security**

Relevance: **About uncertainties over foodgrains production**

News: The article describes the government's food grain supply three years ago and its current situation.

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What was the situation of foodgrains three years ago?

Three years ago, during the pandemic, both the center and the states did not have money to make large-scale cash transfers to poor and vulnerable households.

However, there was plenty of wheat and rice in the Food Corporation of India's (FCI) warehouses. Due to which, there was enough distribution of these foodgrains.

Along with distribution, the three years from 2020-21 also saw all-time-high grain exports from India. Thus, **there was surplus grain not only to give out free, but even to export in record quantities.**

What is the present situation?

The situation has reversed today. Governments have money, due to the resumption of economic activity, but there has been a shortage of grains.

The newly formed Karnataka government sought additional grains from FCI to fulfill its poll promise of providing 10 kg of free rice per month to all members of below-poverty-line (BPL) households. However, the FCI refused to provide it.

Hence, **the government in Karnataka is transferring cash into the bank accounts of beneficiaries.** Thus, earlier there was grain but no money. Now, there's not much grain, but governments have money to pay PDS beneficiaries.

Why is the FCI hesitant to provide additional grains?

The total stocks of wheat and rice in the Central pool on July 1, 2023, are at a five-year low.

While these stocks are currently above the minimum required level, there are concerns regarding the monsoon and its potential impact on this year's rice crop.

Although the country has experienced normal rainfall during the current monsoon season, **major rice-growing areas, including Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, have faced significantly below-normal rainfall.**

Additionally, **the presence of El Niño**, through the 2023-24 winter, raises concerns about the monsoon's performance in the rest of the season. This can impact the production of not just the kharif rice, but even the upcoming rabi wheat crop.

Must Read: [Protect rural incomes to tackle the current food security threat](#)

What are the concerns present with exports?

Last year, due to a poor crop, **the government banned wheat exports** in May 2022. This was followed by a prohibition on exports of broken rice and the imposition of a 20% duty on non-parboiled non-basmati rice shipments in September.

However, despite these restrictions, the last two years registered record exports of rice and wheat.

However, **with retail cereal inflation at 12.7% in June and monsoon-related production uncertainties, the government is considering additional curbs on rice exports.**

What can be the way ahead?

India is the world's largest rice exporter, with a 40.4% share of the global trade in the cereal. Therefore, given its position, it cannot import rice even for domestic production shortfalls; instead, it can only limit exports.

Moreover, **if the FCI does not have surplus grain, it is possible that many states could follow Karnataka.** However, from a macroeconomic perspective, opting for cash transfers has

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an inflationary effect, while distributing free grain is deflationary.

47. [Speed and strategy – Indian Railways must get its priorities right](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Speed and strategy – Indian Railways must get its priorities right**” published in **Business Standard** on **17th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure

Relevance: measures needed to improve train services.

News: The recent launch of new Vande Bharat trains has dominated headlines. However, along with these trains, overall services of the railways need improvement.

What are the benefits and concerns associated with Vande Bharat trains?

The Vande Bharat trains have co-benefits – **a)** stimulating local manufacturing and **b)** offering an upgraded travel experience. However, two key issues need attention.

Firstly, despite their technological capabilities, **the Vande Bharat trains do not represent a significant leap in speed for regular users. Their financial sustainability is also uncertain**, particularly considering lower occupancy rates.

Secondly, improving the broader experience across regular trains is of far greater importance than ensuring that there are some aspirational, showpiece express services.

Must Read: [Vande Bharat trains: Potential and Challenges – Explained](#)

What measures can be taken to improve overall train services?

Although it is challenging to improve the overall experience due to the scale of the Indian Railways and the number of people it moves, improvement is still possible.

Reform like the one made by the past railway minister; Madhu Dandavate is notable. He introduced “**two inches of foam**” to second-class berths. Thus, improving conditions for long-distance travellers.

Similar modernized improvements should be identified and implemented. Some of them could be:

First, routes that are prone to overcrowding need to be identified, and the demand for additional general unreserved seats should be met.

Second, investing in capacity should be accompanied by investments in safety and track improvements. **For instance**, to achieve high-speed train transport, trains like the Vande Bharat need upgraded infrastructure.

Third, routes capable of accommodating speeds of 160 km/h should be prioritized for the introduction of multiple new trains in order to ensure the desired results from the investments.

48. [Flood feud](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Flood feud**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **17th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Disaster Management

Relevance: Flood Management

News- The article emphasis that States must coordinate to evolve a joint strategy to combat floods.

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What is the present flood situation across the country?

Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Delhi have reported record rainfall and at least 60 deaths have been confirmed.

However, **unusual inundation of Delhi** has brought to national focus the disasters.

What are the reasons stated for floods in Delhi?

Delhi's officials have attributed this to the **flooding of the Yamuna in upstream States**, particularly at Yamunanagar in Haryana.

But, there was no **desilting of drains** ahead of the monsoon in Delhi. There has been an **accelerated large-scale concretisation** of the city.

Delhi makes a case that **huge amounts of silt due to riverbed mining from Haryana** block the natural flow of the river.

What is the way forward?

Delhi should no longer consider itself immune from urban flooding given that its population and infrastructural needs are only going to expand.

The Air Pollution **joint management strategy evolved by** National Capital Territory can act as a model for flood management.

These States **must set aside their differences** and evolve a joint strategy on countering future floods

[49. Monsoon havoc in India: How floods can be a valuable resource](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Monsoon havoc in India: How floods can be a valuable resource**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on 13th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS3 – Disaster Management

Relevance: Flood Management

News- The monsoon arrived in Mumbai and New Delhi and heavy rainfall immediately followed, causing flooding in many parts of India.

What are the methods for Better Flood Management?

The focus needs to shift from flood control to **flood management** as complete flood protection for citizens, properties, and infrastructure is not feasible in India.

Instead of considering flood flows as a nuisance and discharging them into the ocean quickly, conserving a significant portion of floodwater could help reduce damages and **mitigate upcoming droughts**.

What are the structural and non-structural measures for flood management?

Structural tools include **storage reservoirs, embankments, and diversions**. These measures help reduce flood hazards.

Storage reservoirs can **store water during high-flow periods**, moderating the flood peak, and provide water for irrigation, electricity generation, and water supply.

Non-structural methods, such as **flood forecasting, warnings, and floodplain zoning**, contribute to timely evacuation of people and regulate the use of floodplains.

What are the solutions?

Comprehensive approach for flood Management along with an appropriate mix of grey (**man-made**), blue (**water bodies**), and green (**natural**) infrastructure.

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Flood management should adopt a **river basin approach** while considering the environmental aspects.

Upgrading hydro-infrastructure and implementing a **comprehensive flood management** program are necessary steps to address increasing **climate change and flood variabilities**.

Flood moderation, conserving flood water for future use, and adopting a combination of structural and non-structural measures are some steps.

50. India's conglomerates are getting too big for comfort

Source– The post is based on the article **“India’s conglomerates are getting too big for comfort”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **17th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

News- The article explains the increasing concentration of wealth in India and increasing closeness between business and state.

What shows the increasing concentration of wealth in India?

The Adani Group continues with its acquisitions even after the Hindenburg report. **Financial markets** are lending it more money, despite its over-dependent on debt.

Tatas and the Aditya Birla empire are also performing well. The biggest of India’s big businesses seem to be thriving.

But all the businesses in India are not **making progress**. The performance of a large number of **informal enterprises** is not good and they have not recovered from **COVID-19-inflicted losses**.

As per a report by a former Reserve Bank of India Deputy Governor, the share of **assets in the non-financial sectors** owned by the **Big-5 business groups** has risen from 10% in 1991 to nearly 18% in 2021. While the share of the next five has fallen from 18% to less than 9%.

What are the dangers associated with a rapid rise in industrial concentration?

It uses **market power** to **stifle competition**. It leads to **profit inflation or profiteering**, through the **manipulation of costs and prices**. The result is **extreme asset and income inequality**.

Institutions of democracy are influenced by them through means such as the **capture of the media**. The **role of civil society** as a **countervailing power** is reduced in this process.

The ultimate result is **corporate influence over political processes and the formulation of policy**.

These tendencies are not stalled by **competition in the ‘market’** but are a consequence of the functioning of markets.

Asset and income inequality increases, and therefore there is **differential power** among economic agents, the **functioning of the ‘market’** favours the rich.

What are the emerging trends that show the narrowing of political distance between the state and big business?

- **Powerful voices** within and outside the state have **adopted neoliberalism**. This implied adoption of the view that the role of the state is not to regulate private capital, but to facilitate its growth as means to all round economic progress.

Advocates of neoliberalism argue that the competition generated by a **liberalised regime** will **counter concentration**. The reverse has happened.

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In areas such as telecommunications and civil aviation, there was the initial increase in the number of new players. But a few were finally left, with **signs of collusion** among them. The consumer will be the loser.

- There is the propagation of the view that the state must help **strengthen domestic big business** against **giant global competitors**. **State policy, diplomacy and public resources** will be key instruments in this process.

Liberalisation opened Indian markets, induced **global competition for Indian businesses**. But the state is **protecting and promoting** sections of big business through **large-scale subsidies and transfers**.

- State is not interested in reducing the **influence of money in politics**. Connections of politics with big business are necessary for resources needed to **“manage” elections and win electoral support**.

Over time, there has been a change in policy to **legitimise corporate donations** to political parties, including through the **electoral bonds scheme**.

51. How are cheetahs faring in India?

Source– The post is based on the article **“How are cheetahs faring in India?”** published in **“The Indian Express”** and **“Cheetah Questions”** published in **“The Times of India”** on **18th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment – Biodiversity Conservation

Relevance: Animal conservation and protection

News- Five of the relocated cheetahs and three out of four cubs born in India have passed away.

What is Project Cheetah?

Project Cheetah is an initiative in India aimed at **relocating cheetahs**.

The objective is to introduce **5-10 cheetahs each year** for the next ten years, with the goal of establishing a **self-sustaining population** of approximately 35 cheetahs.

In South Africa and Namibia cheetahs inhabit **enclosed reserves**. India’s approach involves allowing the cheetahs to thrive in **natural, wilderness settings**.

Currently, 11 of the relocated cheetahs are in the true wild, while four are being kept in specialized enclosures.

Unfortunately, five of the relocated cheetahs and three out of four cubs born in India have passed away.

Why is there a need for a medical examination of the death of cheetahs?

One of the dead cheetahs had a wound on its neck. He was infected with **maggots**. The larvae of the maggots were also found on the **radio-collar**. There was a chance that chafing from the collar is responsible for infection.

Radio collars pose **obstructions for cheetahs**. The animal is unable to **lick itself**. It is compounded by the **moisture generated by monsoon**.

The injured African animal may have been exposed to parasites that Indian big cats are typically immune to.

Another cheetah died after being attacked by a female cheetah, which took place within their enclosure.

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In May, three out of four cubs passed away due to **heat and malnourishment**, while an adult female succumbed to injuries sustained during a conflict among the animals.

Two other deaths occurred in February and April, caused by **renal infection and cardiovascular issues**, respectively.

According to the Ministry of Environment, cheetah cubs in the wild experience a significantly **high mortality rate** compared to tigers and lions. They have a **survival rate of only 10%**. However, deaths in Kuno, except for one, have occurred among the cheetahs in the enclosure.

What are issues related to the cheetah relocation programme?

Kuno National Park has **too little space and prey for 20 cheetahs**. It has **three cheetahs per 100 sq. km** compared to **one cheetah per 100 sq. km** in Africa. A **cheetah's home range** is over 1,600 sq. km of unfenced territory. Whereas area of Kuno is 750 sq. km.

The **prolonged confinement of cheetahs in quarantine** has had adverse effects on their **ability to adapt** and has led to **psychological adjustment issues**.

Unlike tigers and leopards, cheetahs are **comparatively fragile creatures** and are more prone to **sustaining fatal injuries** in the wild.

At present, Indian cheetahs do not **encounter competition** from similar predators like lions and leopards. However, it remains uncertain whether these animals can **effectively establish** their presence in India over time.

[52. Chandrayaan-3: Small step to moon, giant leap for India's space journey](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Chandrayaan-3: Small step to moon, giant leap for India's space journey**" published in "The Indian Express" on 18th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Awareness in the fields of Space

News: In this article author discusses the journey and significance of India's Chandrayaan-3 mission to the Moon, its role in promoting India's global space reputation, private sector involvement, international collaborations through the Artemis Accords, and its inspiring effect on future generations.

How the India's private sector contribution to Chandrayaan-3?

1. Chandrayaan-3 marks the first time India's private sector has collaborated with ISRO on a major space mission.
2. The lunar lander and rover for the mission were developed by a consortium of Indian companies in partnership with ISRO laboratories.
3. India's private sector also contributed to the development of ground control systems for the mission, working alongside ISRO.
4. Data from the mission will be processed and analyzed largely by India's private sector.
5. This collaboration illustrates the Indian government's commitment to its Space Policy 2023, which aims to boost the commercial presence of India's space program.
6. By collaborating on Chandrayaan-3, the private sector showcases its capabilities, potentially attracting more investment and positioning itself as a significant player in the international space industry.

What are the Significances of Chandrayaan-3?

Advancement in lunar exploration: Chandrayaan-3 is a significant stride in India's lunar exploration program. The mission aims to soft land near the Moon's unexplored South Pole,

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where it will collect important data about geographical features and potential resources. It will contribute valuable insights to our understanding of the Moon, and by extension, Earth.

Boosting India's global space reputation: This mission also plays a critical role in building India's reputation in the international space community. Success in such a complex endeavor will demonstrate India's growing space capabilities to the world.

Promoting commercial presence in space: Chandrayaan-3 is in alignment with the Indian government's Space Policy 2023, which aims to stimulate a flourishing commercial presence in space. The mission is a partnership between ISRO and the Indian private sector, highlighting the potential for private industry's involvement in future space endeavors.

Influencing international collaboration: India, as a signatory to the Artemis Accords, is collaborating with other leading space agencies for Moon exploration. The success of Chandrayaan-3 could provide valuable data for these international collaborations and potentially guide future exploration efforts.

Pioneering technological boundaries: India's participation in worldwide projects like the Thirty Meter Telescope, CERN's Large Hadron Collider, LIGO-India, and the Square Kilometer Array in Radio Astronomy is evidence of its growing technological prowess. Chandrayaan-3 further cements India's position as a technological leader in space and astrophysics sectors.

Inspiring future generations: The mission is expected to inspire India's future scientists and engineers, fostering a culture of scientific research and technological innovation within the country. This impact on the nation's human capital is invaluable and hard to quantify.

[53. Express View on employment: The stress signals](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Express View on employment: The stress signals**" published in "The Indian Express" on 18th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

News: In this article the author discusses the rising demand for work under Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), despite economic growth. They highlight high unemployment rates, especially among urban youth, and an increase in credit card defaults, indicating economic stress despite the expected growth.

About current economic and employment situation in India

- India's economy is expected to grow at 8% in the first quarter of the current financial year.
- Demand for MGNREGA work is increasing, indicating a lack of productive job opportunities in rural areas. In June, 3.04 crore households availed work under the scheme.
- The unemployment rate among urban youth is high, at 17.3% in the first quarter of 2023. For males, it was 15.6%, but for females, it was even higher at 22.9%.

How has MGNREGA evolved over the years?

Rising demand: Demand for work under MGNREGA has been consistently rising. In 2015-16, 7.2 crore individuals were part of the scheme. This number increased to 7.88 crore by 2019-20.

Wage increase: The wage rate under MGNREGA increased from Rs 218 per person per day in 2022-23 to Rs 233.

Pandemic impact on MGNREGA: The pandemic caused a surge in demand for MGNREGA, with participation reaching 11.19 crore in 2020-21 and 10.61 crore in 2021-22. Even after a drop to 8.76 crore in 2022-23, it was higher than pre-pandemic levels.

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What are the implications of high unemployment rates?

Effects on the economy: High unemployment rates can harm the economy. The demand for work under the MGNREGA scheme has risen over the years, indicating that more people are seeking employment. It implies fewer productive job opportunities in rural areas.

Impact on credit defaults and bad loans: Rising unemployment may increase credit defaults and bad loans. For instance, bad loans in the credit card segment rose to Rs 4,073 crore at the end of 2022-23 from Rs 3,122 crore the previous year. High unemployment can worsen this situation as people struggle to repay loans.

What should be done?

- Economic growth should be inclusive, providing more productive job opportunities, especially in rural areas.
- Measures should be taken to reduce the high unemployment rate among urban youth.
- Strategies to curb the rise in credit card defaults and bad loans are necessary.
- Areas showing stress, like MGNREGA demand, need close monitoring.

54. [Misplaced interest: Govt equity in chip design firms is impractical](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Misplaced interest: Govt equity in chip design firms is impractical**” published in **Business standard** on 18th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Indigenization of technology (Science and technology)

News: In this article author discusses the Indian government’s strategy to stimulate the domestic semiconductor industry, pointing out potential drawbacks due to its focus on manufacturing, bureaucratic processes, past private sector partnerships, and neglect of the broader economy.

About Government’s approach to Boosting the Domestic Semiconductor Industry

- Government aims to boost the domestic semiconductor industry.
- They will **underwrite up to 50% of foundry costs.**
- They’ve offered **₹55,392 crore production-linked incentives.**
- The Design-Linked Incentive (DLI) scheme supports local companies.
- **Goal:** retain intellectual property rights within the country.
- **Aim** to counter brain drain to Silicon Valley.
- Plan to take equity stakes in domestic chip design companies.

What are the major concerns in the Government’s Approach?

Overemphasis on manufacturing: The government’s strategy might be too focused on manufacturing, while the core value in the semiconductor business lies in design. Major players like Intel, Qualcomm, Nvidia, and AMD have chosen to invest in refining technology rather than in costly manufacturing processes.

Inadequate acknowledgement of industry dynamics: The semiconductor design industry thrives on speed, competitiveness, and resilience to failures. The government’s lengthy bureaucratic processes may stifle this innovative environment.

Past unsuccessful partnerships: Government’s previous collaborations with the private sector, like with Balco and Hindustan Zinc, cast doubt on its capability to stimulate the required competitive dynamism in the semiconductor industry.

Neglecting broader economic context: The approach of picking industry champions without considering the wider economy could yield minimal results. A holistic approach that stimulates market creation, similar to how Silicon Valley focused on the consumer goods market, could be more effective.

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What should be done?

Streamline processes: Reduce bureaucracy to foster a fast-paced, innovative industry environment.

Improve private sector partnership: Learn from past experiences to build strong, successful collaborations.

Integrated approach: Don't select industry champions in isolation; consider the wider economy.

Market creation: Help chip designers establish markets in India and abroad.

Enhance ease of doing business: Reduce frictions, making it easier for companies to operate.

Learn from successful models: Emulate Silicon Valley's strategy of focusing on fast-growing consumer goods markets.

[55. Moving ahead with small modular reactors](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Moving ahead with small modular reactors**" published in **Business standard** on 18th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- infrastructure (Energy)

News: In this article author discusses India's strategic shift towards smaller nuclear plants, specifically Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), and highlights the role of the private sector and policy changes in driving this transition.

About India's nuclear energy mix

Nuclear power represents 1.7% of India's total installed power capacity as of March 2022.

By 2032, nuclear power is predicted to constitute 2.2% of capacity and 4.4% of gross generation.

India aims to raise nuclear power to 10% of its energy mix by 2035, requiring a significant increase in nuclear capacity.

What is Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) Technology?

Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) are advanced nuclear reactors with a maximum capacity of 300 MW per unit. They are smaller, simpler, and safer than traditional reactors. SMRs can be factory-made and transported to a site for installation.

SMRs are economical and time-efficient, and unlike traditional reactors that require refueling every 1-2 years, SMRs only need refueling every 3-7 years.

What are the global advances in SMR technology?

Worldwide, over 70 SMR designs are under development in 17 countries.

Notable examples include the **U.S.'s** NuScale Power company, whose 600 MW SMR plant design has been approved by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission.

In Russia, a 77 MW SMR, Akademik Lomonosov, was operational as early as 2019.

China has also commissioned a high-temperature gas-cooled modular pebble bed demonstration SMR.

In the **U.K.**, Rolls-Royce is setting up a manufacturing facility for SMRs.

What is India's strategy for nuclear energy transition?

Switching to small reactors: India's strategy for nuclear energy transition involves moving from larger to smaller nuclear power plants. The country is focusing on the development of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs), which are simpler, safer, and more cost-effective.

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Engaging the private sector: The Indian government is advocating for private sector involvement in this initiative. It's encouraging public-private partnerships for setting up SMRs across the country, inviting both domestic and foreign private companies to participate.

Setting future goals: As of March 2022, nuclear power represents 1.7% of India's total installed power capacity. The goal is to raise nuclear power to 10% of India's energy mix by 2035. This would require increasing nuclear capacity to approximately 90GW, a target that may be achieved through the development of SMRs.

What are the major suggestions given by Niti Aayog for SMR?

The NITI Aayog has published a report titled "**The Role of Small Modular Reactors (SMRs) in Energy Transition.**" In this report, it suggests:

Private sector participation: NITI Aayog, India's policy think tank, suggests that the private sector should be actively involved in setting up Small Modular Reactors (SMRs). It believes this can be achieved through public-private partnerships (PPPs), which would offer shared responsibilities and benefits.

Regulatory changes: The think tank recommends creating a comprehensive regulatory regime with stringent safety standards and regular monitoring to ensure the safe operation of SMRs.

Modifying foreign investment policies: NITI Aayog proposes changes to India's foreign investment policies to enable both domestic and foreign private companies to participate in the country's SMR development. It aims to attract global nuclear power leaders, such as Westinghouse Electric, GE-Hitachi, Electricite de France, and Rosatom, to invest in India's nuclear sector.

56. Push for GM mustard disregarding science, the law

Source: The post is based on an article "**A push for GM mustard disregarding science, the law**" published in **The Hindu** on **19th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science & Technology, Agriculture

Relevance: concerns associated with GM crops

News: Environmentalists in the Supreme Court of India are engaged in a battle against Delhi University's Genetically Modified (GM) Herbicide-Tolerant (HT) mustard.

What are GM crops?

Read Here: [What are GM crops?](#)

What are the arguments against GM crops?

Environmentalists, scientists, politicians, farmers, consumers, and the judiciary, have raised concerns about the safety, efficacy, and necessity of GM food.

The experience with Bt cotton, India's only approved GM crop, has raised concerns. Long-term research suggests that while Bt cotton initially provided some benefits to farmers, **it ultimately increased cultivation costs and risks.**

However, two Standing Committees of the Parliament independently and comprehensively examined GM crops and food.

The first one was the Standing Committee on Agriculture in 2012, and another was the Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment and Forests in 2017.

The Supreme Court also appointed a Technical Expert Committee (**TEC**) to study the GM crops.

Must Read: [Transgenic Crops in India: Need and Challenges – Explained](#)

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What were the observations made by these committees?

The two standing committees unanimously highlighted major weaknesses in the regulatory system and called for utmost caution before releasing GM food.

The Committee on Science and Technology, Environment and Forests made a specific reference to GM mustard, and asked the government to conduct a thorough, independent, and transparent assessment of long-term biosafety, environmental risk and socio-economic impacts.

In 2013, **five out of six members of the TEC also identified serious shortcomings in the safety assessment of GM crops.**

They found HT crops are “completely unsuitable in the Indian context” and warned of serious harm to the environment, rural livelihoods and sustainable agriculture if they were released.

Therefore, these observations raise concerns for release of any HT crop and emphasize the need for comprehensive regulatory strengthening before approving GM food.

What measures are being taken by the government in promoting GM crops?

Despite the widespread political and technical consensus against HT crops, **the Indian government is proceeding with GM mustard in a manner that disregards both science and law.**

For instance, it has not placed the full biosafety dossier on GM mustard in the public domain, despite the terms of the Right to Information Act and a declaration to that effect by the Environment Ministry’s Genetic Engineering Appraisal Committee.

Even in the recent hearing of the SC, **the government has argued that GM mustard should not be considered HT because the objective for developing it was to improve yields.**

However, from the science of biotechnology and ecology perspective, there is no doubt that GM mustard is an HT crop.

What lies ahead?

Instead of engaging with the constitutional issues involving public health, environmental protection and agricultural livelihoods, the government is misleading the SC by presenting irrelevant facts in the support of GM crops.

Hence, if the Supreme Court allows GM mustard to go through, it will likely pave the way for the release of other HT crops such as cotton, rice, and maize.

[57. A roadmap to eliminate poverty in India](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**A roadmap to eliminate poverty in India**” published in “The Indian Express” on 19th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilisation of resources, growth development and employment.

News: This article outlines India’s path to achieving a 7% growth rate. It emphasises domestic investments, technological adaptation, managing global challenges, environmental balance, and the potential of a basic income system.

What is the current and future growth status of India?

Current growth status of India:

Per capita income: India’s per capita income was \$2,379 in 2022-23.

Investment rate: The Gross Fixed Capital Formation rate in 2022-23 stood at 29.2% of GDP.

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Global position: India is the world's fifth-largest economy, yet 149th out of 194 in per capita terms.

Trade Concerns: Developed nations are retreating from the free trade model, potentially impacting India's global trade prospects.

Future growth prospects for India:

Targeted growth: India aims for a 6-7% continuous annual growth.

Technological adaptation: Emphasis on integrating Artificial Intelligence in industries, though job creation remains a concern.

Environmental responsibility: Aiming for a more sustainable growth rate considering environmental constraints.

Basic income: Plans to introduce a basic income for financial security, potentially reducing other subsidies.

What are the threats to India's future growth?

Global tensions: The Ukraine-Russia conflict has impacted the overall global peace climate. Prolonged tensions can hinder international collaboration and growth prospects.

Trade barriers: Developed countries, which once championed the free trade model, are now imposing restrictions on imports. Such barriers can harm India's emerging ability to compete in global markets.

Technological disruptions: While India is poised to integrate Artificial Intelligence, it may boost productivity but not necessarily jobs. Given India's populous nature, AI's potential job-reducing ramifications can be a significant threat.

Environmental commitments: Addressing environmental concerns, like pollution reduction, can influence the overall output. Achieving a growth rate beyond 6-7% might be challenging when factoring in sustainable goals.

Developed countries' stance: Historically industrialized countries have a significant carbon footprint. If these nations push developing countries like India to bear the brunt of pollution reduction, it could strain India's growth.

Job market elasticity: With modern technology integration, India may face a lower employment elasticity concerning output, implying that even if the economy grows, it might not translate to proportional job growth.

Resource constraints: Achieving the desired Gross Fixed Capital Formation rate of 30-32% may be challenged if domestic and foreign investments don't match expectations, given the 29.2% rate of 2022-23.

What should be done?

Enhance investment rate: Target a Gross Fixed Capital Formation rate between 30-32% of GDP. With the current rate at 29.2% for 2022-23, focused efforts can bridge the gap.

Prioritize key sectors: Allocate resources to agriculture, manufacturing, and exports. This can build on existing strengths and open avenues for global trade.

Harness technological evolution: Embrace Artificial Intelligence and its applications. While ensuring its integration, prepare the workforce for potential changes in job dynamics.

Review trade strategies: Given the changing stance of developed countries on trade, India should re-evaluate its global trade partnerships and navigate barriers.

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Sustainable growth: While aiming for a 6-7% growth, integrate environmental sustainability measures. Balancing growth with environmental responsibility is crucial.

Education & skill development: Reform the education system to equip students with skills relevant to evolving industries, especially in tech domains.

Promote domestic investments: While welcoming foreign investments, especially in emerging tech sectors, prioritize and incentivize internal investments for more sustained growth.

Implement basic income: Explore introducing a basic income structure. Such a system can provide financial security, possibly leading to more consistent consumer spending and reduced reliance on other subsidies.

[58. Tackling poverty: Better job prospects will improve outcomes](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Tackling poverty: Better job prospects will improve outcomes**” published in **Business standard** on 19th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- poverty and developmental issues & GS 3- growth development and employment.

News: According to the National Multidimensional Poverty Index: A Progress Review 2023, prepared by the NITI Aayog and other partners (UNDP, Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative) shows that India’s multidimensional poverty dropped from 24.85% in 2015-16 to 14.96% in 2019-21.

What is Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)?

Definition: The MPI measures poverty beyond just income, considering various factors.

Aspects Covered: It includes health (nutrition and maternal health), education (school attendance and years of schooling), and living standards (sanitation, drinking water, housing, assets, etc.).

Relevance: The MPI is vital for tracking Sustainable Development Goals, which aim to reduce poverty.

Importance: It captures broader perspectives of poverty, giving a comprehensive view of an individual’s well-being.

What are the major outcomes of the “National Multidimensional Poverty Index: A Progress Review 2023”?

Positive Outcomes

Significant Reduction: Multidimensional poverty in India dropped from 24.85% to 14.96% between 2015-16 and 2019-21.

Massive Exit: 135 million people moved out of multidimensional poverty during this period.

Urban Progress: In urban areas, only 5.27% of the population is multidimensionally poor.

State Improvements: Bihar witnessed a significant decline, though challenges remain.

Negative Outcomes

Rural Concerns: Rural areas have a higher rate at 19.28%, emphasizing the urban-rural divide.

Regional Disparities: States like Bihar still have high levels at 34%, while Kerala stands at just 0.55%.

Quality of Education: Though schooling years are considered, the quality of education in many Indian schools remains unsatisfactory.

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Job Challenges: India faces a lack of quality job opportunities for its rising workforce.

59. Intervention does push deprivation levels down

Source: The post is based on the article “**Intervention does push deprivation levels down**” published in **Live mint** on 19th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- poverty and developmental issues & GS 3- growth development and employment.

News: This article discusses a Niti Aayog report which highlights a decline in ‘multidimensional poverty’ in India from 2015-16 to 2019-21. It mentions the government’s significant efforts in improving sanitation, cooking fuel access, and housing, while also pointing out some challenges faced by these welfare programs.

About major outcomes of the Niti Aayog report

Drop in Poverty: ‘Multidimensional poverty’ in India reduced to 15% in 2019-21 from 25% in 2015-16.

Health Metrics: Modest gains in nutrition, maternal health, and child mortality; notable inadequacies in nutrition.

Sanitation Progress: In 2015-16, 52% of people lacked sanitation; by 2019-21, this decreased to just over 30%.

Cooking Fuel Improvement: Access to cooking fuel saw an enhancement, with deprivation dropping by 15 percentage points.

Welfare Indicators: The report focused on dimensions like health, education, and standard of living rather than just monetary measures.

How has the Indian government approached welfare?

Priority on Welfare: The Modi administration emphasized welfare, indicating no reduction in favor of market solutions.

Major Initiatives: The Swachh Bharat Mission was launched aiming to end open defecation in India, with a focus on toilet construction.

Hygiene Promotion: The mission took inspiration from Mahatma Gandhi’s advice on hygiene.

Sanitation Improvements: In 2015-16, 52% lacked sanitation, reduced to just over 30% in 2019-21.

Cooking Fuel Access: Cooking fuel deprivation decreased by nearly 15 percentage points, with efforts like Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana enrolling 96 million kitchens by 2022.

Stretch Targets: By setting ambitious goals, public projects, like the Swachh Bharat Mission, gained urgency.

Regular Updates: Ministries, like Jal Shakti, offered updates on village progress in sanitation and waste disposal.

What are concerns in the government welfare programs?

Housing Progress: Only a minor improvement in housing with deprivation decreasing by just over 4% in five years.

PM Awas Yojana Issues: Despite being prioritized, there are tales of poor cost forecasts and overruns.

Local Corruption: The Awas Yojana has faced risks of local corruption.

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Loan Defaults: Even if default rates aren't alarming in the Awas Yojana, it doesn't guarantee the program's success.

60. Why are tomato prices still high?

Source: The post is based on the article “**Why are tomato prices still high?**” published in **The Hindu** on **20th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Indian Economy – Inflation**

Relevance: **concerns associated with** volatility of tomato prices

News: The RBI has recently highlighted that the volatility of tomato prices has historically contributed to the country's overall inflation levels.

Where are tomatoes grown in India?

Andhra Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Karnataka, Odisha, and Gujarat, contribute nearly 50% of the total tomato output.

Tomatoes are grown both as rabi and kharif crops. However, some regions in Maharashtra and Himachal Pradesh's Solan can also grow tomatoes during the monsoon months.

During the summer, **Andhra Pradesh's Madanapalle area alone accounts for all tomato production in the country.**

Further, the peak production of tomatoes was recorded in 2019-20 at 21.187 million tonnes (MT). However, it has been declining since then.

Why are the prices of tomatoes high?

First, the production of tomatoes has been low this year due to the extreme weather conditions. The farmers have also grown less tomatoes due to the low profit received from tomatoes in the previous year.

Second, delayed monsoon precipitation in southern India and Maharashtra, caused pest attacks on tomato crops. Hence, lower-quality varieties appeared in the markets earlier this year. Due to which farmers received lower profit on the crops.

While some farmers sold tomatoes at cheaper rates, others abandoned their crops, resulting in a supply shortfall.

Third, continuous rains in tomato-growing regions affected the new growing crop. Prices rose even more because the months of July and August are typically times of lower tomato production.

Fourth, due to higher profits, several farmers in Karnataka's Kolar region, who are known for substantial tomato production, moved to other crops such as beans.

How has the government responded to the rising price of tomatoes?

As per the government, the rise in price of tomatoes **is seasonal and a temporary issue.** The Consumer Affairs Ministry added that the price increase is a seasonal issue and that tomato prices have increased in these months during the last five years.

What is the impact of rising tomato prices?

The RBI and the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) are concerned over high seasonal price volatility of tomatoes and its impact on the overall Consumer Price Index (CPI).

Although TOP commodities only make up 2.20 of the CPI basket's weight, their contribution to the total CPI has been volatile, resulting in higher overall inflation.

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For instance, tomato's contribution to the CPI basket in June 2022 was 8.9%, making it the highest of the 299 commodities.

Additionally, **an ICRIER analysis found** a cyclical trend in tomato pricing, with similar events taking place every other year.

How can volatility be managed?

Read Here: [Volatility in Tomato, Onion and Potato \(TOP\) prices – Explained](#)

61. [NRF: A landmark initiative](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**NRF: A landmark initiative**” published in **Business Standard** on **20th July 2023**.

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

Relevance: **About** the National Research Foundation

News: The article discusses the National Research Foundation (NRF).

What is NRF?

The NRF funds scientific research rather than technological research. Academics from both public and private universities are eligible for NRF funding.

However, **scientists working at autonomous national laboratories are only eligible for NRF funds if they collaborate with an academic researcher.**

Read More: [India's National Research Foundation \(NRF\): Needs, significance and challenges](#)

Why was NRF needed?

In comparison to other nations such as South Korea, Taiwan, Israel, Singapore, and China, **India's overall R&D investment is 0.6 percent of GDP.**

Indian industry invests around 0.25 per cent of GDP in in-house R&D **compared to a world average of 1.4 percent.**

Further, unlike the rest of the world, **India conducts its research in autonomous government institutions rather than universities.** Due to which, India allocated only 0.04 percent of GDP for research done within the higher education system.

Hence, there was a need to scale the R&D investments both by the industry and by the government within the higher education system.

Read More: [India's National Research Foundation \(NRF\): Needs, significance and challenges](#)

What are the challenges with NRF?

Dividing the Funding Amount: Initially, the 50,000-crore funding was supposed to be totally funded by the government. However, in the final proposal the amount is shared by the government and private entities.

This does not align with the global trend where the burden of funds is totally taken up by the government.

Amount below the Global Average: The funding amount of 10,000 crore per year would double research within the higher education system and raise its share from 0.04% to 0.1% of GDP. However, it still falls short of the global average of 0.35% of GDP.

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Governance: The current governance structure of the NRF includes a high-level board chaired by the prime minister, with the ministers of education and science and technology as deputies. This makes it difficult to make them accountable.

However, instead of this, the board should consist of only professionals willing to dedicate the necessary time and energy and keep it free from any bureaucratic influence.

This board can then be accountable to the Cabinet, headed by the Prime Minister. This would be a more effective solution to the governance of NRF.

Read More: [India's National Research Foundation \(NRF\): Needs, significance and challenges](#)

What can be the way ahead?

The NRF is indeed a landmark initiative. However, to achieve its potential, it is necessary that funds are properly utilized and those governing the NRF should be made accountable.

R&D IN INDIA AND THE WORLD

Country	National R&D spending (\$bn)	R&D spending as a % of GDP	Industry as a % of total R&D done	Government as a % of total R&D done	Higher education as a % of total R&D done	Government funding of R&D as a % of GDP
USA	731	3.5	75	10	15	0.4
China	357	2.4	76	16	8	0.4
Japan	166	3.3	79	8	13	0.3
Germany	120	3.1	67	15	18	0.5
South Korea	79	4.8	79	10	11	0.5
UK*	47	1.7	67	7	26	0.1
Taiwan	23	3.5	82	10	8	0.4
India*	17	0.6	39	54	7	0.3
Israel	22	5.4	90	1	9	0.1
World	1,709	2.0	71	12	17	0.5

Source: OECD, Forbes, N. (2022) *The Struggle and the Promise*, Centre for Technology, Innovation and Economic Research (CTIER)
UK* share for 2019; India data is for 2020-21

SPENDING BY UNION GOVT ON R&D

Union Govt, Key Agencies for R&D	2020-21 (₹ Cr)
Defence Research & Development Organisation	157,07
Department of Space	94,74.4
Department of Atomic Energy	46,93.9
Indian Council of Agricultural Research	60,43
Department of Science & Technology	43,15.4
Council of Scientific & Industrial Research	42,02
Department of Biotechnology	18,64.4
Indian Council of Medical Research	16,11.8
Total for Key Agencies	479,11.9

Source: Union Budget Documents 2022-23; Department Websites; Centre for Technology, Innovation and Economic Research (CTIER)

Source: Images from Business Standard

62. [Combating air pollution -Rural areas should not be left out](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Combating air pollution -Rural areas should not be left out**” published in “Business standard” on 20th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Environmental pollution

News: In this article the author discusses the overlooked issue of air pollution in rural areas. It highlights its causes and the need for equal attention to both urban and rural regions in combating this pollution.

About recent air pollution data

Urban Air Pollution

Urban areas in India recorded a **PM 2.5 content of 46.8 microgram in 2022**. This is **higher than the national threshold of 40 micrograms**.

NCAP Focus: The National Clean Air Program (NCAP) targets 130 cities for a 20-30% reduction in PM 2.5 and PM 10 levels by 2024.

About Rs. 89,000 crores have been allocated for the program, focusing solely on urban areas.

Rural Air Pollution

PM 2.5 Content: Rural regions showed **almost equal PM 2.5 levels at 46.4 microgram in 2022**.

Lifespan Impact: According to the Centre for Science and Environment, **villagers lose around seven more months of their potential lifespan due to polluted air**.

What Causes Pollution in Rural Areas?

Traditional Ovens: Rural homes commonly use chulhas (clay ovens) that emit smoke.

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Conventional Fuels: Fuels like wood, crop residues, and animal dung cakes are burned for cooking.

Diesel Usage: Farm operations rely on diesel-run machinery such as tractors and water pumps.

Crop Residue Burning: Farmers burn crop leftovers, releasing pollutants into the atmosphere.

Fertilisers: Chemical fertilisers contribute to greenhouse gases, especially ammonia and nitrogen dioxide.

What's the Solution?

Rural and urban areas need equal attention in battling air pollution.

Promoting access to clean fuels and efficient use of farm inputs can help curb rural pollution.

[63. Cities, climate change and urban flooding](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Cities, climate change and urban flooding**” published in **Business standard** on 20th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Disaster and disaster management.

News: The author discusses the challenges urban areas face due to climate change, such as flooding and infrastructure damage, emphasizing the need for improved urban planning, infrastructure, and global cooperation to address these issues and promote sustainable city growth.

What are the causes of the rise in urban flooding?

Climate Change: Increases unpredictable weather patterns, leading to intense rainfall, heatwaves, and cyclones.

Unplanned Urban Growth: Rapid expansion over natural resources makes cities vulnerable.

Human Encroachment: Building on active flood channels leads to urban flooding.

Inadequate Flood Management: Many cities lack proper flood control practices. For example, urban India frequently experiences waterlogging, highlighting municipal unpreparedness.

Waste Disposal Issues: Solid waste in drainage systems exacerbates flooding.

What are the challenges urban areas face due to the rise in urban flooding?

Infrastructure Damage: Heavy rainfall and flooding can damage buildings and roads, disrupting daily life. Example: frequent waterlogging in Indian cities.

Emergency Response: Unexpected disasters strain city resources and redirect budgets from growth to recovery.

Transportation Disruption: Floods can bring essential services to a halt, affecting socioeconomic activities.

Pollution Issues: Large amounts of contaminated runoff can overwhelm urban drainage systems, causing flash floods.

Health Risks: Poor air quality and contaminated water increase public health risks.

Food, Water, and Energy Security: Natural disasters threaten these basic needs, especially in coastal cities.

Housing Issues: In many developing cities, the poor often build homes in risky, flood-prone areas, increasing the harm caused by floods.

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What should be done?

Improve Urban Planning: Focus on energy-efficient designs to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and the subsequent risk of severe weather.

Strengthen Infrastructure: Build systems that can withstand extreme weather. This can help prevent situations like the frequent waterlogging in Indian cities.

Prioritize Waste Management: Address the issue of solid waste in drainage systems to reduce flooding risks.

Enhance Emergency Preparedness: Cities need early warning systems for floods and other disasters.

Promote Global Cooperation: Join initiatives like the **100 Resilient Cities and the Global Covenant of Mayors** for shared solutions.

Encourage Citizen Involvement: Local action plans involving residents can support municipal efforts.

Shift to Clean Production: Embrace renewable energy and reduce industrial emissions, benefiting both climate and local air quality.

Protect Natural Resources: Ensure urban growth respects and conserves the environment.

64. [Use contextual tools and models to catalyse our climate transition](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Use contextual tools and models to catalyse our climate transition**” published in “Live mint” on 20th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

News: In this article the author discusses the importance of genuine and long-term business strategies in the climate transition, warning against short-lived tactics and emphasizing that eco-friendly investments are beneficial.

About carbon emissions data

Global Carbon Emissions:

Economic systems are now accounting for the cost of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Transition to a low-carbon economy is driven by various stakeholders.

Electric vehicles are a solution to replace traditional combustion engine vehicles.

Rice cultivation contributes 10% of global methane emissions, a GHG 25 times stronger than CO₂.

India's Carbon Emissions:

India ranks as the third-largest emitter worldwide.

Per capita emissions in India are one-fifth the global average.

With a growing middle class and manufacturing base, India's emissions will rise.

What should be done to effectively catalyze the climate transition?

Adopt Low-Carbon Technologies: Embrace alternatives for carbon-heavy industries to reduce emissions. Electric vehicles can replace traditional combustion engine vehicles, minimizing automotive emissions.

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Implement Digital Solutions: a) Optimizing supply chains can reduce carbon footprints, b) A McKinsey report highlights that **80% of an organization's emissions come from its supply chain**, signifying the importance of this optimization, c) Digital tools can monitor production processes, decreasing inefficiencies and waste, thus cutting emissions.

Encourage Innovative Food Production: Adopt technologies like CRISPR for different food production methods. Like, String Bio is a model example, using methane-based synthetic biology to improve rice yields by 30-40% while decreasing methane emissions by 60%.

Reduce Food Waste: a) **It's tied to 8-10% of all annual GHG emissions**, b) Digital-enabled supply chains can help match demand with supply for perishable items, reducing waste rates to single digits.

Develop the Carbon Accounting Market: a) Transition from legacy accounting systems that overlook the costs of earth's resources, b) The potential growth of the carbon accounting market is vast, with estimates suggesting **a leap from \$12 billion to \$65 billion by 2030**, c) Use software and hardware-led methods for scalable and authentic carbon measurement and reporting.

Promote Transparency and Accountability: Business opportunities in climate transition should prioritize transparency to counteract short-term opportunistic strategies like **greenwashing**.

[65. When El Nino and the monsoon meet in India: Rain checks for our times](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**When El Nino and the monsoon meet in India: Rain checks for our times**" published in "The Indian express" on 20th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment

News: In this article author discusses the changing monsoon patterns in India due to climate factors like El Nino, its impact on agriculture and livelihoods, and suggests strategies like mapping, financial planning, and restoring ecosystems to tackle these changes.

What are the reasons for change in monsoon pattern in India?

El Nino: Characterized by warming of the Central and Eastern Equatorial Pacific Ocean, it influences global weather patterns. For example, during El Nino years, rainfall trends over 132 years show frequent drought-like conditions in India.

Indian Ocean Dipole and Madden-Julian Oscillation: These regional phenomena significantly shape monsoon dynamics.

Climatic Events: Like, in June, cyclone Biparjoy hit the western coast, leading to erratic monsoon onset in other parts.

Human Impact: As the climate changes, unpredictable monsoons occur, affecting 75% of India's rain-fed farmlands.

How can India tackle this challenge?

Mapping and Forecasting: a) Identify monsoon variability impacts, b) Create a high-resolution monsoon variability index for vulnerabilities at city and block levels, c) Strengthen early warning systems for accurate predictions.

Financial Planning and Integration: a) Merge public and private funds to handle financial challenges from erratic monsoons, b) Have the central bank monitor climate patterns like El Nino for better financial planning, c) Implement mandatory reporting as per the **Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures (TCFD)**.

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Ecosystem Restoration: a) Prioritize rehabilitating ecosystems like mangroves, wetlands, and forests, b) Promote nature-based solutions for climate challenges, c) Allocate resources for sustainable land restoration to mitigate climate impact.

Shared Responsibility: a) Encourage all societal sections to collaboratively address climate change, b) Focus on being proactive rather than using alarming rhetoric.

Adopting these strategies can ensure India's preparedness against monsoon changes and its consequences.

[66. Man-made floods of the Yamuna call for ecosystem-led solutions](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Man-made floods of the Yamuna call for ecosystem-led solutions**" published in **Live Mint** on **21st July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster Management

Relevance: measures needed to control flash floods in Delhi.

News: The article explains the reasons behind the floods in Delhi and provides measures to prevent them.

How are manmade flash floods caused?

Man-made flash flooding is caused by dams holding massive volumes of water and then releasing it downstream. It has the potential to cause ecological changes and calamities in downstream locations.

The flash flood on the Yamuna River that caused havoc in Delhi was caused by the discharge of 350,000 cubic meters of water from the Hathnikund barrage.

This resulted in the river's water level rising, the submergence of low-lying areas on both banks and significant back-flow in sewage-carrying storm drains, which worsened the situation.

Delhi also witnessed a flash flood in 1978. However, during that period, a larger volume of water was released from the dam compared to this year, but the water level of the Yamuna did not experience a significant rise.

What has caused a sharper rise in the water level of the Yamuna this year?

First, over time, the **width of the Yamuna's floodplains in certain areas has significantly decreased** from the river channel, and in some sections, **there are no floodplains left.**

This has led to a decrease in the flood-carrying capacity of these floodplains that usually act as a flood-way for flood water. Bunds, guide bunds and other structures built along the flood plains have also reduced the area of flood plains.

Second, there has been a loss of floodplain catchment wetlands which are capable of absorbing large volumes of flood water. Their loss over the years also contributed to the enhanced level of flood water this year.

Third, there has also been an increase in the number of bridges (road, railway and metro) across the river between the Wazirabad and Okhla barrages. These pillars act as a water-resistance, thereby increasing the level of flood water.

Fourth, concretization of floodplains in the name of river ghats has reduced the flow of water. More dams/barrages on the river upstream of Palla also contributed to frequent floods downstream.

Must Read: [Extreme rainfall events and urban floods: Explained](#)

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What steps can be taken to prevent Delhi from flooding in the future?

- Building bridges over the river should be prohibited.
- Avoiding dense plantations of trees and woody plants on floodplains, as trees provide resistance to flood water.
- Delhi's water supply can be improved by the restoration of catchment wetlands on floodplains that collect floodwaters. Off-river reservoirs can be built for this purpose.
- The creation of a network of biodiversity parks throughout the floodplains, similar to the Yamuna Biodiversity Park, would not only help rejuvenate the river, but will also assist lower flow velocity and store floodwater.
- All wetlands should be restored to retain surface run-off and should not be exploited for solid waste disposal.
- To keep flows in check, open lands around main drains should be left free. Natural storm drains should not be used as sewers.
- Establishing a single authority to oversee sustainability and protect the ecological integrity of the Yamuna's Delhi stretch.

[67. No quick fix – on National Research Foundation \(NRF\)](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**No quick fix**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **21st July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science and Technology

Relevance: Issues related to Research & Development

News- The government will table the National Research Foundation (NRF) Bill, 2023 in the current session of the Parliament.

What are some facts about NIRF?

The plan involves the establishment of a **fresh, centralised organisation** responsible for funding research. It will be allocated with a **budget of ₹50,000 crore for the upcoming five years**.

It takes inspiration from successful models like the **United States' National Science Foundation**, which provides nearly \$8 billion in funding for college and university research, and the **European Research Council**.

What is the logic behind establishment of NIRF?

India's **research expenditure** has historically remained at a lower level. It ranges between **0.6% to 0.8% of the GDP**, which is considerably below the **1% to 2% invested** by countries heavily reliant on science and technology.

A comparison with nations like China, the U.S., and Israel reveals that these countries receive almost **70% of their research funding from the private sector**. In contrast, in India, the private sector's contribution accounted for only about **36% of the total research expenditure**.

Therefore, the government believes that the **most effective approach** to encourage university research in India is to attract **more private investment** into the research sector.

What are obstacles in the success of NIRF?

The implementation of such a proposal is currently uncertain. One suggestion is to direct the funds allocated by private companies as part of their **annual corporate CSR obligations** to the **National Research Foundation**.

Data from the Ministry of Corporate Affairs indicates that in the **fiscal year 2022**, companies spent **₹14,588 crore on their CSR obligations**. Historically, around **70% of these funds** were utilised for projects related to education, healthcare, and sanitation.

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Additionally, many companies tend to invest these funds in initiatives within their **own communities**. The government does not have **any control** over how these funds are utilised. Whether the government can **compel companies** to channel some of these funds into the NRF, or **provide tax benefits** to encourage such contributions, remains to be seen

What is the way forward for the success of NIRF?

In numerous countries, the higher involvement of private sector research can be attributed to **consistent government support** provided to universities and research institutions.

This support has inspired individuals to establish companies and institutions that recognize the **significance of investing in research and development**.

The issue in India is not the lack of such companies but rather the **scarcity of their presence**. Entities like the NRF should focus on creating **favourable conditions** that motivate the growth of private sector organisations inclined towards innovation.

68. [Who is accountable in Manipur? The answer can provide justice to mob assault survivors](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Who is accountable in Manipur? The answer can provide justice to mob assault survivors**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **21st July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Internal security

Relevance: Issues related to northeast

News- The article explains the current violence between Kuki and Meiteis undergoing in Manipur.

How is a system of violence operating in Manipur that is responsible for current unrest?

Since May, **social divisions** between the **Meitei and Zo-Kuki communities** have evolved into a **de facto partition**.

The violence has resulted in over a hundred deaths, thousands of people displaced, numerous churches destroyed, properties burned. A **no-man’s land** has established between the hills and the Valley, secured by the army.

The state administration has also been **divided**. **Meitei police officers** confined to the Valley, **and Kuki-Zo officers** restricted to the hills. Moreover, a significant number of bullets and arms, including machine-guns, have gone missing from various police training centres.

The conflict is further complicated by **gender politics and the balance of power between different communities**. The administration in southern Manipur is currently being governed from New Delhi. N Biren Singh government mandate is limited to the Imphal Valley.

Recent incidents, like the murder of a Naga woman in Imphal East, threaten to strain **Naga-Meitei ties** and potentially drag Nagaland into the conflict. The situation is like the **Meitei-Kuki rift** in the south that has already involved Mizoram.

Thousands of **displaced Kuki-Zo families** are being hosted by the Mizoram government. **Mizos** are openly supporting this community to protect their **ethnic kin in Manipur** from Meitei majoritarianism.

This has created **political tensions among Mizoram, Assam, and Manipur**, particularly concerning disputed boundaries.

The situation is further complicated by the **influx of drug profits and products from Myanmar**. All these factors have contributed to **escalating tensions and armed ethnic mobilisation** in Northeast India, with support from states within the Union.

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What are the driving factors behind this system of violence?

Such systems of violence are a result of **India's majoritarian politics**. The driving factor is **competing desires for regional hegemony** and demands for **access to resources and power** within the Union and not territorial separation.

Such ecosystems are benefitted by **electoral politics**. These communities become **vote-banks** for whoever advocates their cause. **Illegitimate and unaccounted cash-flows** further boost it, both of which are abundant in the Northeast.

The **polarised politics** in Manipur is sustained by **mechanisms of silence** surrounding it. Both the Prime Minister and Home Minister have maintained their silence.

On the other hand, another aspect of this silence is linked to the **systemic violence against women** in Manipur.

The alleged gang-rape of the two Kuki women was not unknown to the authorities. However, it was only after a **leaked video and public outrage** that the Manipur police finally ordered an investigation into the matter.

69. Textiles in a tangle

Source: The post is based on the article "**Textiles in a tangle**" published in **Business standard** on 21st July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Effects of liberalization on the economy & Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.

News: The article discusses the challenges faced by Tamil Nadu's spinning mills due to a decline in demand from the US and EU, competition from other countries, high cotton import duties, and rising borrowing costs. It has resulted in many mills to seek financial relief and impacting India's textile exports.

What are the challenges faced by Tamil Nadu spinning mills?

Demand Recession: There has been a noticeable decline in demand from US and EU markets. This is evident from the fact that textile and apparel exports from India fell by 11.3% over the previous year.

Financial Strains: Many mills in Tamil Nadu are under financial pressure. They have reached out to the Indian Banks' Association seeking relief measures for their loans. It's concerning that 15% of the 1,800 affected mills are now falling under the non-performing asset category, indicating serious financial health issues.

International Competition: Exporters, especially from Tiruppur, are grappling with stiff competition from countries like Bangladesh, Vietnam, and Cambodia. The challenge is compounded by the fact that India's textile exports face tariffs of 5.9% in the EU, while many competitors benefit from nil or significantly reduced duties.

High Import Duty on Cotton: One major issue has been the 11% import duty that India imposes on cotton. This policy has meant that for the past 15 months, Indian cotton prices have been consistently higher than those on the international market.

Domestic Market Decline: There's been a downturn in the domestic market as well. Tiruppur's domestic sales have seen a decrease by 20-25%. Large clients report having too much stock, which means they are placing fewer orders.

Cotton Procurement Issues: The spinning mills are also facing challenges in cotton procurement. There's been a massive 55% drop in cotton procurement over the last year due to the decreased global demand.

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Global Economic Concerns: Economic patterns in Europe and the US have affected demand. Europeans, facing inflation, are focusing their spending on essentials and cutting back on textile purchases. Additionally, retail giants like Walmart are closing several of their outlets in the US and EU.

Despite these challenges, there's a glimmer of hope as the industry anticipates a potential boost in demand during festivals like Diwali.

What are its implications?

Economic Impact: With textile exports dropping to \$1,624 million in June from \$1,736 million in 2022, India's economy could face substantial revenue loss.

Job Losses: Mills shutting down means potential job losses for thousands in the industry.

Global Market Position: India risks losing its competitive edge to countries like Bangladesh and Vietnam, which enjoy tariff advantages.

Domestic Market Saturation: With a 20-25% drop in domestic intake in Tiruppur, overstocking issues could arise for retailers.

Supply Chain Disruption: A 55% reduction in cotton procurement may affect the entire textile production chain.

What should be done?

Policy Revisions: Reduce the 11% import duty on cotton to make Indian textile competitive.

Financial Support: Provide mills with the requested loan relief, including extending moratoriums, to prevent more NPAs.

Trade Agreements: Pursue favorable trade agreements with the EU and US to reduce tariffs below the current 5.9% and 6.2% respectively.

Domestic Market Boost: Promote domestic consumption to clear overstocked inventory in major outlets.

Diversify Markets: Explore new international markets beyond the US and EU for export opportunities.

70. Missing the real achievements

Source: The post is based on the article “Missing the real achievements” published in **Business Standard** on 22nd July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development

Relevance: About India's economic scenario and challenges with it

News: The article explains India's macroeconomic achievements and challenges associated with it.

What are the macroeconomic achievements made by India?

Wholesale and consumer price inflation rates in India have fallen significantly.

The WPI rate has decreased from an average of 9% in the 1970s to around 4% in the last decade. **The CPI has also decreased, going from** 7.5 percent to less than 6 percent in the last decade.

From 1992 to 2002, the overall balance of payments surplus was \$52 billion. It has risen to \$354 billion in the most recent decade (2012-22). **This has resulted in the elimination of dollar scarcity.**

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Moreover, the reliance on aid and foreign borrowings has also decreased substantially.

Although the merchandise trade deficit has grown in comparison to earlier decades, **the expanding services export surplus has mostly neutralised it.**

Further, growing foreign investment in the last three decades has also contributed to the positive economic shift. **As a result of this, India's currency has become more stable.**

Although the rupee has continued to depreciate against the dollar, the rate of decline has slowed over time.

However, despite these achievements, India still faces challenges in becoming the fastest-growing large economy.

What are the challenges with India in becoming the fastest-growing economy?

First, in 2022, **Saudi Arabia and Vietnam surpassed India's growth rate, and the Philippines outperformed in the first quarter of 2023.** India is likewise not a beneficiary of the "China Plus One" scenario. It's Vietnam.

Second, India is at a disadvantage compared to nations like Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia because of its lack of economic integration with East Asian economies and its exclusion from the [Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership \(RCEP\)](#).

Third, Vietnam is currently on par with China in terms of exports to the West when it comes to supplying apparel to the US.

Hence, India still belongs to the group of developing players despite having a sizable market.

What can be the way ahead?

The structural improvements experienced in India over the decades have resulted in a more stable economy and currency, contributing to political stability as well.

However, despite this, India has not achieved a rapid-growth trajectory comparable to that of several East Asian economies since the mid-twentieth century. **Therefore, there is a need for introspection to address this disparity.**

[71. Menaka Guruswamy writes: Can AI be communist?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Menaka Guruswamy writes: Can AI be communist?**" published in "The Indian express" on 22nd July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life; developing new technology. & Awareness in the fields of IT, Computers,

News: In this article author discusses China's draft regulations on AI, which require AI to promote socialist values and undergo state security assessments. The regulations highlight China's approach to controlling AI content and its providers. The author contrasts this with the U.S.'s focus on individual rights in AI regulations.

What are the global efforts made to introduce laws that will regulate AI?

China's Efforts to Regulate AI

China's Cyberspace Administration drafted regulations for generative AI products and services.

These products must uphold socialist values and cannot promote subversion, separatism, or false information.

AI products aiming for public use must pass a state "security assessment" before being launched.

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Providers are responsible for content generated by their AI. Violations can result in penalties as per various Chinese cybersecurity and data laws.

United States' Approach to AI Regulation

The White House released a "Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights" in October 2022.

This bill emphasizes individual rights and protections against algorithmic discrimination.

Algorithmic discrimination is defined as unjust treatment based on race, color, gender, religion, age, etc., caused by automated systems.

The U.S. model aims to protect individuals from AI bias and promotes freedom of expression.

Different countries are adopting AI regulations based on their political and legal values. While China prioritizes state control and socialist values, the U.S. emphasizes individual rights and protections against AI biases.

What are the implications of these regulations and efforts?

Implications for AI in China:

AI will promote socialist values, affecting the content and answers they generate.

Chatbots like Baidu's "Ernie" could have filtered responses based on state guidelines.

Innovation may be limited due to stringent state controls.

Providers bear the responsibility for AI content, leading to self-censorship and cautious development.

Implications for AI in the U.S.:

AI systems will prioritize individual rights and avoid algorithmic discrimination.

Companies will focus on creating unbiased AI, considering the wide range of individual attributes like race and gender.

Users can expect more transparent and just AI services.

General Implications:

Countries will shape AI based on their political and legal values.

AI development may differ regionally, causing a divergence in AI behavior and functionality.

Regulation might influence how global AI companies tailor their products for different markets.

The infusion of ideology in AI can potentially shape human opinions and beliefs.

[72. Two analyses on Manipur](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Two analyses on Manipur. The first explains why ST status for Meiteis is problematic for a number of reasons. The second details the gender dimension of the escalating ethnic violence**" published in **The Times of India** on 22nd July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 1- Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India. & GS 3- Internal security

What is Manipur High Court's ruling on Meitei community's tribal status?

The Manipur High Court directed the state government to evaluate the Meitei community for inclusion in the Scheduled Tribe list.

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The directive was issued on March 27, specifying that the evaluation should preferably be done within four weeks of the date of the order.

The High Court's decision missed out on the detailed process for recognizing a group as a Scheduled Tribe.

What are the Implications of recognition of schedule tribal status?

Job Reservations: Recognized tribes benefit from job reservations, influencing the power dynamics in governance.

Land Rights: In Manipur, special laws can prevent non-tribal communities from procuring tribal land, safeguarding tribal territories.

Legal Protections: Tribes can invoke the Prevention of Atrocities Act, providing added legal safeguards.

Economic Benefits: Tribes in Manipur get income tax exemptions as per Section 10 (26) of the Income Tax Act for income earned within the state.

What is the legal process for recognizing tribes?

Initial Recommendation: The first step involves the state government or Union Territory recommending a community for inclusion in the Scheduled Tribe list. For Manipur, consent from **the Hill Areas Committee is also needed due to Article 371 (C)** of the Constitution.

Verification by the Registrar General: Once the state makes a recommendation, the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India, under the Union home ministry, examines the proposal.

Assessment by NCST: After the state and Registrar General provide their recommendations, the proposal reaches the National Commission of Scheduled Tribes (NCST), for technical assessment. NCST is the **constitutional body created under Article 338A**. The NCST forms a panel of experts from various fields like anthropology and ethnography to evaluate the recommendation.

Final Approval: If NCST agrees with the recommendations, the matter proceeds to the Cabinet and then to Parliament for finalizing the amendment order.

What does the Lokur Report say about the Meiteis tribe?

The Lokur Committee was formed in 1965 to review the inclusion or exclusion of communities in the scheduled tribes list.

The committee recognized tribes specific to geographical areas.

For Manipur, the committee recommended tribes like the Khonjai (Kukis with sub-tribes), Nagas (with sub-tribes), Marings, and Mizos as scheduled tribes.

The Meiteis were notably absent; they weren't mentioned as a scheduled tribe in Manipur or any other state.

What are the issues faced by women in Manipur's conflict zones?

Violence and Assault: Disturbing videos have surfaced showing women being paraded and assaulted by mobs.

Use as Political Tools: Women's bodies are used to assert power and mark political boundaries. They're often reduced to symbols for different agendas.

Inconsistent Responses to Crimes: Reactions to assaults vary based on community biases. For instance, The Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI) reacted differently to two separate assault incidents.

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Lack of Justice: Many crimes against women go unaddressed. For example, after a video of an assault went viral, only four culprits were arrested, leaving many still at large.

What should be done?

Re-evaluate the Manipur High Court's ruling: Ensure proper legal procedures are followed for recognizing tribes.

Strengthen Justice System in Manipur: Ensure timely registration of FIRs and swift legal actions against culprits.

Enhance Women's Protection: Address assaults on women in conflict zones with urgency.

Promote Transparency: Publicize the legal process for recognizing tribes to avoid misunderstandings.

73. An Internet ban will not restore peace in Manipur

Source: The post is based on the article **"An Internet ban will not restore peace in Manipur"** published in "The Hindu" on 22nd July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges,

News: The Manipur government issued a blanket internet shutdown from May 3, 2023, to stop "disinformation and false rumors."

What are the critics for the internet shut down in Manipur?

Vague Justification: The shutdown orders used general terms like "thwarting anti-national activities" without specifying what these activities were. This left many uncertain about the exact reasons for the shutdown.

Lack of Concrete Evidence: The government didn't provide actual incidents or data showing harm from internet usage. For example, no details were given on how online platforms contributed to violence or misinformation in the state.

How has the judiciary responded?

A case, Aribam Dhananjay Sharma vs State of Manipur, challenges the shutdown orders.

The High Court of Manipur issued an order for partial restoration of the internet but clarity on the legal stance remains elusive.

The Supreme Court has so far avoided adjudicating on the shutdowns directly.

What are the implications of the internet shut down in Manipur?

Impact on Residents:

About 2.2 million internet users were affected by the shutdown.

Students in metropolitan cities ran out of money.

People couldn't apply for assistance or move to relief camps.

Information Flow Disruption:

A blanket shutdown prevented news from Manipur reaching the broader Indian public.

The nation remained unaware of issues in Manipur until a video clip of sexual violence went viral.

Misinformation and Consequences:

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Despite the shutdown, misinformation spread.

A press report connected misinformation to incidents of sexual violence against Kuki-Zo women.

74. [Ethanol + petrol: How to blend more and blend better](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Ethanol + petrol: How to blend more and blend better**” published in **Indian express** on **24th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Infrastructure – Energy

News: The article discusses India’s growth in ethanol production in recent years. Ethanol, a fuel, can be made from sugarcane and grains like rice and maize. India now blends 20% ethanol with petrol. The government promotes diverse raw materials for ethanol by setting different prices. New technologies in distilleries reduce pollution and create useful by-products like fertilizers and animal feed.

How will India achieve its 20% ethanol blending target by 2025?

Diversified Feedstocks: India no longer relies only on sugarcane for ethanol. Mills/distilleries now use various feedstocks including B-heavy molasses, direct sugarcane juice, rice, maize, and other grains. For example, Triveni Engineering’s distillery uses both molasses and grains, allowing year-round operation.

Increased Production: The country’s ethanol supply to oil marketing companies (OMCs) rose significantly from 38 crore liters in 2013-14 to 559 crore liters in 2022-23. This growth indicates a robust production system in place.

Higher Yields from Grains: Grains give higher ethanol yields compared to molasses. For instance, rice produces 450-480 liters from one ton, while maize gives 380-400 liters. These higher yields can boost overall ethanol production.

Innovative Technologies: Some leading sugar companies — including Triveni Engineering & Industries Ltd, DCM Shriram and Dhampur Sugar Mills — have installed distilleries with the flexibility to operate on multiple feedstocks and, hence, round the year. They use molasses from November to April and grains from May to October.

Environmental Benefits: Modern distilleries use technology to minimize pollution. By-products from these processes, such as fertilizers and animal feed, provide added value.

What is the government initiative in this direction?

Differential Pricing

The government introduced a policy of setting different prices based on the raw material used. **Before 2018**, a single price was set for ethanol regardless of the feedstock. However, from 2018-19, the Modi government began pricing ethanol from B-heavy molasses and sugarcane juice higher to compensate mills for lost sugar revenues.

For 2022-23, the prices set by the government ranged from Rs 49.41/liter for C-heavy molasses to Rs 65.61/liter for sugarcane juice/syrup. This differential pricing encourages diverse feedstock use.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of July 2023

75. [How not to tame inflation](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Ashok Gulati, Manish Kumar Prasad write: How not to tame inflation**” published in “The Indian express” on 24th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy (inflation)

News: In this article author discusses India’s rising inflation, particularly in food items like wheat, rice, tomatoes, and milk. The government’s actions, like export bans, aren’t effective. The author suggests adjusting import duties and updating the CPI basket weights as better solutions to control inflation.

What are the reasons for the rising food inflation in India?

1. **Seasonal Factors:** Erratic monsoon patterns (caused by El Niño), can influence crop yields. Like, tomato prices rose due to seasonal factors.
2. **Disease and Feed Costs:** Milk production faced challenges from rising feed costs and lumpy skin disease.

3.Reduced Production: Tur inflation soared because of lower acreage and production. Weather conditions might further reduce pulse outputs in regions that depend on rainfall.

Why is an export ban to curb inflation not an effective approach?

Export Bans and Stocking Limits

India banned wheat exports in May 2022 and imposed stocking limits on traders. An export ban was also placed on white rice.

Policymakers are using older strategies from the 1960s, which might not be suitable for current market dynamics. For example, despite the wheat export ban and stocking limits, wheat inflation is at 12.37%. Rice inflation is at 11.78%. These bans might not be favored by G20 countries.

What measures should be taken to address this issue effectively?

3. Adjust Import Duties:

Reduce the import duty on wheat from 40% to 10%.

Decrease import duties on skimmed milk powder from 60% to 10% and butter from 40% to 10%.

By lowering duties, cheaper imports can help control domestic prices.

4. Release Excess Stocks:

The government holds more than 40 million tonnes of rice, much above the buffer stock norms of 13.5 MT.

Unload excess stocks in the open market at lower prices than the current rates.

5. **Update the CPI Basket Weights:** The current weight for food in the CPI basket is based on a 2011 consumption survey and is outdated. The current weight is 45.9%, it should be around 38% in 2023.

6. **Enhance Processing Capacity:** Process 10-15% of items like tomatoes and onions to stabilize prices.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of July 2023

76. [Tax can be an incentive-Voluntary tax transparency framework can attract capital, generate employment](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Tax can be an incentive-Voluntary tax transparency framework can attract capital, generate employment**” published in **The Indian express** on 24th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy – mobilization of resources

News: In this article author discusses the need for India to adopt a voluntary tax transparency framework to support its economic growth. This transparency can attract global investors, create jobs, and align with environmental, social, and governance (ESG) goals. The younger generation values ESG, making transparency crucial for businesses.

How can tax transparency benefit India’s economy?

Tax transparency can offer multiple benefits to India’s economy:

Investor Attraction: Transparent tax strategies can draw in global investors who value responsible tax behavior, amplifying capital inflow.

Economic Growth: By attracting more investment, especially in sectors like infrastructure and green energy, there can be a significant economic expansion.

Job Opportunities: Increased capital from transparency can lead to job creation, benefiting the wider population.

Improved ESG Scores: Companies disclosing their tax approaches can enhance their Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) scores. High ESG scores can attract even more global investors.

Healthy Corporate Competition: A voluntary transparency framework can spur companies to willingly disclose their tax practices, promoting responsible behavior.

Alignment with Global Practices: Following global transparency norms, like the tax transparency report (TTR), strengthens India’s position in the international business community.

What are the global practices around tax transparency?

Tax Transparency Report (TTR): Many companies globally use TTR to share their tax strategies annually.

OECD’s BEPS Project: The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) started the Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) project. This aims to fix gaps in international tax rules.

ESG Values: Globally, investors take a company’s Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) scores seriously, which includes tax transparency.

What should be done?

Adopt Tax Transparency: Introduce a voluntary framework for companies to disclose their tax strategies, promoting responsible behavior.

Link to ESG: Connect tax transparency to Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) scores. Higher scores can attract more investors.

Introduce Reporting Systems: Emulate the global Tax Transparency Report (TTR) model for consistent reporting.

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Support Ease of Business: Ensure the transparency framework does not hinder business operations.

Promote Green Practices: Encourage businesses to report environmental taxes, pushing for eco-friendly measures.

77. Many Indian firms need more leverage

Source: The post is based on an article “**Many Indian firms need more leverage**” published in **Business Standard** on **24th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development

Relevance: concerns associated with low debt scenario in India.

News: There has been a decrease in borrowing by India firms. This presents concerns for the Indian economy.

Why is less borrowing by firms not healthy for the Indian economy?

- Debt drives management to work hard, which eventually benefits shareholders and society.
- Borrowing improves return on equity, which is good for shareholders.
- Debt-ridden businesses fail, as part of Schumpeterian creative destruction, fostering a dynamic economy.

What has been the trend in borrowing by the Indian non-financial corporate sector?

Since the early stages of economic reform, **the Indian non-financial corporate sector has reduced its borrowing**. The debt-equity ratio, which was at its highest of 1.85 in 1991-92, has steadily declined, reaching 0.89 in 2021-22.

Why do Indian corporations follow this trend of low borrowing?

This has been low demand of loans due to – **1)** the prevailing macroeconomic environment with low investment, **2)** fears of bankruptcy, and **3)** low supply of loans due to fear amongst bank employees because of a Supreme Court decision in 2016 over the application of the Prevention of Corruption Act.

Moreover, some see India’s low or nearly zero debt level as a sound basis for long-term growth. However, there are various concerns associated with very low corporate debt.

What are the concerns associated with low levels of debt?

Debt as a disciplining device: There are usually conflicts between the interests of shareholders and the interests of managers. While managers want more money and less effort, shareholders want the firm to do well.

Therefore, in such a scenario, debt acts as a disciplining device for managers to work hard, regardless of whether they have shares in the company or not.

However, when there will be low debt or zero debt, managers will be less motivated to put in the required effort.

Creative destruction: Debt also plays an important role in the failure of the firms, which is essential for a healthy economy.

However, when debt is removed, many low-quality firms can survive indefinitely, leading to governance problems. This lack of a steady pace of firm failure is harmful for economic dynamism.

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Return on equity: A successful business achieves a high return on equity by utilizing debt. However, many businesses in India have low debts, leading to poor returns for shareholders.

Therefore, a low rate of firm failures affects the economic dynamism, which ultimately impacts society at large.

Hence, while excessive debt is very harmful, so is zero debt. Therefore, **a balance needs to be maintained.**

What can be the way ahead?

Implementing a strategy of moderate debt may encounter constraints due to the ineffective bankruptcy process and its associated costs.

Therefore, **in order to reach moderate debt levels**, enterprises and group-holding companies' finance departments will need to have specialized skills in strategizing and implementing borrowing programs.

78. Managing the rivers

Source- The post is based on the article **"Managing the rivers"** published in **"The Hindu"** on **24th July 2023.**

Syllabus: GS3- Disaster management

Relevance: Issues related to flooding in cities

News- Recently, there was flooding in Delhi. The decision to release 350,000 cusecs of water after heavy rain further north seems to have caused the flooding.

What are factors responsible for recent flooding in Delhi?

There is the existence of **multiple authorities** with responsibilities for Delhi. It has impacted the **preparedness for floods** and **proper accountability** for errors.

The water took some time to travel downstream as far as Delhi. But, no alarm was raised. There were no **emergency preparations.**

Many flooded areas are situated on the **floodplains of the Yamuna** and are **prone to flooding and to subsidence.**

The **extensive use of concrete** in urbanised areas without considering the earth's **capacity to absorb excess water** could further exacerbate the problem.

There are issues with the **quality of urbanism and its administration.**

What is the way forward to mitigate flooding?

The feasibility of **consolidating barrages** along the Yamuna and other major rivers under a unified authority should be explored.

State governments must maintain their **jurisdiction over the flow of water** within their territories. But they require **assistance in managing riverine infrastructure.**

The Union government should initiate a **comprehensive examination** of the Yamuna flood plan. It needs to ensure that **infrastructure development** is carried out in a manner that facilitates the **harvesting, absorption, or downstream flow of excess water.**

There is a need to plan for **additional infrastructure**, such as **new channels, de-sedimentation facilities, and stronger embankments.**

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79. Dilemmas of India's great power ambitions

Source– The post is based on the article “Dilemmas of India's great power ambitions” published in “The Indian Express” on 24th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS32- International relations

Relevance: Issues related to Indian foreign policy

News- The article explains the dilemma for India in projecting itself a global power.

What are the strengths of India on the economic and strategic front?

India's **foreign exchange reserves** are around \$600 billion. India is not worried about war with Pakistan.

There is **higher GDP growth** and **significant poverty reduction** has been achieved.

India is now ranked as the **world's fifth largest economy**. It has **one of the largest militaries in the world** with over a hundred nuclear weapons.

Relationship with the US is strong. India has strong relationships with several powerful states around the world.

India is also one of the **pivotal swing powers** of the contemporary international system. It is strategically located.

There is talk of **India's role in world politics** in the context of **great power politics around the Ukraine**. Both Russia and the West want India to be on their side.

There is **demand for mediation** by India in issue to bring an end to the war.

India employs the **rhetoric of mediation** during global crises. It positions itself as a **connecting link between the north and south, as well as the east and west**. This implies its significant role as a **major player in world politics**.

The nation's national power has witnessed a remarkable rise. It is now a **formidable force** with the ability and aspirations to **shape the international system**.

What are the weaknesses of India on the economic and strategic front?

India **GDP per capita** was \$1,947 in 2021. It was \$2,227 for Bangladesh. It is more than that of India even though Bangladesh is only the 40th largest military in the world.

India faces **major infrastructural and governance issues**. Ease of doing business may have improved, but starting a business without a bribe is still not easy.

There exists **regional, caste, ethnic and religious divisions**. India's domestic challenges will continue to distract the attention of its political leaders from **global problems**.

India's political class will have to **reduce poverty and improve the well-being** of Indians living under the poverty line. It will divert its attention from **external engagements**.

When the political class has little concern about the **country's foreign and security policy**, career bureaucrats manage them. They follow a **traditionalist approach** and don't take risky decisions. The foreign policy tends to be on autopilot without **political will**.

A **weak domestic economy** prevents politicians from allocating adequate resources for **foreign policy objectives**.

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As per the **Parliamentary Committee on External Affairs**, “despite an increase in the overall budget allocation, the allocation made to MEA in percentage terms is showing a downward turn during the last four years.

Such allocation does not take into consideration the country’s **rising aspirations and growing global stature**.

What is the way forward for Indian foreign policy?

India’s **domestic inabilities** will limit its ability to **influence the world order**.

If a country is not a rule shaper, it will be a rule taker. India will have to **influence and shape the global order** to meet its **foreign policy objectives**. It will impact its **economic growth, security environment and geopolitical and geo economic interests**.

India’s influence on the world order is undeniable. In today’s **interconnected world**, a nation’s global impact and its domestic growth are linked to each other.

India’s role in **shaping international politics** should be influenced by its **domestic context**. Its **global involvement** must prioritise the **welfare of its citizens**. **Strategic isolation** is not a viable choice.

[80. India should combat loan sharks online with effective regulation](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**India should combat loan sharks online with effective regulation**” published in the “**mint**” on **24th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance: Issues related to financial system

News – The article explains the rise of lending by loan sharks.

What are some facts about shark lending?

It is described by excessively **high interest rates and intimidating strategies**. It focuses on **vulnerable individuals**.

It takes advantage of low-income individuals and those with **restricted access to conventional banking services**.

They operate through a network of **physical establishments, online platforms, and mobile apps**.

What has been the approach of the Indian government towards shark lending?

In August 2017, the RBI mandated that **only NBFCs** should operate **peer-to-peer lending platforms**. Despite this directive, only 22 companies had registered as NBFC-P2P lenders with the RBI. Around 1,100 online lending apps are **unregistered and unregulated**.

To address this issue, RBI established a **working group in January 2021** to study **digital lending activities by unregulated players**. The group’s report, released in November 2021, recommended **regulating digital lending**.

The report proposes a **three-pronged approach**. These are **legal and regulatory measures, technological advancements, and consumer protection initiatives**.

It advocates for the creation of a **nodal agency** to verify digital lending apps, the recognition of **Self-Regulatory Organizations (SROs)** to foster a **healthier lending ecosystem**.

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The collection of borrower data with **explicit consent and verifiable audit trails**, the maintenance of a **'negative list' of problematic lenders** by SROs, and the formulation of a **recovery code of conduct** in consultation with RBI are other suggestions.

What are the measures adopted by countries to combat loan sharking and protect borrowers?

Kenya– It has established a **self-regulatory body** composed of **responsible digital lenders**. It is called the **Digital Lenders Association of Kenya (DLAK)**. It ensures **fair lending practices, transparent interest rates and ethical debt recovery procedures**.

Philippines– It has taken steps to differentiate legitimate fintech companies from loan sharks. Its Securities and Exchange Commission introduced regulations that require online lenders to obtain a **licence and comply with fair lending practices**.

What is the way forward for combating loan sharking?

India needs a **comprehensive regulatory framework**. It should be guided by a **'LENDERS' approach**:

Licensing and registration: Implement a system to ensure **legitimacy and ethical compliance** of all lending entities.

Ethical interest rates: Enforce regulations to cap interest rates, preventing **predatory practices** and offering **reasonable repayment terms**.

Non-coercive practices: Prohibit coercive tactics and encourage **respectful communication** during debt collection.

Disclosure and transparency: Mandate **clear and comprehensive information** on rates, fees and terms to empower borrowers.

Education and awareness: Use **financial literacy programmes** to educate people on fair lending.

Redressal mechanisms: Establish accessible avenues for borrowers to **report complaints and seek resolution**.

Strong legal framework: Strengthen existing laws, introducing **severe penalties and deterrents**.

[81. A case for a new pronoun for AI](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **"A case for a new pronoun for AI"** published in **"The Hindu"** on **22nd July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and Technology

Relevance: Issues related AI

News- The article explains the issue of use of pronoun for AI tools

What are some facts about chatbots?

Large Language Models are empowering chatbots to engage in conversations like human experts. In some cases, they outperform even the most skilled individuals.

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To utilise LLMs effectively, we need to become proficient in **using prompts**. These prompts can be user-generated **questions or instructions** provided by software programmers to elicit **specific responses** from the algorithm.

Why is there a need for a pronoun for AI tools?

There is a shared agreement that **misrepresentation of AI's identity** seems **manipulative**.

Experts propose that restricting AI from using **first person pronouns and other human pronouns** could decrease cases of **AI mistaken identity**. It will make it easier to distinguish machine-generated text.

This is crucial because pronouns play a significant role in **defining identity** in today's context.

Even ChatGPT acknowledges that granting AI a distinct identity can help **clarify its role and prevent confusion** with human beings.

AI requires pronouns to establish an identity that is distinct from that of humans. For **ethical and security reasons**, human beings should know that **conversing with a bot**.

What are the prevalent practices by big companies having AI based products?

Apple has stereotyped Siri with a **feminine-sounding voice**, although it offers **masculine and gender-neutral alternatives**. The aim is to establish an **emotional connection** with users.

The original default version of Siri unintentionally reflected **society's gender assumptions**. It is portraying a preference for a **submissive feminine assistant**.

Technology companies approach the use of pronouns with caution. **Google's Smart Compose technology**, which automatically completes sentences on Gmail, **avoids predicting pronouns** to prevent **unconscious gender biases** in the AI model.

What is the way forward?

Regulators should seize the chance to address this issue **proactively** before **conventional AI pronouns** become widely established.

To achieve a **systematic solution**, regulators should **collaborate with lexicographers and linguists** to establish a **standard for major languages** from the outset. **Pronoun guidelines** can then be included in style guides for **prompt engineering AI models**.

82. [An avoidable controversy over sample surveys](#)

Source– The post is based on the article **“An avoidable controversy over sample surveys”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **25th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Government policies and interventions

Relevance: Issues related to government statistical exercise

News- An article recently raised doubts on the soundness of data collection procedures of some of the surveys such as the National Sample Survey, National Family Health Survey and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS).

As per the writer, most of the surveys from 2011-12 till 2019-21 **underestimates the proportion of the urban population or overestimates the rural population** significantly.

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What are counter arguments against the writer's viewpoints about India's statistical system?

Bias in population estimate– The **sampling designs of the NSS or the PLFS** do not specifically aim to estimate the total number of households or population. Instead, their primary purpose is to estimate the **major socio-economic indicators**.

The estimates of households or population size are considered **auxiliary information**. Data users appropriately adjust the **survey-based estimates** for rural and urban areas separately by using **projected population figures** derived from the Census.

The estimates of the number of households derived from the NSS align closely with the **Census-based figures for households**. The writer's accusation about **non-representative samples** due to **outdated sampling frames** becomes less relevant for two main reasons.

Firstly, these surveys primarily rely on the **population census lists** of villages and urban blocks for sampling. It ensures comprehensive coverage.

Secondly, for sampling urban blocks, the NSS and PLFS utilise the latest **Urban Frame Survey (UFS) blocks**, covering all towns in the country. This helps address any urbanisation that occurred after the census through State government notifications.

Regarding the **classification of geographical areas** as rural or urban, all these surveys **include census towns** as part of the **urban sampling frame**.

Systematic bias in response rate- Some households don't not share information in the survey. As household income increases, the **response rate** tends to decline. This challenge is encountered in similar surveys worldwide.

To address this issue, the **survey methodology** recommends replacing **non-responsive households** with other households that are as similar as possible.

However, it is important to acknowledge that the **substituted households** may have relatively lower income levels. It could introduce some **downward bias in the overall estimates**.

A majority of the **welfare programmes** of the government are targeted towards households in the **lower income brackets**. So, a very **low non-response rate** in these surveys is not likely to have a serious impact on the **overall household level indicators**.

What is the way forward to remove the concerns regarding the soundness of data collection procedures of some of the surveys?

Sample design and data quality are two distinct components of a survey. Sample design typically involves careful selection using scientific methods.

To remove the concerns about the representation of **affluent households**, there is a need to create a list of such households through **alternative sources**.

Incorporate a **representative sample** of them alongside the **conventional survey** of the rest of the population should be done.

Evaluating the coverage of the UFS frame is important to overcome the issue of underestimation of the urban population. Establishing a **methodological study unit** for further improvements in survey design is also a positive step.

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To enhance data quality, strengthening the training of field personnel, conducting field inspections, concurrent data validation, and implementing effective publicity measures are other essential steps.

83. [Chasing Cheetah – on cheetah reintroduction](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “Chasing Cheetah” published in **Business Standard** on 25th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment

Relevance: concerns associated with cheetah’s introduction in Kuno National Park

News: The deaths of five adult cheetahs and three cubs in Kuno National Park, have raised concerns about the PM’s project to introduce cheetahs from South Africa and Namibia.

About the recent death of cheetah

Read Here: [Radio collars are killing the cheetahs in Kuno. Here is how — and why](#)

Why does the cheetah’s death not raise significant worries?

The experience of cheetah relocations within Africa suggests a 50% death rate and this was taken into consideration while introducing cheetah into the Kuno.

The survival rate of cheetah cubs, even in protected ecosystems like the Serengeti plains, is typically 5-10%. Therefore, the deaths of three cubs, the first to be born in India in over 70 years, are not unexpected.

What are the challenges with the Cheetah’s relocation project?

Effectiveness of Project Management: Concerns have been raised about the efficacy of project management, particularly regarding the deaths of four of the five adult cheetahs in captivity.

For instance, one male cheetah was found disoriented, without any explanation provided. Another cheetah was underweight and had pre-existing health conditions, raising concerns about its care in captivity.

Prolonged Captivity: Some wildlife biologists have expressed concerns about the prolonged captivity of cheetahs. **International standards recommend** one month of quarantine and four to eight weeks in an acclimatization enclosure before releasing them into the wild.

However, the cheetahs from Namibia, who arrived in September 2022, were released into the wild in mid-March instead of mid-December.

Degree of Intervention: Concerns have been raised about the extent of interference with cheetahs in the wild. Injured females or males fighting for territory are rescued, deviating from the established practice of allowing nature to take its course.

What can be the way ahead?

Project Cheetah needs to be evaluated, especially when lions in Gir are facing habitat issues.

84. [Advancing technologies are not giving all children a better future](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “Advancing technologies are not giving all children a better future” published in the “Live Mint” on 25th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Inclusive growth. GS2- Vulnerable sections of the population

Relevance: Issues related to digital divide

9 PM Compilation for the Month of July 2023

News- The article explains the issue of lack of digital access, connectivity and literacy among children from vulnerable sections.

What are some digital divides among vulnerable sections of the population?

Women, the elderly, individuals with disabilities, ethnic or linguistic minorities, indigenous communities and residents of impoverished or remote areas are **mostly impacted** by this digital divide.

Children from **underprivileged backgrounds** are most vulnerable. They **lack access** to the resources needed to utilise advancing technologies.

As per a report jointly released by **Unicef** and the **International Telecommunication Union**, 2.2 billion children and young people aged 25 years or younger lack **internet connectivity** in their homes. 768 million children without **internet access** reside in South Asia.

Closer home, report by the **Unified District Information System for Education plus**, about 66% of schools in India lack **access to the internet**. Less than 50% of the schools surveyed had functional computers.

What are the impacts of digital divide on children and young population?

It impacts the **academic, professional** and **personal endeavours** of children in an increasingly digitised world.

In today's interconnected **world**, access to the internet has become a **fundamental necessity**. It serves as a gateway to **knowledge, information** and **opportunities**.

Children from rural households face unequal levels of **connectivity and access** to online resources compared to their urban counterparts.

Without appropriate interventions, these disparities will only widen. It will limit **educational opportunities** and hinder their ability to engage in **e-learning**, access **online educational material**, and participate in **virtual classrooms**.

The lack of internet access in rural areas also impacts their **social development**. They are unable to connect with peers, explore **diverse perspectives**, and access a wealth of online content that could enrich their knowledge and experiences.

This dearth of connectivity also hinders their exposure to **digital literacy** and **essential technological skills**. These have become increasingly crucial in today's workforce.

As a result, the digital divide exacerbates existing **socio-economic inequalities** and perpetuates a cycle of disadvantage for rural communities.

Way forward

To bridge the digital divide and ensure **equal opportunities** for children from rural households, **concerted efforts** are required.

This entails expanding internet infrastructure, enhancing connectivity in remote areas, and making internet services more affordable and accessible.

Universal Service Obligation Fund can be utilised. It was intended to financially support telecom services in rural and remote regions with limited commercial viability.

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Public-private partnerships can play a crucial role in implementing initiatives to address these challenges, such as establishing **community centers** with internet access or leveraging innovative technologies like satellite-based internet connectivity.

Collaborative efforts among government agencies, educational institutions, companies with **corporate social responsibility** budgets, and non-profit organizations is required.

It can help develop comprehensive strategies aimed at **empowering** rural communities and providing them with the tools needed to succeed in the digital era.

Investing in closing the **digital divide** for education is particularly crucial for **marginalized children** in India. The private sector can play a pivotal role by investing in **infrastructure**, **expanding connectivity**, and offering **affordable** internet services.

Telecom companies can collaborate with governments to extend network coverage, while tech companies can support **digital literacy** and **skills training**.

Capacity-enhancement programs that combine **digital literacy** with entrepreneurship initiatives from marginalized communities, to leverage technology for personal and **economic development**.

85. [Wi-fi hotspot pouches: Internet from a sachet](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Wi-fi hotspot pouches: Internet from a sachet**” published in “The Indian express” on 25th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3- Infrastructure (Digital) & Awareness in the fields of IT

News: In this article author is talking about PM-WANI, a system in India that allows people to access the internet using local Wi-Fi hotspots. The system is cheaper and helps those who can't afford normal internet rates. This can improve internet access in rural and poor areas of India.

About digital infrastructure transformation in India

Connectivity Boom: India has over a billion mobile connections and 4G coverage. Data cost has dropped from Rs 300 per GB to Rs 7 per GB.

Digital Transactions Rise: Due to policies like Net Neutrality and UPI, digital transactions are increasing.

Data Demand Surges: India's monthly data consumption is 19.5 GB per person. There's a gap between demand and supply, especially in rural areas.

Low home broadband penetration: Currently, India's home broadband penetration stands at one of the lowest in the world, hovering at around 10 per cent.

What is PM WANI?

WANI (Wi-Fi Access Network Interface) is a concept introduced by TRAI in 2017 to create interoperable public Wi-Fi hotspots. The vision was to offer connectivity via local providers known as Public Data Offices (PDOs). Building on the success of the WANI pilot, the Indian government introduced PM-WANI, which was approved by the Union Cabinet in December 2020 to implement the WANI vision on a broader scale.

Benefits of PM-WANI:

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Affordable Connectivity: With PM-WANI, over a million people are accessing unlimited Internet daily by paying just Rs 5 to 10. For comparison, students are now opting for this “sachet internet” over chips or soft drinks.

Boosting Local Economy: Local shops and households can become PDOs, setting up Wi-Fi hotspots. This not only promotes affordable internet usage but also augments their earnings.

Infrastructure Utilization: Existing infrastructure by companies like RailTel and GAIL, which is currently underused, can be effectively tapped into for PM-WANI.

Benefits for ISPs and Telcos: These major providers can sell more bandwidth by transforming their customers into retailers.

Bridging the Digital Divide: With a low home broadband penetration of around 10% in India, PM-WANI offers an opportunity to improve internet access, especially in underserved areas.

What should be done?

Promote PM-WANI: Given the successful pilot of WANI and the subsequent approval of PM-WANI in December 2020, there’s a need to actively promote this initiative. Over 1.5 lakh hotspots have been set up, benefiting millions.

Engage Stakeholders: Governments, startups, and civil society should collaborate to enhance the reach of this Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI).

Capitalize on Underutilized Infrastructure: Infrastructure from companies like RailTel and GAIL should be tapped into more effectively, boosting PM-WANI’s potential in underserved areas.

86. [What’s UP With The Ban?: Single-use plastic is still choking drains in cities](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**What’s UP With The Ban?: Single-use plastic is still choking drains in cities. Banning it won’t work until there are cheap alternatives**” published in Times of India on 25th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment (Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation)

News: In this article author says the ban on single-use plastics (SUPs) in India is not effective enough. Many small businesses still use them as alternatives are expensive. The author suggests the government should support cheaper, eco-friendly alternatives. The author also highlights that plastic waste causes floods and environmental problems.

What is single-use plastics (SUPs)?

Read here: [What is Single-Use Plastic \(SUP\) and magnitude of its usage?](#)

Why ban on single-use plastics (SUPs) in India is not effective enough?

- **Lack of Enforcement:** State pollution boards haven’t strongly enforced the ban. For instance, despite the 2016 ban in Karnataka, SUPs still dominate in Bengaluru.
- **Limited Awareness:** Many people know about the ban, but compliance is low.
- **Small Business Reliance:** SUPs are essential for many small businesses due to their low cost.
- **Costly Alternatives:** Eco-friendly alternatives are more expensive, making them less appealing. Like, in Hyderabad, 70% of desilted waste from water bodies is plastic.

What are the impacts of single use plastic?

- **Environmental Hazards:** SUPs increase flood risks during monsoons.

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- **Water Body Contamination:** In Hyderabad, 70% of desilted material from water bodies is plastic.
- **Drain Blockages:** Delhi and Mumbai face choked drains due to plastic garbage, affecting drainage.
- **Ocean Pollution:** Mumbai's drainage system disposes plastics into the sea, harming marine life.

What should be done?

- **Strengthen Enforcement:** Ensure state pollution boards actively enforce the ban.
- **Boost Awareness:** Increase efforts like in Bengaluru with awareness drives and penalties.
- **Support Small Businesses:** Help them transition to affordable alternatives.
- **Promote Alternatives:** Government should prioritize and fund recyclable/compostable innovations.

[87. A big step in reducing the risk of disasters](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**A big step in reducing the risk of disasters**” published in “The Hindu” on 25th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Disaster and disaster management.

News: The author discusses how recent disasters show the need for more action on climate change. India has started a G20 group for reducing disaster risks. The group will focus on early warnings, resilient infrastructure, and funding for risk reduction. Brazil will continue this work when it leads the G20.

About Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction

Duration: 2015-2030.

Goal: Reduce disaster risks and losses.

Progress: At its midpoint, efforts are underway, but more is needed.

Global Importance: Recognized as the roadmap for reducing global disaster risks.

Key Calls to Action: Enhance early warning systems, develop resilient infrastructure, and secure funding for risk reduction.

Relation to G20: Directly supported by G20 Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group's priorities.

What are the initiatives taken by India for disaster risk reduction?

G20 Leadership: India has given high priority to disaster risk reduction during its G20 presidency.

Working Group: Established the first G20 Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group, aiming to influence global economic decisions linked to disaster risks.

Early Warning Systems: Emphasized the role of inclusive and multi-hazard early warning systems. For instances, during Cyclone Biparjoy, India's effective warning and action systems resulted in zero deaths.

Resilient Infrastructure:

Launched the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure with the UN in 2019.

Focuses on enhancing the resilience of critical infrastructure globally.

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Aims to support policy development and capacity building, especially in developing countries.

Resource Allocation: India uses risk metrics to distribute resources at local levels for disaster risk reduction. This method aids in targeted and efficient resource utilization.

What additional measures should be considered?

Proactive Approach: Instead of just responding, there should be more upfront investment to prevent or reduce the impact of disasters.

G20's Role: The G20, representing 85% of global GDP, needs to incorporate disaster risk considerations into economic decisions.

Expand Early Warning Systems:

Use disruptive technologies to enhance forecasting and cater to local needs.

Support the UN Secretary General's goal of universal early warning coverage by 2027.

Infrastructure Resilience:

Evaluate and enhance the resilience of critical infrastructure globally.

Ensure infrastructure supports sustainable development outcomes.

Financing Strategies:

Develop new methods of funding disaster risk reduction.

Collaborate with private sectors, as many risks are generated by them.

Ecosystem-based Approaches: Scale up methods that prioritize the health of ecosystems to mitigate disaster risks.

[88. Oppenheimer's project should inspire climate action urgency](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "Oppenheimer's project should inspire climate action urgency" published in **Live Mint** on **26th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment

Relevance: measures needed to tackle climate change

News: The article explains different models that can be adopted to tackle climate change.

What are the different models present that can be replicated for climate change?

Oppenheimer/Manhattan model: Robert J. Oppenheimer led the Manhattan Project during World War II to build an atomic bomb. The project was completed under the given deadline.

This highlights that **when the social return on an investment is higher than the private return**, the government can run focused projects better than the private companies.

Hence, given the urgency of climate change, there are questions about whether the success of the Manhattan Project could be replicated in tackling this global emergency.

Apollo Programme: It was a successful US government initiative to send astronauts into space during the 1960s before the Soviet Union. NASA received funds an equivalent of 0.7% of GDP in the 1960s and employed 400,000 people to achieve the mission before the Soviet Union could.

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As per the findings of research, the investment made by the government and technological assistance, increased productivity in US counties that already had relevant technology capabilities.

However, the impact on overall productivity across the entire US economy was limited.

Hence, a key takeaway from the study is that **directing focused spending towards particular sectors to achieve specific geopolitical or climate objectives can** potentially lead to enhanced productivity in those specific sectors.

However, its effect on the entire economy remains uncertain.

Can these two models be adopted for green transition?

A common objective in both the models was the need to accomplish a massive task under time pressure, requiring a substantial push, which is also required for green transition.

However, the government was the sole user of the new technology in both the models. Whereas **the green transition requires a much broader adoption of new technologies across society, involving firms, cities, and citizens.**

This presents challenges on both the demand and supply sides.

Must Read: [Financing the Green transition: initiative and challenges – Explained](#)

What can be the way ahead for green transition?

The practical approach to the green transition will involve targeted investments in new areas, a combination of subsidies and a carbon tax to encourage technology adoption, requiring efforts from both the state and the market.

However, there may also be a need to replace capital more quickly than normal, which carries risks. **One such risk is governments' ability to select technology more effectively** through industrial policy than through market forces.

Hence, urgent action is needed to tackle climate change while taking all the factors into consideration.

[89. What has flipped the forex reserve Decline of India?](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“What has flipped the forex reserve Decline of India?”** published in **Live Mint** on **26th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development

Relevance: About India's forex reserves

News: As of March 2023, India's forex reserves stood at \$578.4 billion, showing a decrease of over \$28 billion since March 2022.

What has caused a decline in the forex reserves?

The decline in reserves was driven by the **appreciation of the US dollar** following the US Federal Reserve's rate hikes, as well as India's balance of payment (**BoP**), which experienced a reduction in net capital inflows.

However, **this trend reversed after the dollar index peaked in October**, and there has been an overall increase in the forex reserves this year compared to the last year.

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What has caused an increase in the forex reserves this year?

The increase in forex reserves this year was primarily driven by **revaluation gains due to a weaker dollar and higher capital inflows**.

Additionally, **the settlement of oil imports from Russia are not made in dollars**, has also helped the reserves to increase.

Can India maintain these levels of foreign exchange reserves?

The US Federal Reserve's rate hikes have resulted in foreign investments flowing into the US treasury and a simultaneous outflow of capital from India.

However, the US Fed has already raised rates by 75 basis points and it is expected to raise interest rates further by 25 basis points. **This could potentially lead to increased capital inflows into emerging markets like India.**

Moreover, **India's BoP has significantly improved, and the projected current account deficit is less than 2% of GDP.** Equity capital flows have also revived, with India drawing the most of these flows among its fellow emerging market nations.

Hence, it is expected that India can maintain these levels of foreign exchange reserves.

What is the global status of India's foreign exchange reserves?

India holds the fourth-highest forex reserves globally, with China, Japan, and Switzerland occupying the top three positions, respectively.

Unlike many countries that achieve a large current account surplus through competitive exports, **India, Brazil, and the US have built their forex reserves mainly through capital flows**, not relying heavily on current account surpluses.

How are forex reserves measured?

Read Here: [India's forex reserves rise \\$6.30 bn to \\$584.75 bn and Explained: Forex reserves at all-time high](#)

The value of these reserves can change each week based on exchange rates and gold prices.

When the US dollar goes down or gold prices rise, the reserves increase in value. However, if the US dollar becomes strong or gold prices drop, the value of the reserves goes down.

What is the RBI's strategy for diversifying its forex reserves?

The RBI aims to reduce reliance on foreign currencies by **[internationalizing the Indian rupee](#)**.

It is exploring the use of currencies from **Asian Clearing Union member states**, including the rupee, for payment and settlement between these countries.

Additionally, **the RBI and the Central Bank of Sri Lanka have agreed to designate the rupee as a foreign currency**, facilitating trade and enabling Indian tourists in Sri Lanka to use the rupee for transactions.

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90. [More capex for states](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**More capex for states: Higher Central funds for states’ capital outlay are welcome, but these should lead to additionality**” published in **Business standard** on 26th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy – resource mobilization

News: In this article author discusses how India’s finance minister, Nirmala Sitharaman, has increased government’s capital expenditure over the years. However, some Indian states are not increasing their spending as much as expected, despite receiving more money from the central government. The author suggests this might be because states are using the extra money for other expenses, not for new projects.

About Government’s Capital Expenditure **Central Government’s Capital Expenditure**

Steady rise over years: 1.67% of GDP in 2019-20 to 3.3% in the current year.

Last time it was over 3% of GDP was in 2004-05.

Aim: Upgrade infrastructure and boost private sector investment.

State Governments’ Capital Expenditure

Received ₹10,000 crore in 2021-22, by way of 50-year interest-free loan for capex, subject to the fulfilment of certain economic policy reforms by the state governments.

2022-23: States got ₹1 trillion of the total ₹7.5 trillion Central capex.

2023-24: States allocated ₹1.3 trillion out of ₹10 trillion.

Despite more funds, capital expenditure by states rose only 12% in 2022-23.

States with Increased Capital Expenditure:

Bihar: 29%, Chhattisgarh: 27%, Gujarat: 27%, Haryana: 17%, Jharkhand: 49%, Kerala: 13%, Maharashtra: 32%, Odisha: 45%, Tripura: 48%, Uttar Pradesh: 31%, West Bengal: 26%

States with Decreased Capital Expenditure:

Andhra Pradesh: 55%, Punjab: 17%, Rajasthan: 17%, Telangana: 38%, Assam: 20%, Nagaland: 18%

Singal digit growth in capital outlay – Tamil Nadu and Uttarakhand

Why did some states not spend more?

Covid pandemic reduced: States didn’t see the need for more capital projects to create jobs.

Shortage: Some states might have lacked executable projects or couldn’t handle more funds.

Misuse: Central support of ₹1 trillion might have been diverted. Instead of capital projects, states might have used it for other revenue schemes.

Financial strategy: States could use Central funds for capex targets and save their own resources for other plans. Example: Andhra Pradesh reduced capex by 55%.

What’s the concern for the future?

Slow Growth: Despite Central support, states’ capex growth was slow in 2021-22.

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Unrealistic Projections: States project 37% growth in 2023-24, but past performance raises doubts.

Absorptive Capacity: States might lack the ability to effectively implement capital projects quickly.

Financial Jugglery: States might misuse Central funds, diverting them from capital projects to other schemes.

91. [Express View: India's road to 2047](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “**Express View: India's road to 2047**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **26th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and growth

Relevance: Development model for high growth

News- In his Independence Day speech last year, Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid out his vision for India to achieve developed country status by the 100th year of its independence.

A recent study by economists at the Reserve Bank of India provides some clues on the growth trajectory needed to hit the target.

What are the prospects of India achieving the status of high income country?

India has a **per capita income of \$2,388 in 2022**. It is currently classified by the World Bank as a **lower middle income country**.

As per IMF, the country's per capita income is expected to **rise to \$3,720 by 2028**. So, it is unlikely to achieve **upper middle income status** by the end of this decade.

Recent Reserve Bank of India study- Presently, the World Bank classifies countries with **per capita incomes surpassing \$13,025** as **high income countries**.

If **inflationary effects** are taken into account over the next few decades, a country's per capita income would need to exceed **\$21,664 by 2047** to maintain **high-income classification**.

To reach this objective, the **nominal per capita GDP** in USD needs to increase at a yearly rate of 9.1 percent during this timeframe, which translates to 7.6 percent in **real GDP terms**.

However, achieving these growth rates poses a challenge. The study highlights that even during India's most **favourable 25-year period** between 1993-94 and 2017-18, such growth rates were not achieved.

Way forward-

Countries that have achieved high income status have taken a conscious decision to **industrialise and focus on external trade**.

This is a challenge for the Indian economy. The **level of merchandise exports** has not reached the levels envisaged.

Manufacturing's share should increase to 25% of value added. A **business as usual approach** is not sufficient.

The RBI study advocates for the urgent need to **increase investments in the economy, reduce logistics costs, focus on skilling the labour force, investing more in health and**

education, and scaling up R&D.

92. [Himachal floods: a man-made disaster?](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Himachal floods: a man-made disaster?**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **26th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Disaster management. GS1- Geography

Relevance: Floods in mountains

News- Flash floods during this year’s monsoon season have caused unprecedented damage to both lives and assets in Himachal Pradesh.

How climate change is contributing to disaster?

As per **IPCC VI report**, the impact of climate change on Himalayas and coastal regions of India will be high. In the Himalayas, there is a **noticeable pattern of increased precipitation** occurring in shorter periods of time.

How anthropogenic factors have also significantly contributed to the disaster?

The State implemented its **own development model** after 1971. The focus of the model was land reforms, robust **state-led investment in social welfare**, and a strong emphasis on **human resources**.

However, things changed after liberalisation. Central government advocated for stringent **fiscal reforms**. It forced the mountain States to generate their own resources for **fiscal management**.

This led to the **rapid construction** of hydropower projects, widening of roads without **proper geological and engineering assessments**, expansion of cement plants, and a shift in **agricultural practices** to cash crop economies.

What are the impacts of hydropower generation?

Prior to 2000, multilateral agencies were opposed to financing **large hydropower projects**. But, they started providing funding for such ventures, making finance readily available for these projects.

These hydropower projects are one of the main reasons for the **devastating impact of floods** in the region.

The dams are based on “**run of the river**” **technology**. Water is diverted through tunnels burrowed into the mountains. The **excavated material** is disposed of along the riverbed

During periods of **higher precipitation or cloudbursts**, the water returns to the river. The dumped material is carried along with it.

Moreover, **long tunnels** have been commissioned on the Sutlej river. These are responsible for **significant harm** to the entire ecosystem.

Currently, there are 168 hydropower projects in operation. As per projections; by 2030, 1,088 hydropower projects will be commissioned to harness 22,640 MW of energy.

What are the impacts of tourism?

The **development-driven road expansion** is aimed at **promoting tourism**.

This development model follows a **PPP approach**. There is focus on completing these projects rapidly. **Essential geological studies and mountain engineering skills** are bypassed.

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Traditionally, mountainous regions are not cut with **vertical slits**. They are **terraced**. It minimises the damage to the environment.

Unfortunately, **vertical cutting of mountains** has been done in case of four-lane projects in Manali and Shimla. It is leading to **massive landslides** and damage to existing roads.

How change in crop patterns is contributing to disasters?

Many farmers are now opting for **cash crops** instead of traditional **cereal farming**. It poses **challenges in transporting** these perishable crops to markets.

In response to this demand, roads are being hastily constructed without considering **necessary factors** like **land cutting and gradient requirements**.

Modern excavators are used in the construction process, but **proper drainage systems and designated areas** for muck disposal are not created.

It is important to note that while the **total designated road length** in the state is approximately 1,753 km, the total length of all roads, including link and village roads, exceeds 40,000 km.

Way forward-

An **Inquiry Commission** should be established to **engage the main stakeholders** for addressing both **policy framework shortcomings and specific aspects** of the undertaken projects.

A **new approach** is necessary to **empower local communities** and grant them control over their assets.

Losses incurred in culverts, village drains, small bridges, schools, and other social infrastructure must be compensated. It can be achieved through **insuring the assets** and entrusting their care to local communities.

It is essential for humans to take **responsible actions in infrastructure planning** to prevent the disasters witnessed by the State since June.

93. Arvind Datar writes: With high GST on online games, death by taxes

Source- The post is based on the article "**Arvind Datar writes: With high GST on online games, death by taxes**" published in the "**mint**" on **25th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Mobilisation of resources

Relevance: Issues related to taxation

News- The 50th GST Council has decided to levy 28% tax on the gross amount involved in online games.

What are the legal aspects related to games of skill and games of chance?

The law clearly distinguishes between **games of skill and games of chance**.

Games of chance, like roulette or lotteries, rely solely on **luck or pure chance** to determine the winner. These games are considered forms of **gambling or wagering**.

According to **section 30 of the Contract Act, 1872**, legal proceedings cannot be used to recover amounts due from such games.

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Section 12 of the Public Gambling Act, 1867 states that **games of skill** do not fall under the **category of gambling**. In these games, the **player's skill** plays a significant role, and **luck or chance** has little to no influence on the outcome.

What are issues related to the government's move to levy 28% tax on gross amount involved in online games?

In the world of online games, taxes are not imposed on the **entire pooled money**. Instead, it is levied on the **amount charged for the service** provided.

The **estimated annual GST collection** from online games is around **Rs 2,000 crore**, which is only a **fraction of the total annual GST collection** of Rs 15 lakh crore.

The Revenue Secretary claims that the new rates will result in an **increased collection of Rs 17,000 crore to Rs 20,000 crore**. This would require **online games worth over Rs 60,000 crore** to be played. It seems highly unlikely.

Increasing tax rates does not guarantee a **proportional increase in tax** collected. The current taxation system focuses excessively on **revenue maximisation**.

While the GST collection from the gaming industry might seem modest, it **employs a significant number of people** directly and indirectly. These employees will pay **GST on the goods and services** they consume, which should not be ignored.

Implementing such a high GST rate is likely to benefit **offshore gaming platforms with illegal activities**. It could lead to the **downfall of the gaming industry** and **substantial loss of employment** without a significant increase in revenue

94. [Technology will boost the role of MSMEs in India's export success](#)

Source: The post is based on the article "**Technology will boost the role of MSMEs in India's export success**" published in **Mint** on **27th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Indian Economy – Industrial Policy**

Relevance: **measures needed to boost MSMEs**

News: Several discussions about technology took place during Prime Minister's recent visit to the United States.

What were the discussions made?

The discussions focused on promoting mutually beneficial collaboration, resulting in new investment projects and strengthening current partnerships in digital trade and e-commerce.

One of the outcomes of the discussion was that **Amazon announced a goal of \$20 billion in total e-commerce exports from India by 2025 and \$125 billion by 2030**.

This is in line with India's G20 aim of connecting MSMEs to global value chains through e-commerce platforms.

What is the significance of MSMEs in the economy?

The MSME sector plays a crucial role in India's economy, contributing around 33% to the GDP and 50% to exports. It is expected to generate at least 60% of India's overall goods and services export goal of \$2 trillion by 2030.

Therefore, to support the participation of MSMEs in international trade, various initiatives have been implemented through the [Union Budget 2023-24](#) and [Foreign Trade Policy \(FTP\) 2023](#).

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However, India needs more MSMEs to be part of the global value chains (GVCs) of large companies like Amazon and Walmart-Flipkart to gain a larger share of the \$5 trillion global B2C e-commerce.

Must Read: [MSMEs: Significance, Challenges and Solutions – Explained](#)

What measures have been taken by the government to boost cross-border trade?

India has introduced various initiatives to enhance cross-border trade, including integrating e-commerce into the FTP, discussing e-commerce in trade agreements, creating a dedicated portal for MSME exporters, and identifying export hubs.

India is also focusing on including provisions for collaboration in its digital trade agreements to overcome obstacles faced by MSME exporters. Domestic market processes are being streamlined through technology to speed up customs and agency approvals.

However, two critical measures that need immediate attention: **1)** removing value limits on exports to facilitate high-value product shipments, like handicrafts, and **2)** establishing a strong process for handling return consignments to avoid import duties.

How has India's exports performed?

Despite global uncertainties like the Russia-Ukraine war, **India's exports experienced double-digit growth last year**. Hence, MSMEs using e-commerce for international sales will play a crucial role in achieving the FTP's target of \$2 trillion in exports by 2030.

[Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan](#) also aims to increase the share of MSMEs in exports from 50% to 60% within five years.

According to a study on express delivery services (**EDS**) in India, the sector has experienced strong growth. However, **India's share in the global EDS market and merchandise trade is currently only 2%**.

Hence, to improve competitiveness, the study recommends adopting global best practices like removing value limits on exports, easing restrictions on perishable imports like pharmaceutical products, etc.

What can be the way ahead?

Studies show that **around 80% of global trade and participation in global value chains are through SMEs**.

Therefore, MSMEs in India can significantly contribute to the country's economic growth by utilizing e-commerce platforms and digital inclusion initiatives to expand their customer base and increase revenues.

Attracting investment in e-commerce will also create jobs and establish digital and logistical infrastructure.

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95. [Elusive quest for semiconductor self-sufficiency](#)

Source: The post is based on an article “**Elusive quest for semiconductor self-sufficiency**” published in **Mint** on **27th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Indian Economy – Industrial Policy**

Relevance: **concerns associated with semiconductor industry in India**

News: The demand for semiconductors is increasing exponentially. Countries are now focusing on self-reliance for accessing semiconductors due to pandemic-related supply disruptions and geopolitical tensions.

What is the status of semiconductors in India?

India, as a major electronics consumer, **imports nearly all of its semiconductor requirements**. India has also identified electronics manufacturing as a crucial sector to enhance growth and exports.

However, since its dependence on imports, any disruption in the supply chain will impact India’s growth. Hence, India has been taking efforts to establish semiconductor fabrication unit in India.

What efforts were made by India to establish semiconductor fab units?

In 2006, the Andhra Pradesh government partnered with SemIndia for a \$3 billion project, however, the project failed. **In 2007**, the Indian government tried to attract Intel Corporation, but the company invested in China and Vietnam.

In 2014, two projects, one by JP Associates and the other by Hindustan Semiconductor Manufacturing Corporation, were approved by the Union Cabinet. However, both projects faced obstacles and were eventually dropped.

What are challenges faced by India in the semiconductor industry?

Read Here: [Need of Indigenous Semiconductor Manufacturing Facilities in India](#)

What was the outcome of the last efforts taken by India to set up fab units?

The Centre under the PLI scheme, announced up to \$10 billion in subsidies or 50% of the project cost, to attract semiconductor fab units in India.

For this, **three projects were approved:** **1)** Vedanta-Foxconn, **2)** ISMC consortium with Tower Semiconductors from Israel, and **3)** IGSS Ventures from Singapore. However, these projects have experienced limited progress.

For instance, the Vedanta-Foxconn project collapsed. The ISMC project is on hold due to the merger of Tower Semiconductors and Intel, and IGSS is still in search of an Indian partner.

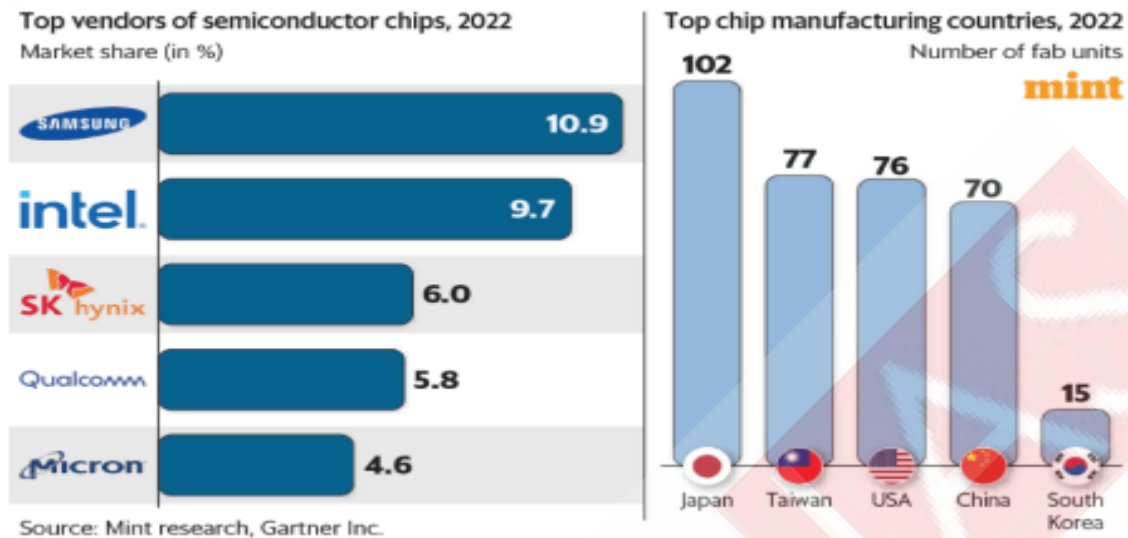
Must Read: [Semiconductor manufacturing in India: significance and challenges](#)

What are the efforts being taken by other countries?

The US has enacted the CHIPS Act, providing \$280 billion in subsidies for chip research and production. **Germany has announced** subsidies worth \$22 billion to encourage the establishment of fab units.

The European Union has implemented the European Chips Act to enhance semiconductor production, and **the UK has unveiled** its own semiconductor strategy.

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Source: Mint

96. [The changing contours of Delhi](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**The changing contours of Delhi**” published in “The Hindu” on 27th July 2023.

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

News: In this article author discusses India’s economic development challenges, especially in the Delhi-NCR region, which has become highly populous and urbanized. They emphasize the need for equitable and sustainable planning, addressing issues like income inequality, pollution, and lack of infrastructure. The article suggests using economic geography to guide effective policies and investments for inclusive growth.

What are the economic development challenges faced by India (Delhi-NCR)?

- 5. Population and Urbanization:** India’s recent status as the world’s most populous country with 1.4 billion citizens has put immense pressure on its urban centers, particularly Delhi-NCR. The region is witnessing rapid urbanization and becoming the most populous urban agglomeration, surpassing Tokyo by 2028.
- 6. Infrastructure and Coordination:** Delhi-NCR’s economic growth heavily relies on its mega city-regions, but the expansion of the agglomeration has created challenges due to multiple state and city jurisdictions. The lack of coordination among these entities hinders comprehensive planning and development efforts.
- 7. Income Inequality and Employment Patterns:** The region’s economic growth has not led to an equal distribution of wealth, leading to increasing income inequality. Informal work persists, and unemployment rates have risen, with women’s workforce participation remaining low.
- 8. Environmental Concerns:** Delhi-NCR faces severe environmental issues like air and water pollution, exacerbated by industrialization and population growth. The region struggles to balance economic development with sustainable practices, leading to detrimental effects on the environment and public health.

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What should be done?

9. **Regional Economic Development Corporation:** Create a region-specific economic development corporation for Delhi-NCR to leverage existing interstate frameworks and devise place-specific development strategies. This would facilitate better coordination and planning among participating cities and States.
10. **Multi-Stakeholder Platform:** Establish a multi-stakeholder platform involving the government, private sector, academia, industrial bodies, and civil society representatives to address development needs collaboratively.
11. **Targeted Infrastructure and Investment:** Use spatio-economic assessments to target infrastructure investments and foreign direct investments in economically dynamic locations, ensuring better returns and job growth.
12. **Empowering Women and Marginalized Groups:** Implement strategies like safe and accessible work environments, along with child and elder care facilities, to enable greater participation of women in the economy. Spatio-economic assessments can also improve access to education, healthcare, basic services, and jobs for marginalized groups.
13. **Environmentally Conscious Planning:** Incorporate environmental impact assessments into planning processes, promoting sustainable practices and valuing planetary resources while pursuing economic growth.

97. [Shedding more light on the debt dilemma](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Shedding more light on the debt dilemma**” published in “The Hindu” on 27th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilisation of resources.

News: In this article author discusses India’s high fiscal deficit and public debt, emphasizing the challenges it poses to the economy and future generations. The article points to the need for fiscal consolidation, improved tax compliance, and suggests policy reforms such as reducing government involvement in certain sectors and better management of subsidies.

About current fiscal deficit and public debt data of India.

Fiscal Deficit 2020-21: It increased to 13.3% of GDP.

Public Debt 2020-21: Elevated to 89.6% of GDP.

Post-Pandemic Recovery: Deficit and debt ratios receded to 8.9% and 85.7%, respectively.

State-Level Debt: Punjab’s Debt to GSDP is 48.9%, West Bengal’s is 37.6%, Rajasthan’s is 35.4%, and Kerala’s is close to 33%.

Primary Deficit 2022-23: Stands high at 3.7% of GDP and is budgeted over 3% for 2023-24.

What challenges are posed by India’s elevated fiscal deficit and public debt?

Interest Payments: They consume over 5% of GDP and 25% of revenue receipts, surpassing government spending on education and healthcare combined.

Crowding Out Essential Spending: Large interest payments reduce funds available for infrastructure, human development, and environmental priorities.

State Debt Issues: Specific states, like Punjab (48.9% Debt to GSDP ratio) and West Bengal (37.6%), have high debt ratios.

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Limited Counter-Cyclical Fiscal Policy: High debt restricts the government's ability to respond to economic downturns or shocks.

Distorted Debt Market: Commercial banks and insurance companies mainly buy government bonds due to regulations, affecting lending to sectors like manufacturing.

Rating Concerns: High deficits lead to lower sovereign ratings, increasing the cost of borrowing internationally.

Future Generations: The next generation will bear the burden of today's borrowing.

Election Cycles: Upcoming elections may push the debt ratio higher due to electoral budgeting.

What measures should be implemented to address these issues?

Follow Finance Commission Recommendations: The Union government should reduce its deficit relative to GDP from 43.6% in 2015-16 to 36.3%, and States should aim for about 22%.

Enhance Tax Collection: Goods and Services Tax (GST) has stabilized, showing high growth potential. This can improve revenue.

Tax Administration: Technology has made tax administration efficient. Cross-matching GST with income-tax returns can further improve compliance.

Increase Tax-GDP Ratio: Expected to rise by 1.5 to 2 percentage points in the medium term, boosting revenue.

Disinvestment: Speed up the process of selling government stakes in sectors where the private market can operate, like in Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited.

Limit Subsidies: Favor direct cash transfers to people rather than subsidizing goods and services, preventing resource distortions.

Enforce Fiscal Discipline: Adhere to Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management rules, especially when permitting states to borrow.

Reassess State Roles: Governments should avoid redundant or unnecessary expenses and avoid competitive market involvement.

98. [FTAs: Learning from peers](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "**FTAs: Learning from peers**" published in the "**Business Standard**" on **27th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance: Issues related to external trade

News- The article compares the India approach to FTAs with other emerging economies.

What are the impacts of tariff liberalisation?

In the early stages of Free Trade Agreements, **tariff liberalisation** was the central agenda for **shallow economic integration**. An example of this is the **US-Canada auto pact** in 1965. It stimulated growth in the Canadian auto industry.

Similarly, the Thai auto industry experienced development through its participation in the **Asean Brand to Brand complementation scheme** in the late 1980s. This initiative offered **preferential tariff margins** to select regional economies.

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How have FTAs evolved over time?

Developing economies have become aware about the advantages of **integrating with global value chains**. Now, FTAs have converted to **deep trade agreements**.

FTAs include **trade in services and investment**, and additional policy areas like **intellectual property rights, dispute settlement and competition policy**. In these deep trade agreements, the **rules of origin** are central to **GVC-led trade**.

How is India 's approach to FTAs different from other major emerging economies?

Tariff liberalisation– Asean's FTAs with its regional neighbours like Japan, Korea, have tariff liberalisation commitments that are in the range of **87 percent to 99 percent of all tariff lines**.

The Asean-India FTA has less than **80 per cent tariff liberalisation**.

In its trade deal with Australia concluded in 2022, India adopted for liberalisation of only around **70 per cent of tariff lines** as against **100 per cent by Australia**.

Rule of origin– Stricter rules of origin does not favour **GVC-type of production**. It restricts the **preferential market access** offered by an FTA.

This is particularly relevant in the context of trade involving parts and components, which are essential in **Global Value Chains**. At each border crossing, the **value addition** may not always be significant.

India has negotiated a **complex set of Rules of Origin in its Free Trade Agreements**. It insists on both a change in **tariff classification and substantial value addition**.

In 2020, changes in the **Customs Act** have made the utilisation of FTAs even more burdensome.

Importers now have the additional responsibility of satisfying the government of India about the **origin of the imported product**, in addition to obtaining the **Certificate of Origin**.

In contrast, Asean has simplified its **RoO criteria** since the early 2000s. The RoOs of Asean's FTAs, as well as those of its member states with East Asian economies, are **simple with flexible cumulation rules**.

Investment liberalisation– India's **model bilateral investment treaty** incorporates an **investor-state dispute settlement mechanism**.

It is complex and requires the **prior exhaustion of local remedies**. These provisions have the potential to create obstacles for **foreign investment**.

On the other hand, China has evolved its BIT with a focus on **economic development**. The first-generation BITs, concluded between 1982 and 1989, only addressed **dispute resolution** related to determining compensation in cases of expropriation.

However, the **next generation BITs** expanded the scope to include the option for investors to approach the **International Centre for Settlement of Investment Disputes**.

The **third generation BITs** offer **stronger international law protection** to foreign investors. China's BITs also apply uniformly in special economic zones.

Sustainability provisions in FTAs– These provisions have transitioned from being **supplementary agreements** in FTAs to becoming **essential chapters** in almost all modern FTAs.

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India's approach of categorising sustainability provisions as **“non-trade” issues** is also outdated. The increasing number of FTAs that now include commitments on internationally recognized **labour rights and climate cooperation**, aligning with the **pursuit of sustainable development goals**.

For instance, the **Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership** has detailed chapters dedicated to both **environmental protection and labour standards**.

[99. Weighing in on the National Research Foundation Bill](#)

Source: The post is based on the article **“Weighing in on the National Research Foundation Bill”** published in **The Hindu** on **28th July 2023**.

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

Relevance: **concerns with National Research Foundation**

News: The Union Cabinet has recently approved the National Research Foundation (NRF) Bill 2023.

What is NRF?

Read Here: [What is the National Research Foundation?](#)

The Kasturirangan Committee in 2019 gave the proposal of creating the NRF as an independent foundation and the National Education Policy (NEP 2020) adopted it.

What are the concerns with NRF?

Low Funding: The Kasturirangan Committee proposed that the NRF should receive an annual grant of Rs. 20,000 Crores (0.1% of GDP).

However, as per the available information, the NRF is expected to receive ₹10,000 crore for five years, totaling ₹50,000 crore.

Out of which, a maximum of ₹14,000 crore is to be provided as a government grant or budgetary support, with the remaining ₹36,000 crore expected to come from industry and private philanthropic sources.

This means that NRF would receive a maximum annual funding of 2,800 crore for the following five years, which is only 14% of the amount the Kasturirangan Committee had suggested.

Subsuming Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB): The SERB was set up as a statutory body within the DST. Its objective was strategically planning, promoting, and financially supporting internationally competitive research in emerging fields of science and engineering.

It has played a crucial role in developing a sustainable research ecosystem and its budgetary allocation has substantially increased over the years.

However, since it is being subsumed with NRF, there are concerns over whether NRF would get the additional SERB's financial allocation, or it will be removed.

Read More: [Proposed National Research Foundation looks to tap CSR to address funding concerns](#) and [India's National Research Foundation \(NRF\): Needs, significance and challenges](#)

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What can be the way ahead?

The New Education Policy places a strong emphasis on the necessity of a vibrant research environment in tackling global issues and utilizing technological advancements.

Therefore, a significant financial support is needed for India to become a leader in this sector, ideally in line with the recommendations of the Kasturirangan Committee.

100. [Adopt a comprehensive plan for nature conservation](#)

Source- The post is based on the article **“Adopt a comprehensive plan for nature conservation”** published in the **“mint”** on **28th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance: Wildlife conservation

News- The article explains the importance of conserving nature. It explains the challenges for India in environment protection and potential solutions to address these challenges.

How does India give importance to environmental conservation?

India culture and traditions deeply embrace the idea of living in **harmony with the environment** and understanding the significance of **ecological balance**.

Ancient scriptures promote the **principle of ‘ahimsa’ or non-violence** towards all living beings. They emphasise the vital role of **conserving biodiversity** for a sustainable **world**.

India’s Constitution recognizes the **fundamental duty** of all citizens to protect forests and biodiversity.

What is the importance of one health approach?

There is **interconnectedness** between human and animal health. Areas with **better animal-care facilities** experienced **improved overall health outcomes** and reduced instances of **vector-borne diseases**.

Development must encompass both human and animal life conservation. This forms the foundation of the **‘One Health’ approach**.

The ‘One Health’ approach is a crucial pillar for nations to achieve their **sustainability goals**.

Various studies indicate that through **education, awareness programs, and regular monitoring**, the transmission of zoonotic diseases can significantly decrease.

In rural areas, where people rely more on animals for **food, transportation, and livelihood**. It becomes imperative to develop **robust models** that integrate the **concept of One Health**.

What are steps taken by the Indian government for wildlife conservation?

India has successfully increased **tiger population** from 2,967 in 2018 to at least 3,167 in 2022.

Over the years, the government has introduced a plethora of **policies and initiatives** aimed at **protecting species** on the verge of extinction.

Remarkable projects such as **Project Tiger, Project Elephant, and the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972** aims to preserve wildlife.

How can India address the challenges in the animal welfare ecosystem?

There is a need to establish a **well-rounded model** that encompasses **legal frameworks, community involvement, and sustainable practices**.

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Strengthening **law enforcement** to **deter crimes** against animals and imposing **stricter penalties** for offenders should be a priority. Involving **local communities, indigenous groups, and other stakeholders** in **conservation efforts** is equally crucial.

There is a need to adopt a **multi-faceted approach** that includes wildlife conservation, caring for free-roaming and pet animals, and improving veterinary services.

Corporations must also **integrate animal welfare** into their **give-back initiatives** and embrace **environmentally responsible practices**. Business should go beyond **seeking profit** and should prioritise the **preservation of our planet**.

Many global business groups have already embraced such an approach. For instance, Vedanta has committed to planting 7 million trees by 2030 as part of the **World Economic Forum's trillion tree pledge** and has already planted over a million trees.

101. [India's rice export curbs could prove too myopic for its good](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “India’s rice export curbs could prove too myopic for its good” published in the “**mint**” on **28th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance: Issues related to external trade

News- Russia’s decision to pull out of the Black Sea grain deal, but also India’s announcement that it would ban the export of many varieties of rice.

Why is the export ban not a good policy decision?

It significantly undermines the claims that India is the **natural and responsible leader of the developing world**. Notably, India’s share of worldwide rice shipments stands over 40% in 2022-23.

It could lead to **growing resentment** over time. If global rice prices surge to a 10-year high and the developing world attributes shortages mainly to the **Indian export ban**, anger may escalate quickly.

The central argument for **India’s leadership to the Global South** has always been its perception that it considers other developing countries as equals. This **distinguishes it from the West or China**.

However, Indian policymakers should refrain from **arbitrary decisions** like export bans that make other nations **feel dependent and subservient**. **True global leadership** is taking responsibility for the **world as a whole**.

What are India’s justifications for its decision?

There is **rising food prices** at home. **Domestic prices for rice** have risen over 10% in the past year.

Export bans may seem like the **best solution for domestic consumers**. The government holds **significant stocks of rice** that could be distributed to poorer Indians or released into the open market to stabilise prices.

For the bureaucracy, export bans appear to be the **immediate response** to soaring domestic prices. Last year, following the upheaval in wheat markets due to the **Russian invasion of Ukraine**, India also imposed a **shutdown on wheat exports**.

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These restrictive trade policies are aimed at **protecting millions of subsistence farmers**. But **farmers' welfare** seems to be the least priority for policy makers.

102. [Once Again, A Knowledge Hub](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Once Again, A Knowledge Hub**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **28th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Issues related to development and management of education

News- The article explains the steps taken by the government for successful implementation of NEP2020.

How does India have a rich legacy of being a knowledge hub?

India's **profound knowledge reservoir** is apparent in the **Vedas and Upanishads**. These have served as vast reservoirs of wisdom for countless centuries.

India had universities like **Nalanda and Takshashila**.

What are significant achievements made in recent times to fulfil the objectives of National Education Policy 2020?

Curriculum– **Early Childhood Care and Education** has been integrated into India's formal schooling system for the first time. The new **National Curriculum Framework for Foundational Stage (NCF-FS)** focuses on a **play-based pedagogy**.

This framework incorporates a diverse range of activities such as **conversations, storytelling, music, arts, crafts, games, nature field trips, and interactive play with materials and toys**. **Textbooks based on NCF-FS** have been introduced for classes 1 and 2. It supports the **national NIPUN Bharat Mission's goal** of achieving **foundational literacy and numeracy** by 2026.

The establishment of **PM SHRI Schools for Rising India** across the nation is the right step in the spirit of NEP.

Blending vocational and mainstream– NEP 2020 places special emphasis on **integrating and mainstreaming** vocational education with general education. **Samagra Shiksha and the Skill India Mission** have been aligned to introduce skilling programs at the school level.

In addition, the introduction of the **National Credit Framework (NCrF)** is a welcome step.

The NCrF allows for **multiple entry and exit points**. It enables students to re-enter the higher education system at any stage of their life. The credits earned are stored in a student's **Academic Bank of Credit (ABC) for recognition**.

The process of earning credits has been expanded to include **online courses** available on the **SWAYAM portal**. There is a plan to establish a **Digital University** in India.

The digital ecosystem for skilling has been strengthened through a **unified Skill India Digital platform**. It facilitates **demand-based skilling**, connects with employers, including MSMEs, and grants access to **entrepreneurship schemes**.

To address language barriers in learning, many higher education institutions now offer **technical programs** in various Indian languages. **AI translation tools** are also employed to translate textbooks into different Indian languages. It ensures **broader accessibility and inclusivity**.

Global presence– India's institutions are setting up **campuses overseas**.

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IIT Madras is planning a campus in Zanzibar-Tanzania. An MoU to set up IIT Delhi in the UAE was also signed in the presence of the PM earlier this month. Notable foreign universities are setting up campuses in **GIFT City in Gujarat**.

103. [Growth Is Everything](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Growth Is Everything**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **28th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy and growth

News- As per PM Modi, India will almost certainly become the third largest economy in the next few years.

What is the important contribution of the Modi government in the Indian economy?

The Modi government has ensured that economic growth takes place with **macroeconomic stability**, by avoiding **imprudent fiscal policies**. It has made India’s **economic growth durable**.

What are the issues with the Indian economy?

Since the emergence of Covid, the job market in India has undergone a structural setback.

Notably, the **least productive sector** of the economy, agriculture, has experienced a relative increase in its **share of employment**.

According to the GOI’s jobs report for 2021-22, **45.5% of the workforce** was engaged in agriculture, which is three percentage points higher than the pre-Covid period

Way forward-

The government should not remain satisfied with a **growth rate of around 6%**. As per economic survey, India’s **potential GDP growth** can rise to **7-8% a year** in the medium-term with reforms.

Economic growth rate below 8% annually will not effectively tackle India’s **serious employment issue**.

To tackle this problem, **innovative policies** are needed to swiftly improve skill development. The **level of human capital** significantly affects investments.

104. [Express View on Centre’s grain policy: Rice and fall](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Express View on Centre’s grain policy: Rice and fall**” published in “The Indian express” on 29th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Issues of buffer stocks and food security;

News: The Indian government is concerned about potential grain shortages due to possible El Niño effects on crops. It is leading them to reduce grain distribution to ensure enough for public welfare, stop exports, and halt sales to distilleries, especially with upcoming 2024 elections.

What are the government initiatives to counter potential grain shortages in India?

Restored PDS Quota: The government has returned the Public Distribution System (PDS) grain quota to its original 5 kg/person/month.

Banned Exports: Between May 2022 and the present month, exports of wheat and all non-parboiled non-basmati rice have been prohibited.

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Stopped Rice Sales to Distilleries: The Food Corporation of India (FCI) has ceased selling rice to distilleries for ethanol production.

Discontinued OMSS Supply: Over a month ago, the government stopped supplying FCI grain to states under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS).

Stocks in Public Warehouses: The government is concerned about the grain stocks in public warehouses.

Priority to PDS: The government is focusing on ensuring enough stocks for the PDS to support poor and vulnerable families.

Elections in 2024: With upcoming national elections, the government is being cautious about grain availability.

105. [Semicon India 2023: How government's support and will built the semiconductor industry](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**Semicon India 2023: How government's support and will built the semiconductor industry**” published in “The Indian express” on 29th July 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Effects of liberalisation on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

News: In this article author discusses India's past missed opportunities in the semiconductor industry and highlights the current government's efforts, through the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), to develop a domestic semiconductor ecosystem, attract global investments, and position India as a leading player in the global semiconductor market.

What are the government's initiatives to support the domestic semiconductor ecosystem? India Semiconductor Mission (ISM): Launched in December 2021 to boost the domestic industry.

Fiscal Support: Committed unprecedented fiscal incentives to attract global interest.

Regulatory Assistance: Offering regulatory support to facilitate industry growth.

Design Linked Incentive (DLI): Supporting startups through incentives tied to semiconductor design.

Semiconductor Complex Limited (SCL) Revival: Approved modernization of SCL in Chandigarh, turning it into a chip manufacturing unit.

International Collaborations: Signed agreements with the US and Japan for cooperation on semiconductor development, manufacturing, and research.

Micron's Proposal Approval: Sanctioned Micron's proposal to set up semiconductor packaging and testing in India.

Fiscal Incentives: Providing competitive fiscal benefits to rival major global economies.

Strengthening the Value Chain: Impetus given across the value chain, from design to final assembly and testing.

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Strategic Vision: Demonstrating clear understanding and commitment to the semiconductor industry's importance.

Why does India need a robust domestic semiconductor ecosystem?

Economic Boost: Enhances economic growth and job creation.

Reduced Dependence: Decreases reliance on semiconductor imports.

Resilience: Protects domestic industries from global supply chain disruptions.

National Security: Safeguards "digital sovereignty" in today's digital age.

Global Attraction: Draws investments from leading semiconductor companies worldwide.

Strategic Positioning: Places India as a leader in the global semiconductor value chain.

Policy Leverage: Allows India to set its terms in global trade and tech agreements.

Innovation Drive: Encourages research, design, and talent development in tech fields.

Sustainability: Opportunities to pioneer green technologies in manufacturing.

Competitive Edge: India can compete with major economies by offering favorable incentives.

Catalyst for Other Sectors: Powers growth in electronics, computing, and other industries.

Why did India miss the previous opportunities in the field of semiconductors?

The Fairchild Semiconductor fab opportunity was missed in the 60s.

Bureaucratic hurdles deterred global semiconductor companies in the mid-2000s.

India didn't secure Intel's expansion in the late 2000s, which went to Vietnam.

Bharat Electronics Ltd (BEL) couldn't achieve the needed volume or state-of-the-art technology.

India's VLSI plant in Chandigarh, which began before Taiwan's industry, shut down after a 1989 fire and wasn't promptly reopened.

Lack of strategic vision and consistent policy hindered progress.

What should be done?

Consistent Policy Interventions: Address past policy failures and create a clear, strategic vision.

Enhance Infrastructure: Modernize facilities like the Semiconductor Complex Limited in Chandigarh.

Secure Global Collaborations: Deepen ties with countries like the US and Japan for tech cooperation.

Drive Investment: Approve proposals like Micron's to attract more global semiconductor businesses.

Promote Green Manufacturing: sustainable semiconductor manufacturing achieved through innovations and investments in green technologies, efficient water and resource usage, reduced factory emissions, and contributing to communities and society.

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Support Startups: Extend support through initiatives like the Design Linked Incentive (DLI) scheme.

Strengthen the Entire Value Chain: From semiconductor design to final assembly and testing.

Utilize Fiscal Incentives: Provide competitive incentives to attract global and domestic investors.

Engage Global Giants: Show India's commitment and clarity to entice industry-leading semiconductor companies.

106. [Mercury rising](#)

Source- The post is based on the article "**Mercury rising**" published in "**The Hindu**" on **29th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance: Issues related to climate change

News- The United Nations Secretary-General, António Guterres, this week reiterated the consequences of the climate catastrophe that has spread globally. The earth had passed from a warming phase into an "era of global boiling".

How climate change is leading to extreme weather patterns?

July is set to be the hottest month in the last 12,000 years. As per Scientists from the **WMO and the European Commission's Copernicus Climate Change Service**, conditions in July were "**rather remarkable and unprecedented**".

Average July temperature has been 16.95° Celsius. It is 0.2° C warmer than in July 2019.

Ocean temperatures are increasing and the **Central Equatorial Pacific Ocean** is transitioning from **La Niña to El Niño conditions**. So, it was widely anticipated that temperatures would be warmer than in the last three years.

But, the **distribution and impact** of the recorded 16.95°C temperature was unexpected. It resulted in **extreme weather events** such as **northwest China experiencing temperatures** as high as 52°C, **wildfires breaking out in Greece**.

The unusually heavy rains in north and western India were influenced by the warm air increasing the atmosphere's capacity to hold moisture. This led to intense, **short torrential bursts of rain, floods and significant devastation**.

How can climate change be tackled effectively?

As per UN secretary General, there is a need for **dramatic, immediate climate action**.

The world's largest economies should adopt more **ambitious emission cuts**.

How will these events impact India?

There will be greater pressure on India for **greenhouse gas mitigation responsibilities**. This could mean advancing its **net zero commitments** from 2070 to 2050, and generating fossil-free electricity by 2040.

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107. [How World Bank group can scale climate finance](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “**How World Bank group can scale climate finance**” published in **Business Standard** on **29th July 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Environment**

Relevance: **measures needed by World Bank in** scaling climate finance.

News: The World Bank has faced criticism for its insufficient efforts in addressing climate change. However, transforming the Bank into the world’s leading institution for climate-related initiatives presents challenges.

What are the challenges present?

The Bank’s governance is heavily influenced by the US and Europe, and the main shareholders are reluctant to offer significant new contributions to increase the Bank’s capital.

What measures can be taken by the Bank to tackle global carbon emission?

There is a need to focus on the largest emitters because the top 35 global emitters account for around 90% of yearly greenhouse gas emissions.

Hence, **the World Bank needs to raise more capital from** its current borrowers who are among the top global polluters, to address mitigation challenges.

However, this shift in focus could be seen as diverting from the Bank’s primary mission of poverty eradication.

How can the World Bank mobilize more capital for climate related activities as well as for poverty eradication?

The Bank needs increased contributions from Global North to the International Development Association (IDA) for providing adaptation finance to the poorest nations.

The Bank should simultaneously focus on supporting 20 of its current borrowing countries (excluding China and Russia), which are among the world’s top 35 emitters.

These countries require additional funding to facilitate their respective energy transitions.

However, **one of the barriers to achieving the climate agenda with the bank is the** International Bank for Reconstruction and Development’s (IBRD) rating-agency regulations on leverage levels.

Therefore, implementing a shift from loans to guarantees could have served the purpose; however, it has also been hindered by staff resistance.

Hence, IBRD may not be the best organization to scale up the Bank’s climate ambition. Two other agencies of the Bank are better suited for the task.

Which agencies are suited for the Bank’s climate agenda?

Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA): It makes much more economical use of shareholders’ capital compared to IBRD. **For instance,** it makes good use of shareholders’ money by underwriting \$17 in guarantees for every \$1 in equity.

It could stretch its capital even further by employing credit enhancement and partial guarantee products and being more open to risk.

Hence, the Bank should focus on increasing MIGA’s risk and expanding its capitalization instead of prioritizing IBRD to mobilize climate finance.

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International Finance Corporation (IFC): It could raise third-party equity financing at scale without straining its own balance sheet by expanding its asset management business.

IFC Asset Management Company manages 13 funds with modest assets of only \$10 billion. **It has the potential to scale up this business to** handle hundreds of billions of dollars.

IFC has the capability to raise third-party equity capital from global insurance companies, pension funds, and sovereign funds. It can efficiently manage a large pool of assets with modest contributions from its own balance sheet.

Thus, IFC should strive to become a leading equity fund manager and fund-of-funds manager, specifically for climate mitigation investments in emerging markets.

108. [Charting the path for the Sixteenth Finance Commission](#)

Source- The post is based on the article **“Charting the path for the Sixteenth Finance Commission”** published in the **“The Hindu”** on **29th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Constitutional bodies. GS3- Government budgeting

Relevance: Finance Commission

News- The Sixteenth Finance Commission is due to be set up shortly.

What are the issues that should be taken into consideration by the 16th Finance Commission?

Share of states-

The **Fourteenth Finance Commission** increased the share of States in the **divisible pool of central taxes** from **32% to 42%**. When the number of States in India was reduced to 28, this share was revised to 41%.

The Center was able to handle this situation due to the withdrawal of **Planning Commission grants** following the abolition of the Planning Commission.

Centre is facing **fiscal imbalances**. So, there is no strong case for proposing any additional increase in the States' share of central taxes.

Role of non-shareable cesses and surcharges-

Between the fiscal years 2020-21 and 2023-24, the **effective share** of States in the *Center's gross tax revenues* averaged approximately 31%. It was notably lower than the previous share of nearly 35% observed during 2015-16 to 2019-20.

This decline was primarily attributed to a significant increase in the **share of cesses and surcharges**.

It increased to 18.5% of the **Center's Gross Tax Revenues** during 2020-21 to 2023-24 from 12.8% during 2015-16 to 2019-20. During the period of the Thirteenth Finance Commission, this share was merely 9.6%.

One possible recommendation could be imposing an upper limit of 10% for the **share of cesses and surcharges** as a percentage of the Center's GTR.

If this proportion exceeds 10%, the share of States should be increased accordingly. The Sixteenth Finance Commission, using the most recent data, could refine this formula to make it more effective.

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Per capita income criteria– The share of individual States in the **Centre’s divisible pool of taxes** is determined by a set of indicators. **Per capita income** is one of the criteria.

Per capita income is the **distance of a State’s per capita income from a benchmark**. It is usually determined by **average per capita income of the top three States**.

This criterion ensures relatively larger shares for relatively lower income States. At present, it has the **highest weight of 45%**. Many of the richer States want a **lower weight for this criterion**.

It is essential to give proper consideration to the requirements of the **lower-income States**. These States will have a greater contribution to India’s **‘demographic dividend’** in the future.

One approach could involve maintaining the weight of the **distance criterion** at its current level or even reducing it to 40%.

However, to address the needs of the economically disadvantaged States, it might be beneficial to make some **upward adjustments** in the resources allocated to them through grants.

Equalisation provision– It is essential to give priority to **equalising the provision of education and health services** in the overall framework of resource transfers.

Resource allocation to individual States could be guided by the **equalisation principle**, by utilising a **limited number of criteria such as population, area, and distance**. This approach could be complemented by an **appropriate system of grants**.

The **equalisation principle** aligns with both **equity and efficiency** and has been successfully implemented in federations like Canada and Australia.

Debt burden of centre and states–

Combined debt-GDP ratio of central and State governments had peaked at 89.8% in 2020-21. Centre’s debt-GDP ratio is 58.7%, and it is 31%.for states.

These numbers are showing improvements. But, still above the corresponding **FRBM norms of 40% and 20%**. The 2018 amendment to the Centre’s FRBM needs to be re-examined.

A few State governments have relatively **larger debt and fiscal deficit** numbers relative to their GSDPs.

There is **proliferation of subsidies** and the re-introduction of the **old pension scheme** in States. However, the **financing sources** for these subsidies and the resulting **fiscal burdens** are not clearly identified.

What reforms can be suggested by the 16th Finance Commission?

A **loan council** can be set up. It was recommended by the **Twelfth Finance Commission**. It should keep a watch on the **loan magnitudes and profiles** of the central and State governments.

It needs to thoroughly investigate the issue of **non-merit subsidies**. The Finance Commission should take a firm stance on States adhering to **fiscal deficit limits**.

It can offer **incentives** to States that maintain **fiscal discipline** and **penalties** for those exceeding the **fiscal deficit limits**.

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General Studies Paper –4

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9 PM Compilation for the Month of July 2023

General Studies - 4

1. [Corporate social responsibility projects demand expertise too](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**Corporate social responsibility projects demand expertise too**” published in the “**mint**” on **10th July 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 4 – corporate governance

Relevance: Issues related to corporate Social Responsibility

News–The article is about concerns related to the money spent by companies on corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities.

Companies above a threshold level of profit, sales or net worth are mandated to invest 2% of their average profit for the last 3 years on CSR activities, which are defined.

What are the issues related to CSR spending?

Limited areas: There has been concentration **in three activities**. These are education, health and rural development. For example, **77% of the total amount spent** between 2014-15 and 2020-21 was on these three areas.

Regional Inequity in spending: There has also been a **concentration of spending in some large states:** Maharashtra, Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

Companies do not have any **core competence in these areas**. Internal staff that are not competent to do this work. They are involved in **low-effort exercises** like distributing water coolers or laptops to schools.

Companies **look for easy ways out** by transferring the money to a centralized fund like the Prime Minister’s National Relief Fund to save the management time on CSR compliance.

What are the challenges faced by companies?

Most of the companies like to transfer the money to a centralized fund like the Prime Minister’s National Relief Fund. It is because companies are not meant to do social work. They need to allocate more resources in compliance with their CSR responsibility. Therefore, it should be the responsibility of the government to use CSR funds effectively.

What is the way forward?

Government can **set up a separate organization** to work on the deployment of these resources. **NITI Aayog could be entrusted with this responsibility.**

Centre can take the prerogative on **how to deploy these funds**. The amount can be paid by companies in a **lump-sum manner** to deploy based on their social-sector priorities.

Government can **draw up a list of all CSR projects followed by directed or suggested CSR spending**. Advice can be given routinely to firms on where money should be spent and for what exact activity.