



9 PM

Compilation

11th to 16th September, 2023

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General Studies Paper – 1

General Studies - 1

1. Opium, history and economics

Source: The post is based on the article “Opium, history and economics” published in **Business Standard** on 14th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS 1 – History – Modern Indian History

Relevance: About opium production in India during the colonial period

News: The West usually credits its economic growth to factors like science, tech, entrepreneurship, and trade. However, recent scholars argue that imperialism, colonialism, slavery, and opium trade were also major contributors.

The article explains how India was utilized as a colony for opium production, leading to substantial profits.

What was the opium production history in India during the colonial era?

Under Dutch East India Company

Opium, used for centuries for medicinal and elite recreational purposes, saw a shift with the emergence of “smoking opium” in the 18th century.

The Dutch East India Company’s introduction of this new form from East India to the East Indies led to mass consumption, substantial profits, and a monopoly on distribution.

The Dutch were the first to use opium as a tool of colonialism, and India under British rule perfected this model, becoming heavily dependent on drug profits.

Under British East India Company (EIC)

Purvanchal: After the East India Company (EIC) secured victories at Plassey and Buxar, they expanded their control westward to include **Purvanchal (now Bihar, Jharkhand, and eastern UP),** a region where poppy was cultivated.

In 1772, Governor Warren Hastings of Bengal decreed that opium produced in Purvanchal could only be sold to designated EIC Agents, creating a monopoly.

In 1799, the East India Company (EIC) created the **Opium Department (OD)** with significant control over pricing and rules. The department dictated who could grow opium, how much, and at what price.

The EIC used force to make farmers produce opium, and corruption was widespread. They set up a big surveillance system that caused trouble for everyone except EIC officials who made money from selling opium in Calcutta.

The oppressive system lasted in Purvanchal for over a century, hindering the region’s progress. Another setback for the region came in the mid-19th century after the 1857 War of Independence.

Before the war, Purvanchal supplied about half of the East India Company’s sepoys (Indian soldiers).

However, **after the British won the war, they began recruiting sepoys from other regions like Punjab,** causing a decline in Purvanchal’s economic and social development.

Malwa: Malwa was another significant poppy-growing area in the 18th century, which included parts of Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Rajasthan.

Unlike eastern India, in Malwa, small farmers voluntarily cultivated poppies and sold their products to traders from various religious backgrounds.

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This was possible because the East India Company's influence was mainly restricted to Bombay in western India.

The British East India Company attempted to halt opium production and sales in Malwa, but local merchants resisted. Eventually, the EIC chose to tax the Malwa opium trade.

This decision led to the flourishing of Malwa's opium, surpassing the amounts exported from Calcutta. Following the Opium Wars, British-Indian opium exports skyrocketed, becoming a significant part of global trade.

The key difference between the Malwa and Purvanchal opium trades was that the Malwa trade benefited many farmers and numerous traders, financiers, and shippers in western India.

Further, **the success of private enterprise in western India, in contrast to the east, can be attributed to the Maratha kingdoms' enduring resistance**, vision and strategy against colonial exploitation.

2. The Rocket Fuel That Is English

Source: The post is based on the article **"The Rocket Fuel That Is English"** published in **The Times of India** on **16th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Indian Society – Salient features of Indian Society

Relevance: About the necessity of English language in the society

News: The article explains that neither the English language should be considered as colonial nor one should depart from one's culture while speaking or learning the language.

Further, post the success of Chandrayaan-3, scientists spoke in the English language while addressing the media.

What is the significance of scientists communicating in English?

Until recently, the idea of Indian scientists educated in their mother tongue successfully landing a rocket on the Moon seemed like a fantasy. Many believed that only students from English-language elite schools could achieve such feats.

However, Mission Chandrayaan-3 has challenged this perception. After landing on the Moon, Isro scientists effectively communicated with the public in fluent English, despite their modest educational backgrounds.

Further, **great minds like Mahatma Gandhi and Sardar Patel**, despite being deeply rooted in their language and culture, **qualified as barristers in England**.

This illustrates that proficiency in English can be acquired without losing cultural identity.

When English is viewed as a cultural acquisition rather than just a technical tool, it can lead to colonialism. However, in the case of Chandrayaan-3 scientists, their success came from using English as a scientific tool, not for cultural reasons.

The era of individuals who once adopted a superficial British attitude and accent is fading. Today, self-made achievers, like Isro scientists who use English as a practical tool, are celebrated.

It's also important to note that, after Hindi, English is the most widely spoken language in India, surpassing Bengali, Marathi, and others.

While English may not be their first language, these scientists' proficiency in it is sufficient to make them top scientists in the country. They view English as a necessary tool, similar to a compass or pen and pencil, rather than a remnant of colonialism.

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Why is it necessary to view English as a necessary tool?

As seen the case of Chandrayaan-3 scientists, teaching in one's mother tongue doesn't hinder learning English. The problem of poor education in India isn't solved by abandoning English.

It's crucial for students to be proficient in their mother tongue and also learn English for its practical benefits.

Isro scientists like K Sivan and Nigar Shaji, who came from modest backgrounds, achieved success through their education. They represent examples of the importance of learning English alongside their mother tongues.

In Europe, countries like Sweden, France, Holland, Finland, Norway, and Germany showcase a balance between embracing English for practical purposes and preserving their own culture.

What lies ahead?

English should be used as a practical tool rather than being burdened by its colonial history. Teaching English inadequately after dismissing it as colonial is counterproductive.

The Isro scientists serve as a living example of the benefits of using English instrumentally.

General Studies Paper –2

General Studies - 2

1. An unforgettable presidency – on G20 Summit

Source: The post is based on the article “**An unforgettable presidency**– India’s convening power, ability to generate a consensus at G20 summit has set a benchmark difficult to emulate” published in “The Indian express” on 11th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS1: Art and culture- India’s soft power & GS2- International relation- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

News: The author discusses India’s successful leadership during the G20 Summit. The summit highlighted India’s ability to bring countries together and influence global decisions. Despite some absences like China’s and Russia’s leaders, the event was effective. The author praises India’s Prime Minister role in making the summit memorable. India’s cultural power and vision for the future were also emphasized.

How did India showcase its global influence at the G20?

Unified Agreement: The Delhi Declaration was a testament to India’s diplomatic finesse. Accepted by all 20 member countries, it touched upon pivotal issues ranging from the Ukraine war to climate change.

India’s Alternative Vision: G20 saw a significant change with the inclusion of the African Union, transforming it into the G21. This move further underscored India’s commitment to inclusivity and its vision of representing diverse voices in global discussions.

Economic Propositions: A significant proposal was the economic corridor connecting Europe, the Middle East, and India. This strategic move was seen as an alternative to China’s Belt and Road Initiative, signaling India’s intent to be a major global economic player.

Leadership Acclaim: The G20’s organization and outcomes were widely attributed to India’s Prime Minister leadership. His efforts drew praise from numerous global leaders, marking India’s G20 presidency as memorable and influential.

How was India’s cultural power displayed?

Cultural Showcasing: The G20 Summit and associated meetings showcased the diversity, color, and genius of the Indian people, bringing them onto the world stage with newfound confidence.

Cultural Diplomacy: The summit highlighted India’s civilizational strength, often suppressed by a lack of self-confidence in the past. This renewed sense of cultural pride positions India as a key destination for dialogue on contentious issues, all while visitors experience India’s renowned hospitality.

Soft Power Expression: The author feels that “soft power” is an understated term for what India showcased. Instead, it’s a resilient source of India’s power deriving from its age-old civilization.

Merging Tradition with Modern Diplomacy: Despite some minor criticisms about cultural presentations, like the choice of dance for Oman’s delegation, the emphasis was on India’s broader cultural essence.

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2. New currency, next steps- Global collaboration and cooperation on regulation of crypto-assets

Source: The post is based on the article “**New currency, next steps- Global collaboration and cooperation on regulation of crypto-assets is needed**” published in **The Indian express** on 11th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- International relation- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests & GS3- Security- security challenges (crypto currency and money laundering)

News: The article talks about differences in cryptocurrency regulations worldwide. It focuses on India’s evolving approach and stresses the importance of international cooperation for efficient cryptocurrency regulation or prohibition. It also mentions an upcoming G20 meeting to discuss a plan for coordinated cryptocurrency regulations.

What is the current regulatory framework for cryptocurrencies in India?

In 2018, the RBI banned Indian banks from cryptocurrency transactions.

In 2020, the Supreme Court of India overturned this ban.

In the 2022-23 Union budget, India proposed:

30% tax on income from digital asset transfers.

1% TDS on cryptocurrency transactions.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman emphasized the need for global collaboration for effective crypto regulation.

What is the major view of the IMF and the Financial Stability Board (FSB) paper on cryptocurrencies?

IMF and FSB View on Cryptocurrencies:

- **Comprehensive Policy Needed:**

The paper highlighted the necessity for a “comprehensive policy and regulatory response” to address the financial stability risks posed by crypto assets.

- **Difficulty in Banning Cryptocurrencies:** Banning crypto might just shift activities to more friendly jurisdictions. A ban could push transactions out of a country’s oversight, raising financial risks.
- **Regulation Over Ban:** Supervising licensed crypto-asset issuers and service providers can fill information gaps. This approach aids in monitoring cross-border crypto activities.
- **Anti-money Laundering Standards:** The paper suggests implementing the Financial Action Task Force’s standards that tackle money laundering and terrorist financing related to cryptocurrencies.
- **Global Coordination:** Emphasized the importance of worldwide coordination to address the borderless nature of cryptocurrencies.

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3. The larger project of subverting the idea of India

Source: The post is based on the article “**The larger project of subverting the idea of India**” published in **The Hindu** on **11th September 2023**.

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

Relevance: **concerns with holding simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies.**

News: The article discusses why the idea of holding simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies may not be a favorable choice.

What are the reasons that make holding simultaneous elections for the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies unwise?

Centralizations of Power: The proposal to hold simultaneous elections is under the concept of “One India” decisions of the government.

However, **conducting simultaneous elections will further centralize power, strengthen the hold of national parties, and reduce the importance of regional parties.**

Don’t Impose High Costs and Obstruct Governance: The idea of simultaneous polls is being promoted as a cost-saving and governance-friendly measure.

However, **critics argue that election costs are overestimated, and the Model Code of Conduct doesn’t hamper governance.** Instead, governance suffers when the ruling national party seeks to win every state election by focusing on state issues.

As Y.V. Reddy (the chairman of the Fourteenth Finance Commission) pointed out, elections are meant to hold governments accountable, and if they are too frequent, this can help to improve governance.

Lower Voter Turnout: Supporters of simultaneous elections relies on a study showing lower voter turnout when Assembly and Lok Sabha elections are held separately. However, this argument is only a justification rather than reality.

While increasing voter participation is important, it should be pursued through alternative means rather than disrupting the constitutional order.

Constitutional Changes: Implementing permanent simultaneous elections will require substantial constitutional changes, such as fixed-term governments, abolishing no-confidence motions, requiring “super-majorities” to unseat governments, enhancing President/Governors’ powers, or a mix of these measures.

These changes would fundamentally alter the Constitution’s Basic Structure, weaken State governments, erode federalism, and centralize power.

Read More: [One Nation One Election – Explained](#)

What is the way ahead?

“One Nation, One Election” is primarily a political and ideological push to replace India’s diversity with homogeneity.

It further goes beyond initiatives like “One Nation, One Tax” and “One Nation, One Ration Card,” aiming to centralize power in the Union Government.

Therefore, ultimately, the choice to embrace this “One India” vision rests with the electorate.

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4. African Dividend – On India- Africa Relations

Source– The post is based on the article “**African Dividend**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **11th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral, regional groupings

Relevance- India and Africa bilateral relationship

News– The African Union (AU) has been included as a permanent member of the G20.

What is the geopolitical significance of African Union inclusion in G20?

Africa is emerging as a potential **global economic powerhouse**, given its **abundant natural resources**.

For instance, Morocco possesses the **world’s largest phosphate reserves**, the Democratic Republic of Congo is rich in **cobalt deposits**. **Nigerian gas reserves** have the capacity to supply all of Europe with energy.

Historically, Africa has had **limited influence** on the global stage. The addition of the AU to the G20 aims to **rectify this imbalance** and ensure that Africa has a **stronger voice in international affairs**.

What is the status of the bilateral relationship between India and the African Union?

India has been making continuous efforts to establish itself as a **credible alternative development partner** to China.

This shift in focus is evident, including in the **realm of defense**. India and Africa held their **inaugural joint army chiefs conclave** earlier this year.

India is also gaining prominence as a **major defense equipment provider** to African nations. Seychelles, Mauritius, and Mozambique ranking as the **top three importers** of Indian-made arms from 2017 to 2022.

The ongoing **initiatives in healthcare, education, and solar energy generation** in Africa further underscore **India’s growing engagement** with the continent.

What is the way forward for India-Africa relations?

Firstly, both parties should promptly confirm the dates for the long-awaited **fourth India-Africa Forum Summit**.

Secondly, India should enhance its presence in **Francophone Africa**. It is an area where it has historically been less active.

Thirdly, initiatives like the **Asia-Africa Growth Corridor** should receive **increased attention and effort**.

5. China’s BRI Now Faces A Credible Indian Challenger

Source– The post is based on the article “**China’s BRI Now Faces A Credible Indian Challenger**” published in “**The Times of India**” on **11th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- International relations

Relevance- Connectivity related issues in international politics

News– During the recent G20 summit, India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEE-EC) was introduced.

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What are some facts about the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEE-EC)?

This initiative focuses on **multi-modal connectivity**. It aims to **connect India with Europe** through **ports and railway corridors** constructed in the Middle East. It offers an **alternative** to the **current trade routes** that pass through the Suez Canal.

In terms of its conception and design, IMEE-EC appears to be a **counterproposal to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**. It can be seen as India's own **"Boats and Rail Initiative"**.

It involves the construction of a **railway track across the Arabian deserts**. It is complemented by **shipping connections** from India on one end and Europe on the other.

The plans also include the installation of **infrastructure for electricity, hydrogen, and data pipelines** running alongside the railway tracks.

What are some positive aspects about the initiative?

The presence of the United States as a key sponsor of this initiative provides it with ample political, technological, managerial, and financial resources. It significantly increases its chances of success.

The involvement of **financially sound stakeholders** such as the US, the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Europe, and India substantially reduces the risks of **one-sided financial outcomes**.

India also enjoys a **demographic dividend** for some time. Its **credit cycle** is near its bottom, with healthy balance sheets. The **Digital Public Stack** is opening numerous doors on an unprecedented scale.

What is the geopolitical importance of IMEE-EC for India?

It addresses complex **geopolitical challenges** that have hindered India's previous efforts to establish **transportation links with Europe via the Middle East and Central Asia**.

The **most straightforward land route**, through Pakistan, has been consistently unviable due to ongoing **Indo-Pak disputes**.

The connection to **Chabahar port** has always been susceptible to the risks associated with **US sanctions on Iran**.

The **International North-South Transport Corridor**, designed to link India to the **Eurasian landmass**, has faced **geopolitical obstacles**. IMEE-EC does not face these same intricate **geopolitical constraints**.

It signifies India's **increased involvement in the Middle East**. India will reclaim some of its **historical legacy** as a **successor state to the British Raj**.

What is the geostrategic significance of the Middle East for India?

The concept of the Middle East as a **regional construct** was initially conceived and shaped by British India.

Lord Curzon envisioned British India's security as dependent on the **creation of a series of buffer states**.

It includes **Tibet to the north, Afghanistan to the northwest, and access to the Arabian Sea through ports in the Persian Gulf and the Bay of Bengal via the Malacca and Sunda Straits**.

British India's influence in the Middle East was so deep that several countries in the region used the **Indian Rupee as legal tender** until the mid-1960s.

What are the challenges before this initiative?

However, the initiative must **meet performance**. This applies first and foremost to India's own performance.

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China's GDP surged from \$3.55 trillion in 2007 to \$12.3 trillion in 2017, whereas **India's GDP** currently stands at \$3.4 trillion.

The world is more **complex today**. The Washington Consensus is fraying. The **global political-economic framework** that facilitated **rapid growth** in much of Asia is in decline. India faces greater challenges today.

6. Tuning into news- Allow news on private FM radio, with effective self-regulation

Source: The post is based on the article “**Tuning into news- Allow news on private FM radio, with effective self-regulation**” published in “Business standard” on 12th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity- Regulatory body

News: The article discusses the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India's (Trai) recommendation to permit private FM radio stations to broadcast news. It emphasizes the potential benefits for communication, particularly in rural areas, and underscores the necessity for a regulatory framework to guarantee accurate and unbiased reporting.

What are the recommendation of the Trai on private FM radio stations.

Allow News Broadcasts: Trai recommends permitting private FM radio stations to air news bulletins.

Content Regulation: TRAI suggests a code of compliance for ethical standards, accurate reporting, and impartiality, ensuring news doesn't incite violence, hatred, or misinformation.

Time Limit: Initially, news content should be capped at 10 minutes per clock-hour.

Code Similar to TV and Digital: The compliance code should be akin to those in place for television and digital platforms.

Licensing and Support: Trai emphasizes changing the licensing-fee regime, offering financial support, and promoting FM radio on smartphones.

What are the implications of allowing private FM radio stations to broadcast news?

Enhanced Reach: Many of the 388 operational private FM channels reach rural and remote areas, serving as a vital communication medium.

Local Language Connect: Broadcasting in local languages can establish stronger connections within communities.

Disaster Management Tool: FM radio can be useful during disasters when other mediums, like the internet and satellite TV, fail.

Ending AIR's Monopoly: Currently, only the state-owned All India Radio (AIR) broadcasts news. This move would diversify sources.

Potential for Misinformation: Without regulation, there's a risk of distorted news leading to societal issues, especially before elections.

Media Pluralism: The media landscape would become more diverse and pluralistic.

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7. Still Just Five- With an even more aggressive China against UNSC permanent membership for India, reform looks tough

Source: The post is based on the article “**Still Just Five- With an even more aggressive China against UNSC permanent membership for India, reform looks tough**” published in “Times of India” on 12th September 2023.

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

News: The article discusses India’s pursuit of a permanent seat in the UN Security Council, the challenges associated with UNSC reforms due to differing member group views, and China’s opposition to India’s bid. It also emphasizes the necessity of change to maintain the UN’s relevance.

Why does India want to reform the UNSC?

Growing Stature: India showcased its global influence at the G20 summit in New Delhi.

Reflecting Current Realities: India believes an expanded UNSC will more accurately represent today’s global dynamics.

Voice for the Global South: The handling of events like the Ukraine war shows that issues concerning the Global South often get sidelined. India’s inclusion can help address this imbalance.

Avoiding UN’s Obsolescence: To keep the UN relevant and prevent it from becoming ineffective like the League of Nations, countries with rising influence like India should have a permanent seat in the UNSC.

What are the challenges to UNSC reform?

High Bar for Amendments: The UN Charter requires a two-thirds vote from UN members for amendments. Additionally, the same number must ratify these changes, making reforms difficult.

Permanent Member Agreement: All five permanent UNSC members must approve reforms, making consensus challenging.

Differing Views: Groups like G4, Uniting for Consensus, and the African Union have distinct visions for reform, complicating unanimous decisions.

China’s Opposition: China, a permanent member, aligns with the Uniting for Consensus group, opposing India and Japan’s permanent membership.

Regional Rivalries: Some nations, such as Pakistan, oppose their regional rivals, like India, from gaining permanent seats.

8. Why simultaneous elections would militate against federalism

Source- The post is based on the article “**Why simultaneous elections would militate against federalism**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **12th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

News- The Union government has constituted a committee headed by former President Ramnath Kovind to explore the possibility of conducting simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha, the Legislative Assemblies, municipalities, and panchayats.

What are the issues with conducting simultaneous elections?

It would result in the **shortening of the tenures** of all Legislative Assemblies except for those in four States: Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha, and Sikkim.

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In total, 17 States would experience a **reduction in the duration** of their Assembly terms by nearly a year and a half.

Among these, the terms of the Legislative Assemblies in Karnataka, Meghalaya, Nagaland, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh, and Gujarat would be **shortened by approximately three and a half years or more**.

The government has advocated for simultaneous elections as a measure to **reduce costs**. A **2018 report from the Law Commission** asserted that conducting the elections simultaneously would **cut costs in half**.

However, these reports tend to view election expenditure as **“wasteful”**. It overlooks the **multiplier effect and the broader economic influence** of holding elections on sectors such as transportation, printing, media, and infrastructure.

Simultaneous elections have **significant implications** for the **distinct legislative and governance levels** in India.

India elects 543 Lok Sabha representatives, over 4,100 Assembly legislators, representatives for 89,194 urban wards, and nearly 31.89 lakh elected panchayat representatives. Each of these tiers has its **own set of roles and responsibilities**.

The significant number of representatives across these tiers underscores the **importance of each tier** and the **necessity for competition** to address the specific needs of voters.

For example, if a voter is concerned about **waste management** in her area, she would give a vote to choose a candidate best suited to address the local ward's issues.

Holding simultaneous elections could potentially **merge the various issues** related to these three tiers into a **single electoral mandate** for voters. This could **undermine federalism** and the **fundamental structure of three-tier governance**.

9. Ridding India of food insecurity

Source– The post is based on the article **“Ridding India of food insecurity”** published in **“The Times of India”** on **12th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Social Issues – Issues related to hunger. GS3- Issues of food security

News– India is facing accelerating food-price inflation. The rise in the price of food first accelerated sharply in 2019. In July this year, annual inflation exceeded 11%, the highest in a decade.

What are challenges related to food insecurity in India?

As per the **‘State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World’** report from the FAO, an estimated **74% of the population** in India cannot afford a **healthy diet**. This translates to **approximately one billion individuals**.

A study highlighted in The Hindu newspaper examined the **price trends of food** in Mumbai city from 2018 to 2023.

It revealed that during this period, the cost of preparing a **homemade “thaali”** has surged by 65%. In contrast, the **average income** of a manual laborer has increased by 38%, and that of a salaried worker has gone up by 28%.

The **latest National Family Health Survey** estimated that over **50% of adult women** were suffering from **anemia**.

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Traditional macroeconomic policies aimed at controlling inflation have **proven ineffective** in this context.

The Reserve Bank of India has faltered in this regard. **Inflation rates** have consistently exceeded their targets for the past four years. Their strategy of “**inflation targeting**,” does not address food inflation stemming from **supply-side issues**.

What are some facts about the green revolution?

The government launched a **supply-side strategy** by equipping farmers with **high-yielding seeds, affordable credit, and guaranteed prices through procurement**.

This endeavor achieved remarkable success. Within a short span, India no longer relied on **food imports**. It facilitated India’s aspiration for **self-sufficiency**.

However, there were some mistakes at the level of strategy. There was **excessive use of chemical fertilizers that led to soil degradation**.

There was also an **overemphasis on procurement prices** rather than **boosting productivity** to enhance farm incomes. It contributes to **inflation**.

The policy predominantly concentrated on **cereals rather than pulses**, a primary source of protein for most Indians.

What is the way forward to achieve the goal of food security?

The focus should be on **rectifying the challenges** created by the **green revolution**. There is a need to prioritize the **specific objective** of reducing the **cost of food production**.

The Green revolution paid **insufficient attention** to the **cost of producing food**. Therefore, a **second agricultural revolution** is now imperative. Containing the escalating food prices necessitates **multifaceted action**. It demands a **mission-oriented approach**.

Farm-focused measures to boost yields and contain production costs are essential.

There is need for improvement in key areas like **extending irrigation** to cover 100% of the net sown area, eliminating **land leasing restrictions, accelerating agricultural research, and reinstating extension services**.

The **ongoing subdivision** of already small land holdings diminishes the potential for investments in **productivity-enhancing capital**. **Allowing land leasing** could provide a solution to this issue.

India’s network of public **agricultural research institutions** needs revitalization to reclaim the pivotal role they played in the 1960s. The **extension services** need to be reinvigorated.

The **active participation of states** is crucial. In the 1960s, the states selected for the adoption of **new agricultural technology** worked closely with the central government.

A similar **collaborative approach** is essential to make a **substantial impact nationwide**. The central government and states should work together in the **spirit of cooperative federalism**.

A **pragmatic approach** is necessary, both at the national level and within individual states, to bring about meaningful change.

An important aspect of the **first Green Revolution** was that it embraced a **capitalist approach** by relying on private enterprise, and compromised on **socialist principles**. The objective was to make India **self-sufficient in food**.

Therefore, in the current context, no approach should be dismissed if it aligns with **ecological sustainability**.

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10. No filter- Prior approval requirement for initiating corruption probes is not desirable

Source: The post is based on the article “**No filter- Prior approval requirement for initiating corruption probes is not desirable**” published in “The Hindu” on 13th September 2023.

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

News: The Supreme Court stated that its 2014 decision, which nullified a law mandating government approval for probing high-ranking officials for corruption, applies retroactively to 2003. This impacts cases from 2003 to 2014, despite a 2018 amendment reintroducing a similar approval requirement.

What does current law say about investigations for corruption?

Original Issue: Section 6A of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act previously required the Central government’s approval to start an investigation into corruption charges against high-ranked officials. This section was invalidated by the Supreme Court in 2014.

Current Provision: In 2018, the Prevention of Corruption Act was amended, introducing Section 17A.

Mandatory Approval: Section 17A requires the government’s prior approval before starting a probe into decisions or recommendations made by a public servant.

Additional Safeguard: A sanction is still needed to prosecute any public servant when the trial court reviews the charge sheet.

Implications: While these approval requirements can prevent baseless investigations, they might also impede genuine anti-corruption efforts, potentially shielding corrupt officials.

What are the views of the Supreme Court on this matter?

Equality Concern: The Court held that Section 6A of the Delhi Special Police Establishment Act violated the norm of equality by protecting only a specific class of public servants.

Retrospective Effect: The recent judgment clarified that the 2014 ruling applies retroactively from 2003, impacting cases between these years.

Constitutional Consistency: Post-Constitution laws must align with the Constitution. If found inconsistent, their invalidation is effective from their inception.

Approval Requirements: The Court observed that approval requirements can block anti-corruption goals, potentially hindering the truth and warning corrupt officials.

Why are approval requirements controversial?

Objective of Anti-Corruption Laws: Such provisions can be destructive of the goal of anti-corruption laws.

Truth Impediment: The approval requirements can block the truth from surfacing in cases of corruption allegations.

Warning to Corrupt Officials: These provisions might act as a forewarning to officials once allegations arise against them.

Balance of Interests: While it’s crucial to have measures that filter out unnecessary inquiries into public servants making genuine decisions, it’s equally vital that these provisions don’t protect dishonest officials.

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11. How fraternity in India is different from the idea enshrined in the Constitution

Source: The post is based on the article “**How fraternity in India is different from the idea enshrined in the Constitution**” published in “The Hindu” on 13th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity – Indian Constitution

News: The author discusses the concept of fraternity in political philosophy and its historical evolution. They emphasize its significance in India’s Constitution but point out its neglect due to caste divisions. The article suggests that addressing caste-based inequalities is essential to attain genuine political fraternity in India.

What is the concept of Fraternity?

Origin in Political Philosophy: Fraternity emphasizes the emancipation and empowerment of people in the political realm. Historically, it stands alongside liberty and equality as a cornerstone of liberal political philosophy.

Ancient Beginnings: Traced back to Plato, where the term “philia” (love) denotes the sharing of knowledge, making friendships more profound. Aristotle later emphasized justice and friendship within the “polis,” marking the birth of political fraternity.

Evolution Over Time: The Middle Ages linked fraternity with Christianity in Europe. It gained political prominence during the French Revolution with the slogan “liberté, égalité, fraternité.”

Fraternity in India: Emphasized during India’s independence struggle, it became a vital tenet of the Constitution. However, India’s caste system presents challenges, as fraternity often remains within caste groups rather than bridging them.

How important was Fraternity in India’s independence?

Foundational Tenet: During India’s independence struggle and the subsequent rise of its constitutional democracy, the ideals of liberty, equality, and fraternity were central. They served as guiding principles for a diverse Indian society transitioning to an independent republic.

Ambedkar’s Stance: Dr. Ambedkar stressed the inseparability of liberty, equality, and fraternity. He highlighted the importance of fraternity in India’s diverse and divided society.

Constitutional Framing: The framers of the Indian Constitution understood the significance of fraternity for India, a nation divided by various social hierarchies. They recognized the necessity of fraternity to counter these divisions and maintain cohesion.

What limits Fraternity in India?

Social Inequalities: Fraternity is hindered if it merely glosses over existing social disparities. True fraternity cannot be built on social solidarity that ignores these differences.

Caste Divisions: India’s caste system poses significant challenges. While there exist fraternal ties within caste groups, inter-caste unity remains elusive. The shared history of India, marked by the caste system, opposes both equality and liberty, key tenets alongside fraternity.

Religious Discrimination: The rhetoric of aggressive nationalism often paints religious minorities as enemies. Such minorities have repeatedly faced social and political discrimination.

Fundamentalism’s Impact: Any form of fundamentalism, with its rigid beliefs and practices, prevents the development of genuine fraternity. A fanatic’s outlook is often exclusive, hampering true fraternal connections.

What’s the way forward for Fraternity in India?

Addressing Caste Dynamics: For true political fraternity to emerge in India, caste and its associated prejudices must be addressed. The article suggests that caste and the idea of political fraternity cannot coexist, with one needing to make way for the other.

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Political Conditioning Over Moral Stance: Fraternity in India needs to be curated, carved, and instilled through political conditioning. The article emphasizes that this approach is more effective than relying on moral considerations alone.

Role of Affirmative Actions: The introduction of affirmative actions, like the reservation system, was aimed at building equality among varied social groups. This equality is essential to actualize fraternal relations in a society marked by structural hierarchies.

Emphasis on Equality: A foundational acceptance of equality is essential to foster true fraternal ties in India. Without this, fraternity remains restricted within caste boundaries.

Politics of the Future: Deciding which one survives, caste or fraternity, will be the task of future politics. The article suggests that the politics of the future will determine the path India takes.

12. African Union and the G20: Africa on the high table

Source– The post is based on the article “**African Union and the G20: Africa on the high table**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **13th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Regional and global groupings

Relevance- G20

News– Recently, the African Union was included as the new member of G20.

What is the significance of the inclusion of the African Union in G20?

The G20 now encompasses almost **80% of the global population, comprising 97 out of the United Nations’ 193 member countries**. It also represents **88% of the world’s GDP** and accounts for **79% of global trade**.

This expansion effectively balances the existing grouping of 27 developed countries within the EU. It elevates the **status and credibility** of the G20.

It enhances the **G20’s representativeness** without making it cumbersome, as the AU will be represented by a single leader.

Africa is also abundantly **rich in resources**, including arable land, minerals, rare earth metals, and a youthful workforce.

It has been **steadily growing** and achieving **economic and political integration**. In 2018, it launched a **Free Trade Area** and adopted “Agenda 2063: The Africa We Want,” a comprehensive plan to transform the continent into a global powerhouse.

Why is inclusion in G20 beneficial for the African Union?

This inclusion provides Africa with a **voice, participation, and leadership** on the global stage. Its **developmental, financial, economic, and environmental** challenges and solutions can be frequently discussed.

Africans now have the opportunity to **shape the agenda and outcomes**.

Importantly, Africa is home to **33 out of 46 Least Developed Countries**. It grapples with widespread **poverty, conflict, political instability, climate challenges, environmental degradation, and financial instability**.

Africa can seek support from the G20 in terms of **global public goods, such as finance, technology, investment, and capacity-building**.

Why admission of the African Union in G20 is a strategic masterstroke for India?

This decision had been pending for the past six years. Prime Minister Modi has earned the **gratitude of Africa** and has **gained their trust**.

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This achievement will yield **substantial benefits** for India in terms of strengthening its partnership with Africa on **multiple fronts**. It includes **strategic, political, economic, technological, trade, and people-to-people relations**.

The inclusion of the AU in the G20 will facilitate **closer partnerships and coordination** within international bodies like the United Nations (UN), World Trade Organization (WTO), World Bank, and International Monetary Fund (IMF).

This is especially important in **countering China's efforts** to influence African countries away from **India's proposed UN Security Council reform**.

What is the importance of G20?

The G20 plays a vital role in the establishment of **rules-based, orderly, and equitable economic, financial, and monetary systems**, and strengthening **multilateral institutions**.

The G20 is committed to creating a more **equitable playing field** within **multilateral systems** for developing countries. It also initiates **affirmative actions and measures** to assist the most disadvantaged developing nations in overcoming their challenges.

Key components include the **reform and funding of Multilateral Development Banks and the IMF**, ambitious replenishment of the **International Development Association (IDA)**, **support for achieving SDGs**.

It is also working for **effective mobilization** and provision of adequate **concessional financing** to low and middle-income countries, the **Green Development Pact** with commitments to green technologies, and **financing for climate** and a **just transition to clean energy**.

13. G20 meet's climate action promise: Significant, but not enough

Source– The post is based on the article “G20 meet's climate action promise: Significant, but not enough” published in “The Indian Express” on 13th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Global groupings

Relevance- G20 and climate change

News– At the recent G20 summit, there was a commitment to work towards tripling global renewable energy capacity by 2030.

Why is this commitment a low hanging fruit?

According to the **International Energy Agency**, this single action has the potential to prevent the **emission of 7 billion tons of carbon dioxide by the year 2030**.

It is the **easiest step** for the G20 countries to address climate issues, even though some fossil fuel-producing nations like Russia and Saudi Arabia initially had reservations.

Renewable energy adoption is already happening rapidly worldwide. **Annual capacity expansions** are increasing by approximately 10% each year. There is no opposition to the **adoption of renewable energy** by developing countries.

As per IEA, tripling the renewable capacity by 2030 is an **ambitious yet feasible aspiration**. Annual capacity is growing at an average **annual rate of about 11%**. Slightly increasing this annual growth rate will meet the targeted 2030 capacity objective.

Why is tripling renewable energy capacities within a span of seven years a challenging objective?

Currently, the **global installed capacity** for renewable energy is **just below 3,400 GW**.

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In 2022, there was an addition of approximately **295 GW of new capacity**, marking the highest increase to date.

To achieve the goal of tripling the overall capacity by 2030, the world would need to incorporate **nearly 1,000 GW of fresh capacity every year**. This is the target advocated by organisations such as the IRENA, the IEA, climate activists.

What are critical components to achieve this objective?

There is a need for **mobilisation of sufficient financial resources** and the creation of opportunities. It includes **infrastructure development, favourable policy environments, and skill enhancement** in countries with limited energy access.

The majority of **new capacity additions** currently occur in only a few large developing countries. Over the past five years, **India and China**, collectively, have accounted for **more than 50% of the global capacity additions**.

Achieving the tripling target is contingent on **rapid demand growth** in other developing nations, particularly in Africa.

According to an assessment by IRENA, an **annual investment of approximately \$5.3 trillion** would be necessary until 2050 to facilitate the **energy transition** required to limit the **global temperature rise** to 1.5 degrees Celsius above **pre-industrial levels**.

How can the International Solar Alliance play a pivotal role in tripling global renewable energy capacity by 2030?

Solar energy consistently constitutes over **50% of new renewable energy capacity additions** each year. It is central to the expansion of renewable energy sources.

In 2022, out of the **295 GW** of new renewable capacity added, **191 GW** came from solar energy.

The ISA was specifically established to accelerate the **deployment of solar energy** worldwide.

The **International Solar Alliance** has collaborated with the **G20 Presidency** to expedite development in G-20 countries and **address climate change** through the promotion of **solar energy utilisation**.

ISA has launched the **Green Hydrogen Innovation Centre** to enhance the **knowledge and capabilities** of all nations in **producing, transporting, and utilising low and zero-carbon hydrogen**.

ISA is **offering guarantees** to its member countries in Africa to **incentivize private sector investments** in **solar mini-grids**.

ISA is **cultivating entrepreneurs** in countries that can become the **leading suppliers of solar energy** across countries and regions. It has recently identified and is strengthening **20 solar startups** in Africa.

Why is the recent G20 summit criticised for insufficient attention to the issue of climate change?

Goal of tripling renewable energy capacity by 2030 alone **would not be sufficient** to meet the 1.5-degree Celsius temperature goal.

Current projections indicate that **greenhouse gas emissions** in 2030 would exceed the levels compatible with a **1.5-degree Celsius rise** by approximately **24 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent**.

Tripling renewable energy would only help avoid about **7 billion tonnes of CO2 equivalent**, which is **less than one-third of** what is actually required.

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The G20 meeting avoided addressing most of the contentious issues, such as more **substantial emissions reductions**, the **phasing out of fossil fuels**, and the substantial **mobilisation of financial resources**.

14. The new India-US dynamic

Source: This post is based on the article **“The new India-US dynamic”**, published in Business Standard, on **13th Sep 2023**.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 – International Relations –

News: India’s successful role in the recent G20 summit highlights improved India-US relations and growing geopolitical importance.

What have been the important development in India US relations?

Geopolitical Stakes: The US and its G7 allies have softened their stance on issues like the Ukraine war, signaling a greater investment in India. This is seen as a counter to China’s aggressive diplomacy.

High-Level Engagements: PM Narendra Modi’s state visit to the US and bilateral meetings with President Joe Biden have led to joint statements, indicating intensified engagement.

UN Security Council: Biden has reiterated support for India’s long-standing demand for a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, continuing a commitment first made by President Obama.

Defense Ties: Agreements between General Electric and Hindustan Aeronautics for light combat aircraft engines signify closer defense relations. Placement of liaison officers in military organizations is another step forward.

Economic Relations: Both countries have resolved trade disputes and are working towards better economic ties. India has removed duties on certain US imports, and the US has exempted some Indian steel and aluminium exports from tariffs.

What should be done?

While the relationship is improving, India faces the challenge of balancing its ties with the US and its complex relations with neighboring China, which has territorial ambitions on India’s borders.

15. Just What Is Justin Up To? – On India Canada Relations

Source– The post is based on the article **“Just What Is Justin Up To?”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **14th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance- India and Canada bilateral relationship

News– Canadian PM Justin Trudeau got a cold response from India at recently concluded G20 summit in India

What are the reasons behind increasing distrust between India and Canada?

First, Trudeau has displayed a **consistent disregard** displayed by towards **Indian interests**. The G20 summit primarily **revolve around trade**. Trade necessitates at least a **basic understanding** of the **needs and desires** of the other party. However, there was an **absence of common ground** between the two sides.

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Second, Trudeau has dismissed the **khalistan issue** as merely a matter of **'freedom of expression'**. He overlooks the fact that India views it as a threat to its **territorial integrity**.

For example, in a recent incidents in Canada, Khalistan supporters displayed scenes depicting the assassination of India's former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi. It crossed the boundaries of freedom of expression.

Third, another significant issue pertains to **India's relationship with China** in comparison to its relationship with Canada. There is a **close relationship** between the current federal government of Canada and the Chinese Communist Party's government.

Before the G20 summit, the Canadian government independently halted **trade negotiations** with India. This decision was **not communicated** to India's High Commissioner to Canada. **Such opacity** in policymaking creates suspicions.

How do Trudeau's personal inclinations impact the foreign policy of Canada?

Trudeau has a history of downplaying the **trade potential** with other countries. It may be due to **ideological reasons** or other motives.

During his initial visit to China early in his tenure, he returned without **significant achievements** because he primarily focused on issues like **gender equality**.

In August 2022, the German Chancellor visited Canada seeking **natural gas supplies** due to the Ukraine conflict. Trudeau sent him back without a deal. He cited the absence of a **"business case"** for exporting the abundant Canadian natural gas to Germany.

16. A mockery of pedagogic ethics, the breaking of a bond

Source: The post is based on the article **"A mockery of pedagogic ethics, the breaking of a bond"** published in "The Hindu" on 14th September 2023.

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

News: The article discusses the decline in teacher training and quality in India, especially in Uttar Pradesh. It mentions a specific incident where a teacher made students slap a young Muslim boy. The article highlights the need for better teacher training and the importance of the teacher-student relationship.

What is the status of the Right to Education Act in India?

Momentum Loss: The Right to Education (RTE) Act, introduced over a decade ago, has lost its initial momentum.

Quality Indicators: The RTE has established clear indicators of quality for schools.

Attempted Compliance: For some time, there was an effort in a few states to ensure both government and private schools met RTE standards.

COVID-19 Impact: While the pandemic affected the implementation of the RTE, it wasn't the sole reason for its decreased focus.

Neglect in Teacher Training: The crucial sector of teacher training has seen neglect, impacting the RTE's effectiveness. For example, the incident in a Uttar Pradesh school, where a teacher allowed students to slap a young boy, highlights the gaps and challenges in maintaining RTE standards.

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What is the issue with teacher training?

Entrepreneurial Dominance: Since the 1990s, teacher training has become a domain for small-time entrepreneurs, which could lead to a compromise in quality.

Ineffective Regulation: The National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) has struggled to enforce its meticulously set norms for teacher training.

Justice J.S. Verma's Report: In 2008, the Supreme Court of India appointed a commission under the late Justice J.S. Verma to address issues in teacher training. Despite its detailed report in 2012, many recommendations have gone unheeded.

Qualification Concerns: The Supreme Court commented on the NCTE's decision to allow Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree holders to teach at the primary level, which is traditionally for secondary education.

Gap in Professional Ethics: The incident in Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh, highlights the decline in teaching ethics and professionalism in some educational settings.

What are the recommendations of the Chattopadhyaya Report?

Professional Conduct: The report tried to define what would be considered appropriate professional conduct for teachers.

Well-read and Thoughtful Teachers: Chattopadhyaya envisioned a teacher who is well-read, thoughtful, and conscious of her decisions and actions.

Gap from Professional Standards: The report highlighted how teaching in India was distanced from the standards and ethics one would consider professional.

What should be done?

Reinforce RTE Act: The momentum of the Right to Education (RTE) Act needs to be reinvigorated to ensure quality education for all.

Strengthen Teacher Training: Address the concerns in the teacher training sector by strictly enforcing the National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) norms.

Revisit Recommendations: Review and implement the guidelines and vision from past reports, like the Chattopadhyaya Report, emphasizing introspection and ethical teaching practices.

Address Qualification Mismatches: Ensure that teacher qualifications align with their teaching levels, as highlighted by the Supreme Court's concern over BEd degree holders teaching primary students.

Strengthen the Teacher-Student Bond: Recognize and nurture the crucial bond between students and teachers, ensuring trust, respect, and effective education.

17. Unified approach- An integrated approach to health can prevent zoonotic spillover

Source: The post is based on the article "Unified approach- An integrated approach to health can prevent zoonotic spillover" published in "The Hindu" on 14th September 2023.

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

News: The article discusses another Nipah virus outbreak in Kerala, its impact, previous outbreaks, the need for constant vigilance, and emphasizes adopting a "One Health" approach to consider human, animal, and environmental health together.

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About Nipah virus in India

Origin: Nipah virus is a zoonotic disease, transmitted from animals, especially fruit bats, to humans.

Outbreaks: Kerala, India, has witnessed four outbreaks in the past five years. The most severe was in 2018, where 21 out of 23 infected people died.

Current Situation: Kozhikode in Kerala is facing another outbreak. Two have died, and three more are infected.

Treatment: There's no cure for Nipah; only supportive care is available in hospitals.

Cause: Expansion of agricultural activities into fruit bat habitats has been a contributing factor in these outbreaks.

How is Kerala responding?

Establishment of Control Room: A dedicated control room has been set up in Kozhikode to monitor the situation closely.

Hospital Protocols: All hospitals in the district are directed to follow strict infection control measures.

Containment Teams: Sixteen specialized teams have been formed to implement appropriate containment protocols.

Central Assistance: A central team has been dispatched to Kerala to support the state government's efforts.

Communication: The state's Chief minister has communicated through video, assuring the public of serious efforts to handle the crisis.

What should be done?

Address Root Causes: Consider addressing anthropogenic activities, like the expansion of agriculture into fruit bat habitats, which contribute to zoonotic spillovers.

Adopt One Health Approach: Embrace a comprehensive strategy that looks at the health of humans, animals, and the environment as interconnected.

Educate the Public: Raise awareness about the disease, its transmission, and preventive measures.

Collaborate with Neighbors: Work closely with neighboring states to ensure the virus does not spread across borders.

18. Expert Explains: With the announced India-Europe Economic Corridor, a look at India's supply chain opportunity

Source: The post is based on the article "**Expert Explains: With the announced India-Europe Economic Corridor, a look at India's supply chain opportunity**" published in "Indian express" on 14th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- International relation- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests. & GS3- Economy- Effects of liberalisation on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

News: The article talks about global supply chains moving away from China and how India could become a significant hub. It mentions India's strengths, like its growing manufacturing and

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service sectors, and offers ideas for India to seize this chance. The article also stresses India's role in fostering growth in South Asia.

What are supply chains?

Supply chains represent the different stages of producing a product or service.

They dictate where each production stage, like design or assembly, happens.

The model has dominated industrial production since the 1980s.

Historically, the shift from local supply to global supply has taken about 100 years. Examples of industries with supply chains include:

Textiles: Like clothing production.

Food processing: Making packaged foods.

Complex industries: Such as cars, electronics, and pharmaceuticals.

In essence, supply chains describe the journey a product takes from its initial concept to reaching the consumer, determining where each part of that journey is most cost-effective.

Why are companies leaving China?

Economic Reasons:

Rising Wages: Costs in China are increasing, especially in labor-intensive stages of production.

Supply Chain Bottlenecks: Companies are experiencing operational issues, impacting their efficiency.

For economic: Exports from China and Hong Kong dropped by 15% and 27% respectively in the last quarter of 2022.

Regulatory Challenges:

Tighter Regulation: There's growing apprehension about stricter oversight and rules for foreign companies in China.

Geopolitical Tensions:

Trade War: The ongoing conflict between the US and China is causing uncertainties for multinational firms.

Why is India seen as a new hub?

Manufacturing Advancements:

Tech Transfers & Manufacturing: iPhones are now being produced in India, and there was an early technology transfer for the advanced Mercedes Benz EQS.

Growing Industries: Foxconn is setting up a chip-making fabrication plant in Gujarat, and sectors like automotives and pharmaceuticals are flourishing.

Attractiveness to Foreign Investors:

WTO Rankings: By the end of 2022, the WTO listed India as the fifth largest importer of intermediate goods with a 5% share.

Trade Agreements: New trade deals, like the UAE-India partnership and ongoing negotiations with the UK and EU, indicate deep economic integration.

Service Sector Growth:

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Diverse Services: India excels in IT, back-office work, financial services, and logistics. Considering these factors, India is gaining attention as a key center in global supply chains.

What should India's strategy be?

Promotion of FDI:

Export-Oriented Approach: India should promote export-oriented foreign direct investment to effectively join global supply chains.

Trade Liberalization: There's a need for trade liberalization, especially with an emphasis on facilitating FDI in manufacturing.

Modern Special Economic Zones: As public-private partnerships, these zones would enhance the business environment.

Empower Local Companies:

Big Company Advantages: Large companies have the advantage in supply chains due to scale and technology access.

Support SMEs: Small and mid-sized enterprises should work as suppliers or subcontractors to these large firms.

Domestic Technological Investment: Invest in domestic technology to meet international standards in price, quality, and delivery.

Learning from China's Experience:

Selective Adoption: While some aspects of China's industrial policy may be relevant, India must avoid wholesale copying to sidestep risks of government failure and cronyism.

Education Focus: Upstream investment in tertiary-level education, especially in STEM fields, is crucial.

By adopting these strategies, India can position itself as a dominant force in global supply chains.

19. For Make in India, Invent in India

Source- The post is based on the article "**For Make in India, Invent in India**" published in "**The Indian Express**" on **15th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Government policies related to human resource – skill development

Relevance- Issues related to scientific research in India

News- The article explains the recent efforts by the Indian government to promote scientific research and suggest solutions to promote scientific research in the country.

What are efforts made by the government to promote scientific research?

The government has acknowledged the need for a significant overhaul of the **infrastructure for generating patents**. There is a concerted effort to **streamline and expedite** the process of **filing and obtaining patents**.

Recent bilateral agreements in the field of science and technology, particularly with the United States, demonstrate that the government is correctly identifying **strategic priorities** in this crucial sector.

The government has established the **National Research Foundation (NRF)**.

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What is the way forward to promote scientific research in India?

Human capital- The most significant factor for running institutions should be the **merit and quality of human capital**.

Bureaucrats and administrators tend to prioritize **numerical metrics**. But, scientific research is governed by **Lotka's law**, where the top few leaders in a specific field hold **paramount importance**.

Quantity cannot replace **quality**. India must focus on both **retaining its top talent** within the country and positioning itself as an **attractive destination** for talent from overseas.

The mindset of **seeking remittances** from abroad should be replaced with an approach focused on **creating value**.

Collaboration between laboratories and academia- One of the fundamental shortcomings of science policy has been the nearly **complete segregation of teaching and research**. **Research facilities and centers** within a wide range of scientific institutions are spread throughout India.

Many government laboratories have the potential to establish **structured partnerships** with universities and collaborate with on-campus science parks. It can further extend their involvement into the industrial sector.

The objective should be to **unite teaching and research** through a **merit-based admission system**.

Funding strategy- India should adopt a **funding strategy** for research that resembles a barbell. It should be a combination of **high-impact, high-yield projects** that receive **financial support** from a consortium of government agencies and industry.

The **Design-Linked Incentive (DLI) program** is an example of it. It aims to support **high-reward innovation** in partnership with high-tech businesses, with specific funding allocated to the India Semiconductor Mission for semiconductor design.

Moonshot research initiatives are known for their **high risk** and the potential for **enormous rewards**. It often originates from individual researchers.

Government should **bear responsibility** for funding such ambitious endeavors. But, it's also important to encourage **innovative and entrepreneurial scientists** to seek **additional financial support** from the industry.

Cultural transformation- It is imperative within the realm of Indian science. Decision making is influenced by **science bureaucrats** who rely on **subject-matter experts** in academia.

Unfortunately, this group is **resistant to necessary changes** that might disrupt the existing **status quo**.

The long-term success of Indian science will ultimately depend on the **caliber and motivations** of the individuals engaged in it.

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20. [On The Right Road – Airbags for rear passengers are best achieved via competitive pressure](#)

Source: The post is based on the article “[On The Right Road – Airbags for rear passengers are best achieved via competitive pressure put on carmakers by customers](#)” published in [The Times of India](#) on 15th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance – Government Policies & Intervention

Relevance: About government’s decision to postpone its plan to make six airbags mandatory in vehicles.

News: Road Transport Minister Nitin Gadkari announced that the Indian government has postponed its plan to make six airbags mandatory in vehicles carrying up to eight passengers from October 1.

This decision was made due to a lack of unanimous industry support. However, frontal airbags have been compulsory for new vehicles since 2021.

Why is car safety important?

Vehicle safety is crucial due to global statistics indicating that road accidents are the top cause of death for those aged 15-49. **In India**, this is a grave concern, with 154,000 fatalities in 2021, averaging 18 deaths per hour.

Further, in India, highways comprise just 5% of road length but are responsible for 51% of fatalities due to impact momentum.

Data from the US supports the use of frontal and side airbags, saving 34% and 31% of lives, respectively.

However, **while the government hasn’t mandated side airbags**, it has still taken a wise decision by empowering customers to demand enhanced safety features from auto manufacturers.

In this regard, the government has recently come up with the [Bharat New Car Assessment Programme \(NCAP\)](#), a collaborative tool designed to help Indian car buyers evaluate safety standards.

Read More: [Lapses in Road Safety: A casual attitude to safety](#)

21. [Mansukh L Mandaviya writes | Ayushman Bhav: May all be free of illness](#)

Source- The post is based on the article “[Mansukh L Mandaviya writes | Ayushman Bhav: May all be free of illness](#)” published in “[The Indian Express](#)” on 16th September 2023.

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

Relevance- Government health scheme and interventions

News- Recently, a new health campaign called Ayushman Bhav was launched by President Droupadi Murmu.

What are some facts about the Ayushman Bharat scheme?

Its goal is to offer **inclusive healthcare** services to all individuals, regardless of their **geographic location or financial situation**.

Ayushman Bharat represents a shift from a **fragmented healthcare system to a more comprehensive, demand-driven approach**.

It encompasses **preventive measures, health promotion, and healthcare delivery** at **primary, secondary, and tertiary levels** through the establishment of **health and wellness centers (HWCs)** and the **implementation of the Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PM-JAY)**.

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What are some facts about Ayushman Bhav?

Its core objectives include **extensive coverage**, **raising awareness** about PM-JAY, establishing **health account IDs**, and **delivering healthcare services** such as **disease screenings** and the **management of various health conditions** like tuberculosis, hypertension.

The primary goal of Ayushman Bhav is to extend its reach to over 6.45 lakh villages and 2.55 lakh gram panchayats.

The campaign will organize activities such as **sewa pakhwada**. It encompasses initiatives like **organ donation drives**, **cleanliness campaigns**, and **blood donation initiatives**.

Ayushman Sabhas are scheduled to convene on October 2. Another round is planned before December 31.

These gatherings will provide a platform for citizens to **acquire knowledge** about both diseases and **voice their concerns** regarding healthcare services.

This initiative aims to promote **social accountability** within the healthcare systems and exemplify the principle of **“jan bhagidari se jan kalyan”**.

Activities during these assemblies will include **distributing PM-JAY cards**, **showcasing accredited hospitals**, **creating Ayushman Bharat Health Account IDs**, **offering screening services**, and **organizing informative talks** about various diseases.

Participation is expected from **various stakeholders**, including MPs/MLAs, PM-JAY beneficiaries, beneficiaries of Ayushman Bharat Health and Wellness Centres, tuberculosis champions, and others to inspire **community engagement**.

Ayushman Melas will be held weekly at 1.6 lakh **Health and Wellness Centre** in villages and also at community health centers. It will be **organized by medical colleges** at the block level.

These Melas will provide **specialized services** such as ENT, eye care, and psychiatric care, **build trust** between the community and the healthcare system, improve **health-seeking behavior and literacy**, encourage **greater interaction** with medical colleges.

It will transform every village and urban ward into an **Ayushman Gram Panchayat or Ayushman Urban Ward**. It will foster **comprehensive and sustainable development** at the grassroots level.

The mission aims to **certify villages** that achieve **100 percent coverage of selected schemes** under each pillar.

It includes the **distribution of Ayushman cards**, generation of **Ayushman Bharat Health Account IDs**, **population-based screening**, and **testing and treatment** for communicable and non-communicable diseases.

22. Wrong Target – Life ban from polls for convicted netas is a bad idea

Source: The post is based on the article **“Wrong Target – Life ban from polls for convicted netas is a bad idea”** published in **The Times of India** on **16th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance – Salient Features of the Representation of People’s Act.

Relevance: About criminalization of politics

News: An amicus curiae/judicial person appointed by the Supreme Court to help with a case about corruption in politics suggested that politicians convicted of crimes should be banned from running for office for life.

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What was the rationale behind such a suggestion?

Currently, convicted politicians are barred from running for office for six years.

The rationale behind this suggestion is that the six-year ban violates constitutional principles, such as the right to equality, especially when civil servants in comparable situations face dismissal.

This raises the question of whether politicians are given preferential treatment.

What has been the previous stand of the Supreme Court regarding the conviction of the politician?

Section 8 of the Representation of the People Act prevents the criminalization of politics by specifying disqualification criteria.

In the past, the Supreme Court has interpreted this law in a way that politicians must tell voters about any criminal cases they are facing, but the Court has avoided making any major changes to the law.

However, in 2013, the Court struck down a provision that allowed convicted politicians to appeal their convictions before being disqualified.

This means that politicians are now disqualified from running for office immediately after they are convicted of a crime, as seen in the case of Rahul Gandhi.

Must Read: [Disqualification of Legislators in India – Explained](#)

What can be the way ahead?

An analysis of affidavits filed by current members of Parliament found **that 40% of them have outstanding criminal cases.**

This suggests that simply making the Representation of the People Act stricter will not solve the problem of criminalisation in politics, given the flaws present in the Indian criminal justice system.

Further, increasing punishments for politicians convicted of crimes will only give the government more reasons to exploit the system to target its opponents. Therefore, **there is no good reason to amend the existing law by citing equality concerns.**

23. Disentangling the 2030 global renewable energy target

Source: The post is based on the article “**Disentangling the 2030 global renewable energy target**” published in “The Hindu” on 16th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity- Indian constitution

News: The article discusses the controversy surrounding an official G-20 summit invitation from Rashtrapati Bhavan that referred to the President of India as “President of Bharat.”

What are the arguments in favor of using “Bharat” interchangeably with “India”?

Constitutional Reference: Article 1 of the Constitution mentions “India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States,” implying a dual recognition of the country’s name.

Historical Context: The Constituent Assembly debates saw members like H.V. Kamath and K.T. Shah advocating for “Bharat.” B.R. Ambedkar, in a compromise, added “that is Bharat” to the draft.

Symbolic Significance: Using “Bharat” could be seen as an attempt to reconnect with Indian roots and distance from colonial ties.

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Public Perception: Some believe that the term “Bharat” resonates more with India’s cultural and traditional identity than the English term “India.”

Legal Proposition: Some senior advocates of the Supreme Court and other proponents suggest that a simple resolution in Parliament can officially recognize “Bharat” alongside “India.”

What are the arguments against using “Bharat” interchangeably with “India”?

Constitutional Provision:

Constitutional Discrepancy: Article 52 of the Constitution specifically mentions the title as “President of India” rather than “President of Bharat.”

Not Truly Interchangeable: In Article 1, “India, that is Bharat,” indicates that “Bharat” serves as a clarification or translation of “India” and not an interchangeable term in the original text.

Historical Consensus:

During the Constituent Assembly debates, “Bharat” was added as a compromise, without suggesting it can be used interchangeably in the original Constitution.

Communication and Representation Concerns:

Risk of International Ambiguity: Using “Bharat” in international treaties and communications might confuse foreign entities, given the official recognition as the “Republic of India.”

Potential for Public Misunderstanding: The unanticipated change in official communication, without clear explanation, has led to public uncertainty.

Consistency in Official Communication: To prevent misunderstandings and maintain clarity, a country should have one consistent official name in all forms of communication.

24. Jal Jeevan Mission remains a pipe dream

Source: The post is based on the article “**Jal Jeevan Mission remains a pipe dream**” published in “The Hindu” on 16th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- governance- welfare scheme

News: The article discusses the gap between the reported success of the Jal Jeevan Mission in providing tap water connections to households in Mahoba, Uttar Pradesh and the actual ground reality, where many households either lack taps or receive inadequate water supply.

What are the main issues with the Jal Jeevan Mission in Mahoba, Uttar Pradesh?

Data Discrepancy: Official records show 100% tap connections in some villages, while ground realities, like in Asthaun and Luhari, contradict this.

Infrastructure Issues: Many homes lack the necessary pipes and taps, as seen in Kunata village.

Supply Inconsistencies: Even where taps exist, the water supply is inconsistent. Some receive water for only two hours.

Dependence on Old Sources: Villages continue to rely on traditional sources like handpumps due to inadequate tap water supply.

Terrain Difficulties: Laying pipes across Mahoba’s uneven terrains is challenging, causing disruptions.

What are the future goals?

Water Treatment Plants: Five large plants are being established to ensure a clean water supply to households.

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Regular Quality Checks: Water will be frequently tested for purity, and if not up to standards, supply will be halted for cleaning.

Full Water Supply by 2024: The state aims for a full water supply by 2024, with a specific deadline for Mahoba set for November this year.



General Studies Paper –3

General Studies - 3

1. Why India's falling cotton production is a worry

Source: The post is based on the article “**Why India's falling cotton production is a worry**” published in “The Indian express” on 11th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Agriculture- Marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints.

News: The article discusses how India's cotton production grew due to Bt technology, which protects against certain pests. However, a pest called pink bollworm developed resistance, reducing cotton yields. Solutions like “mating disruption” using pheromones are now being explored to control this pest and ensure continued cotton production.

What's the significance of cotton in India?

Cotton's Triple Role: Cotton in India serves three critical roles: providing food, feed, and fiber. It's a vital crop for both agriculture and the textile sector.

Breakdown of Cotton Components: When farmers harvest cotton, known as Kapas, only about 36% is the white fluffy fiber. The remaining consists of seeds (62%) and waste (2%). These seeds are a crucial source of vegetable oil and feed cake.

Cottonseed's Role in the Market: Cottonseed oil ranks third in India's domestically produced vegetable oils, following mustard and soyabean. Additionally, cottonseed contributes the country's second-largest feed cake, with soyabean taking the top spot.

Cotton in Textiles: Cotton dominates the textile industry in India, accounting for approximately two-thirds of the country's total textile fiber consumption.

How did Bt technology impact cotton production?

Introduction to Bt Technology: India adopted Bt technology, using genetically modified (GM) cotton hybrids embedded with genes from the soil bacterium *Bacillus thuringiensis* or Bt. These genes were toxic to certain pests.

Significant Boost in Production and Yield: From 2000-01 to 2013-14, thanks to Bt cotton, India's cotton production soared from 140 lakh to 398 lakh bales. The average per-hectare lint yields also more than doubled during this period, increasing from 278 kg to 566 kg.

Subsequent Yield Decline: Post-2013-14, however, cotton production and yields started declining. By 2022-23, they fell to 343.5 lakh bales and 447 kg/hectare respectively.

Challenge of the Pink Bollworm (PBW): Bt cotton initially provided protection against pests like the American bollworm and the pink bollworm. But by 2014, the pink bollworm had developed resistance to Bt proteins, causing widespread infestations and negatively impacting yields.

How can the Pink Bollworm (PBW) be controlled?

Ineffectiveness of Traditional Insecticides: Conventional insecticides like profenofos, emamectin benzoate, and deltamethrin had limited efficacy against PBW larvae, which negatively impacted lint quality and yields.

Mating Disruption as a Solution: An alternative method called “mating disruption” uses Gossyplure, a pheromone from female PBW moths. The artificial version of this pheromone, found in products like PBKnot and SPLAT, confuses male moths, preventing them from mating with females. The Central Insecticides Board & Registration Committee under the Agriculture Ministry has approved this two mating disruption products.

Results from Field Experiments: Field experiments with PBKnot technology led to a 90% reduction in PBW mating, which translated to 25% higher kapas yields.

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2. Redouble efforts to reduce disaster risks

Source: The post is based on the article “Redouble efforts to reduce disaster risks” published in “The Hindu” on 11th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Disaster and disaster management

News: The world faces increased disasters like floods, wildfires, and extreme weather due to climate change. Vulnerable countries suffer most, yet they contribute least to the problem. Solutions like the SDGs, Paris Agreement, and Sendai Framework exist but need more action. India shows progress in disaster preparedness and is leading global efforts through G20 initiatives.

Why is the world at risk?

Persistent Challenges: The aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic is combined with issues like war, debt, and food insecurity.

Climate Crisis: This is leading to frequent and intense extreme weather events.

Rising Disaster Trend: Increase in disasters, such as flooding in China, wildfires in Europe and Hawaii, and the hottest month ever in July.

Vulnerable Countries Affected: Countries that contributed least to climate issues are facing the worst impacts. The 50 most climate-vulnerable countries also have major debt problems.

India's Experience: India, one of the world's most disaster-prone countries, had weather-related disasters almost daily in 2022.

How is India addressing the issue?

Disaster Management Plans: All 28 States in India have prepared their own disaster management plans.

Reduction in Mortality:

India's early warning system for cyclones covers the entire coastline, leading to a 90% decrease in cyclone-related deaths over 15 years.

Local heat wave action plans have resulted in over 90% reduction in heat wave deaths.

Effective Preparedness: The recent Cyclone Biparjoy in Gujarat saw no casualties. Women were moved to safe places before the cyclone for safe childbirth.

Financial Support: India's 15th Finance Commission allocated \$28.6 billion for disaster readiness and capacity development over five years.

Global Initiatives:

India promotes the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure globally.

During its G20 presidency, India introduced the first-ever work stream on disaster risk reduction.

What global efforts are being made?

Frameworks and Agreements: The SDGs, Paris Agreement, and Sendai Framework serve as global guidelines. However, eight years into the Sendai Framework, efforts need to accelerate.

Learnings from COVID-19: The pandemic emphasized the importance of system-wide disaster risk reduction and resilience. Innovations like India's CoWIN digital vaccine system emerged.

Early Warning Systems: UN-led initiative, with India's backing, is pushing for a global multi-risk warning system. Currently, over a third of the global population lacks access to early warning systems.

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Data and Knowledge Sharing: India's G20 presidency has been recognized for advancements in knowledge sharing, joint data infrastructure, and risk analysis.

What more needs to be done?

Integration of Disaster Risk: Incorporate risk assessment in construction, investment, and lifestyle choices.

Early Warning Systems for All: Spearheaded by the UN and supported by India, the goal is a global warning system for diverse hazards. Right now, over a third of the global population, especially in least developed countries and Small Island Developing States, lacks access.

Enhanced Data Capabilities: Boost global data resources to better predict and respond to arising risks.

No One Left Behind: Strengthen international cooperation in disaster prevention, response, and recovery, focusing on countries of the Global South.

Leverage G20 Outcomes: Use results from the Disaster Risk Reduction Working Group to craft a future equipped to handle disaster risks.

3. Developing best practices – SRO for fintechs will be a first step

Source: The post is based on the article “**Developing best practices – SRO for fintechs will be a first step**” published in **Business Standard** on 11th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Banking Sector

Relevance: About regulating fintech

News: The RBI has suggested fintech to establish a self-regulatory organization (SRO), which is a step in the right direction.

What are fintech?

Fintech plays a vital role in offering convenient access to formal financial services, benefiting lower-income individuals.

The fintech sector encompasses various digital-based financial services such as payments, UPI-based transfers, digital wallets, and small, short-term loans, effectively replacing traditional moneylenders.

Fintech assesses borrowers' creditworthiness using transaction data and collaborates with traditional financial institutions like NBFCS and banks.

They have maintained reasonable default rates while generating significant revenue by serving the low-income segment.

However, to maintain ethical and regulatory standards, fintech practices and processes need to align with established norms.

Why is it necessary to regulate fintech?

Fintech can charge excessively high interest rates, especially to borrowers with limited access to formal credit, which could lead to defaults. Mis-selling of loans is another concern due to incentive structures.

Therefore, looking at potential concerns, the RBI has established a basic framework for a self-regulatory organization (SRO) and encouraged fintech to regulate themselves. **However, if necessary, stricter regulations can be imposed later.**

Currently, **an SRO offers the innovative fintech industry an opportunity to shape its own best practices.**

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Read More: Regulation of Fintech in India – Explained and Why the RBI has proposed setting-up a Self Regulatory Organisation for fintech

4. Secure and fair – On guidelines to prevent and regulate dark patterns

Source– The post is based on the article “**Secure and fair**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **11th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and Tech – Awareness in the field of IT

Relevance- Issues related to digital technology

News– The government has issued draft guidelines to prevent and regulate dark patterns.

What are some facts about “dark patterns”?

In 2010, the British ‘user **experience researcher**’ **Harry Brignull** introduced the term “dark patterns.” During that time, Google was perceived as a harmless search engine.

Profit-driven dark patterns were emerging. But, consumers had **limited awareness** of the potential consequences for their privacy, and the **time, energy, and money** they were spending.

Examples of dark patterns that have since become **widespread**. It includes the **automatic pre-selection of travel insurance** when booking flight tickets, the **obligatory requirement** to provide email addresses or phone numbers to access e-commerce websites.

These details are subsequently used for sending **text messages or emails, and birthday reminders** that encourage users to purchase gifts for themselves.

How governments are introducing regulations for dealing with the issue of excessive profit-driven tactics employed by online e-commerce platforms ?

The **European Data Protection Board** has issued guidelines to identify and avoid dark patterns on social media platforms.

The **United States’ Federal Trade Commission** has warned about the “**increasing use of sophisticated dark patterns** designed to deceive consumers.”

In India, the guidelines specify methods for **recognizing and preventing deceptive tactics** such as **false urgency, basket sneaking, confirm shaming, forced actions, and subscription traps** employed by online platforms.

A 2021 report from the **Advertising Standards Council of India** estimated that **over 50% of e-commerce websites** used dark patterns to promote their products.

5. Stocktaking calamity – on United Nations’ Global Stocktake report

Source– The post is based on the article “**Stocktaking calamity**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **11th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance- Issues related to climate change

News– The United Nations’ Global Stocktake report was released just ahead of the G-20 meet.

What is the purpose of Global Stocktake from the United Nations?

It outlines the **extent of challenges** facing the world’s major economies. It will serve as a blueprint to guide discussions during the **28th Conference of Parties** in Dubai.

Its primary purpose is to provide an **official assessment** of the progress made by countries since 2015 in **curbing greenhouse gas emissions**.

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In that year, during the Paris Agreement, countries committed to **limiting global emissions by more than 2°C and ideally restricting the rise to 1.5°C.**

What are some important takeaways from the global stocktake?

The report acknowledges that, despite making some progress, the world is currently **emitting gases** at a rate that will almost certainly **exceed the limits** agreed upon in Paris.

The report emphasizes that **reaching net-zero CO2 emissions by 2050** requires much more **ambitious action and support** for implementing **domestic mitigation measures.**

The **emissions gap** consistent with limiting global warming to 1.5°C in 2030 is estimated to be **between 20.3 billion tonnes and 23.9 billion tonnes of CO2.**

These are significant gaps that cannot be closed without a **rapid expansion of renewable energy resources and a departure from fossil fuel sources.**

What developments took place at the recent G-20 summit on climate change?

Little progress has been made in terms of **transitioning to cleaner energy sources.**

G-20 countries own 93% of existing coal power plants and 88% of planned ones globally.

The **G-20 Leaders Declaration** formally acknowledged the requirement for **significant financial commitments.**

It stated that there is a need for **approximately USD 5.8-5.9 trillion in the period before 2030** to support developing countries and an **additional USD 4 trillion per year for clean energy technologies by 2030** to achieve **net-zero emissions by 2050.**

The report also emphasizes the importance of addressing **deforestation** and the **adoption of electric vehicles** as crucial components of a **clean energy economy.**

6. Nuclear energy is clean but too risky to rely on

Source: The post is based on the article “**Nuclear energy is clean but too risky to rely on**” published in “Live Mint” on 12th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy- infrastructure (nuclear energy)

News: The article discusses India’s desire to expand its nuclear energy to achieve climate goals. It also highlights challenges such as global politics, potential disasters, and waste disposal. This is particularly significant following a 2010 law that held suppliers responsible for accidents without establishing compensation limits.

Why is India exploring nuclear energy?

Climate Goals: India aims to achieve 500 gigawatts from non-fossil sources by 2030 to move towards carbon neutrality by 2070. Nuclear energy offers a way to meet this target.

Emission-Free Power: Nuclear plants don’t burn fossil fuels. They generate power by heating water, making it environmentally friendly from an emission standpoint.

Comparative Shortage: Despite the growth of renewable sources like wind, solar, and hydro, India still heavily relies on coal, with nuclear energy contributing only 1.6% of the country’s power. Therefore, there is potential for nuclear energy to grow and aid in reducing coal dependence.

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Why didn't the 2005 nuclear deal with the US boost nuclear energy in India?

Liability Law of 2010: India's Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage Act made foreign suppliers accountable in case of a disaster. This law clearly stated that reactor makers and their supply chain would face consequences, not just operators.

No Compensation Cap: The law didn't set a cap on compensation, making it challenging for insurers to price risk coverage.

Resulting Deterrence: The 2010 law's conditions discouraged many nuclear suppliers, indicating the inherent risks in the nuclear industry and the high premiums possibly demanded by insurers.

What are the concerns around nuclear energy?

Potential Disasters: The extreme risk of a Chernobyl-like incident, though rare, is devastating. Such meltdowns can result in widespread radiation.

Increased Exposure: With more reactors in operation, the potential for accidents increases, heightening the country's overall risk.

Waste Disposal: Handling nuclear waste remains a significant challenge. Current temporary solutions, like cooling ponds, can become problematic, as seen with the large volumes of coolant water Japan's Fukushima plant had to dispose of.

Long-term Waste Management: Nuclear waste eventually needs safe storage deep underground or beneath seabed. This containment ensures no radiation escapes but is costly and often downplayed by nuclear proponents.

7. Laptop Decision Doesn't Compute

Source: The post is based on the article "**Laptop Decision Doesn't Compute**– If creating a domestic industry for computers is the goal, tariffs would have been a better policy instrument than reimposing Nehru-Gandhi era licensing" published in "Times of India" on 12th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy- Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

News: The author discusses India's choice to reintroduce licensing on specific tech imports, possibly to safeguard domestic industries. However, this move raises concerns about reverting to older trade policies. The author also stresses the importance of India enhancing its manufacturing sector for economic growth and job opportunities.

Why did India reintroduce licensing on tech imports?

Discreet Discrimination: Licensing could be a tool to discreetly target imports from specific countries without explicitly naming them.

Targeting China: China is a significant supplier, accounting for 54% of India's tech imports in the HTS 8471 category in 2022.

Protection Over Retaliation: The objective might be to protect domestic industries rather than to retaliate against China.

Rapid Response: Licensing offers a quicker protective measure than safeguard or antidumping duties, which require investigations.

What are the other options available to India apart from licensing?

Tariffs: Instead of licensing, India could have simply relied on tariffs to regulate imports.

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Discriminatory Tariffs: If India wanted to target specific countries, it could impose higher tariffs on them, like how the US restricted its steel and aluminum imports in 2018.

Safeguard Duties: For protection against sudden surges in imports, such as the rise in tech imports from \$7.3 billion in 2020 to \$11.1 billion in 2022.

Antidumping Duties: Used to counteract unfairly low-priced imports, though they require an investigative process.

What are the implications of reintroducing licensing on tech imports?

Possible Violation of WTO Agreements: The reintroduction of licensing might breach WTO agreements as this method is from a bygone era.

Potential for Discreet Discrimination: Licensing could allow India to quietly target specific countries, such as China, without having to overtly name them.

Unclear National Security Benefits: Restricting tech imports for national security reasons seems unlikely as potential threats, like malware, could be introduced through various components.

Minimal Economic Impact on China: Even though China accounted for 54% of India's tech imports in 2022, India's tech imports only comprise a small fraction of China's total exports.

Protection of Domestic Industry: The main reasoning might be to safeguard India's domestic industries from surging imports, which rose significantly between 2020 and 2022.

Potential Return to Old Trade Practices: Reintroducing licenses raises concerns of reverting to restrictive trade policies, signaling potential future challenges for India's trade landscape.

What should be done?

Reevaluate Trade Policies: India should reassess the reintroduction of older trade tools like licensing and consider more effective and modern trade measures.

Expert Committee Consultation: After the 2024 elections, the new government should set up an expert committee to advise on policies that can boost manufacturing growth rates.

Focus on Manufacturing: Emphasize the importance of manufacturing for rapid productivity growth, job creation, and skill enhancement.

Employment Strategy: Address the current pattern where 85% of the workforce is in low-output sectors. Encourage the growth of larger enterprises that yield higher productivity.

8. Why the earthquake in Morocco has caused so much damage

Source: This post is created based on the article 'Why the earthquake in Morocco has caused so much damage', published in **Indian Express on 12th September 2023**.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 – Disaster Management

News: Morocco has been hit by its most powerful earthquake. It has resulted in casualties of more than 2500 people.

Morocco was hit by an earthquake of magnitude 6.8. Its epicenter was located in the Al-Haouz province, in the Atlas Mountains of the historic city of Marrakech.

It has resulted in heavy casualties and many survivors are left without food, electricity and phone services.

The earthquakes in the North Africa are the result of northward convergence of the African plate with the Eurasian plate along a complex plate boundary. The present earthquake was attributed

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by USGS to “oblique-reverse faulting at shallow depth within the Moroccan High Atlas Mountain range”.

A fault is a crack between two rock blocks. If they move fast, a quake happens. Faults are classified by their angle and direction of movement.

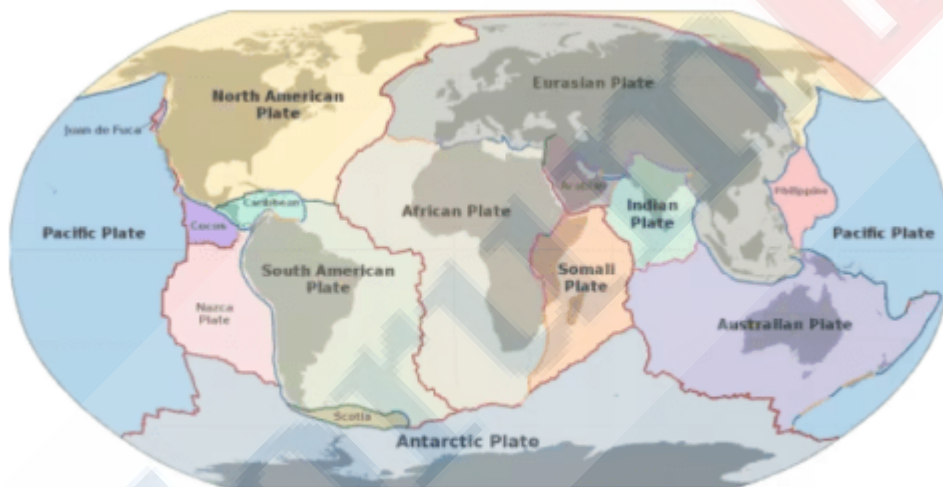
Why the Morocco earthquake was that dangerous?

Although the magnitude of the earthquake was 6.8, which in many other regions did not result in destruction and casualties. But in Morocco, it was a **very shallow earthquake**.

USGS reported the epicenter of earthquake roughly 18.5 km below the Earth’s surface. While Morocco’s own seismic agency pegged the depth at 11 km.

Shallow earthquakes carry a much higher amount of energy when they hit the surface. Whereas earthquakes with deep epicenters lose energy when they hit the surface. Although, deep epicenter earthquakes spread farther to great distances.

For example, the earthquakes, that hit Turkey and Syria were also shallow, originated 17.9 km below the Earth’s surface, with magnitude 7.8. it caused death of more than 50,000 people and destroyed about 1,60,000 buildings containing 5,20,000 apartments.



A map of the major tectonic plates on our planet. The quake occurred roughly 500 km away from the point where the African and Eurasian plates meet. (Wikimedia Commons)

What are the measures of earthquake?

Apart from depth, magnitude is also an indicator of quake. Magnitude tells how big the seismic waves are. Each increasing number of magnitudes represents 32 times more energy release and 10 times more amplitude.

In simple terms, the seismic waves produced by a magnitude 6 earthquake have 10 times higher amplitude than the ones produced by a magnitude 5 earthquake.

What are the reasons behind heavy destruction in Morocco?

First, earthquakes are not very common in North Africa. Therefore, Morocco was not prepared for such a calamity.

Second, many changes were introduced to construction rules after Morocco faced the earthquake in 1960, but buildings in rural areas and older cities are not built to withstand the earthquake. Many houses collapsed in Marrakech, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

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What are the earthquake zones in India?

Western Himalayan region of the 2500-km stretch from the Hindu Kush mountains to the end of Arunachal Pradesh, is the most dangerous seismic zones in the world.

A huge amount of energy is stored along the fault lines there, due to the continuous interaction of different tectonic plates.

Energy can be released only in the form of massive earthquakes.

9. Satwik Mishra writes: Cautiously on AI

Source– The post is based on the article “**Satwik Mishra writes: Cautiously on AI**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **12th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and Technology – Awareness in the field of IT, computers

News– The G20 Delhi Declaration stresses the importance of responsible artificial intelligence (AI) practices, including the protection of human rights, transparency, fairness, and accountability.

What is the potential of AI?

AI is currently **playing a pivotal role** in shaping our digital era and is fundamentally **reshaping our concept of advancement**.

According to **Stanford’s Artificial Index Report of 2023**, **private investments in AI** have surged by 18 times since 2013. The **adoption of AI technologies** by companies has doubled since 2017.

McKinsey’s estimates project that the **annual worth of AI** could span from \$17.1 trillion to \$25.6 trillion.

AI is on a steady upward trajectory. It is showing **increasing capabilities, accessible affordability, and broad-ranging applications**.

What are the challenges posed by AI?

AI poses established challenges such as **biased models, privacy concerns, and obscured decision-making**.

Generative AI carries the potential danger of undermining the **integrity of public discourse** through the **spread of misinformation, disinformation, influence operations, and personalized persuasion tactics**. It can erode societal trust.

In the defense sector, there is a concern that AI **unexplained aberrations and unverified analyses** could potentially lead to **unforeseen and uncontrollable military escalations**.

The concept of **Artificial General Intelligence** has been highlighted as a **significant concern**. There is growing apprehension about the **potential for AI systems** to become extremely powerful.

Way forward-

There is a need to establish a **global consensus** on the **risks posed by AI**. Even a **single vulnerability** can create opportunities for **malicious actors** to execute **extensive breaches**.

It would be wise to establish an **international commission** dedicated to **continuously identifying AI-related risks**

It is crucial to formulate a **set of standards** that should be met by any **public AI service**.

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These standards play a **pivotal role** in enhancing safety by **reducing risks, advancing quality, facilitating private-public collaborations, streamlining operations**, and **fostering compatibility** across different regions.

There is a need to develop **socio-technical standards**. It should **outline ideals** and provide the **technical means** to achieve them. Since AI is an **evolving technology**, these standards must be **adaptable**.

Governments should have a **substantial stake** in the **design, development, and deployment** of AI. It is currently dominated by a small number of companies.

There is a need to **reimagine models for public-private partnerships**. It is required to establish **regulatory sandbox zones** where experiments aimed at **boosting entrepreneurs' competitive edge** are balanced with **fair solutions to societal challenges**.

10. The signals from this 'Made in China' smartphone story

Source– The post is based on the article “**The signals from this 'Made in China' smartphone story**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **12th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian Economy

News– Huawei has created ripples within the strategic and business community with its newly unveiled Mate 60 Pro which houses the Kirin 9000 processor. The chipset reportedly used Semiconductor Manufacturing International Corp (SMIC)'s second-generation 7nm fabrication technique.

What are the challenges before the Chinese advanced chips manufacturing ecosystem?

- The **manufacturing method** employed by Huawei-SMIC for producing the **Kirin 9000 processor** is **ineffective**. The **efficiency metric known as wafer yield** falls well below 50% for this technology.

In contrast, Taiwan's Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company Limited utilizes a **7nm manufacturing process** with a **wafer yield exceeding 90%**.

Consequently, Huawei **SMIC's approach** becomes **excessively costly**. It is reaching up to **ten times** the expenses incurred by other market players.

- The **7nm manufacturing process** represents the **highest level of China's capabilities** given the currently available **Deep Ultraviolet (DUV) lithography tools**.

Sanctions imposed by the United States denied Beijing access to the most advanced lithography tool in the market—the **Extreme Ultraviolet (EUVs)**. It forced China to rely on **DUVs** for fabricating the **Kirin 9000 chipset**.

While DUVs can technically be used to create **7nm chips**, the process is **inefficient**. It is leading to reduced yield.

- There are doubts about Huawei-SMIC's ability to engage in **large-scale production** of the current chipsets. Recent restrictions imposed by the U.S. and its allies pose a challenge for Chinese companies looking to scale up the **production of 7nm chips**.

What is the comparison between the Chinese chip manufacturing ecosystem and US chip manufacturing ecosystem?

- The **decentralized nature** of the **technology ecosystem** led by the United States enables individual countries to **specialize** based on their unique **comparative advantages**.

This is evident in the **current supply chain**. The United States excels in **Electronic Design Automation (EDA) tools and design**.

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- The Netherlands specializes in manufacturing **lithography tools**. Japan is known for producing **specialized materials**. Taiwan and South Korea excel in **fabrication**.

In contrast, China faces the challenge of **achieving self-sufficiency** in each segment of the semiconductor value chain and attaining a **high level of sophistication** in each of these areas to remain competitive.

Specializing in any single segment of the chip value chain alone requires **substantial capital investment**. It is practically impossible in every segment.

- In the U.S.-led ecosystem, the costs can be shared among **participating countries**, most of which have significantly higher per-capita income levels than China.

So, to compete effectively with this larger resource pool, China must achieve a **higher success rate** for every research dollar it invests.

This presents a challenge. Breakthroughs in **fundamental research** often require **substantial capital** and do not always lead to successful outcomes.

- The **U.S.-led tech ecosystem** benefits from its ability to **attract talent** from diverse regions due to its **open immigration policies and widespread network**.

In contrast, China will increasingly rely on its **national or overseas talent pool**. The **movement of human capital** to China becomes more challenging due to **escalating competition** in the high-tech sectors.

11. Spotlighting another border point, the 'rogue channel

Source: The post is based on the article "**Spotlighting another border point, the 'rogue channel'**" published in "The Hindu" on 13th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Security- Security challenges and their management in border areas.

News: The author talks about India's Home Minister, Amit Shah, and his recent efforts to boost border security at the tough Harami Nala region in Gujarat. This includes building observation towers, roads, and other infrastructure to stop illegal activities and infiltration from Pakistan.

What new initiative has India launched to secure its India-Pak border at Harami Nala region in Gujarat?

Observation Post Tower at BOP 1164: A 9.5-metre tall observation post tower equipped with high-resolution pan-tilt-zoom cameras was inaugurated. This will enhance intelligence-gathering capabilities.

Road and Mooring Infrastructure: The newly constructed Chidiyamod-Biarbet Link Road was inaugurated to improve connectivity. Additionally, a foundation stone for a mooring place at Koteshwar in Kutch was laid. This mooring project, with a budget of ₹257 crore, will support larger vessels and floating BOPs.

New Observation Posts: New observation towers are planned at BOPs 1165, 1166, and 1169. These towers, worth ₹3 crore each, will provide live camera feeds for continuous surveillance over Harami Nala's surroundings.

Total Investment: These security enhancements are part of initiatives worth ₹361.35 crore, aiming to realize India's Prime Minister vision of a "secure border".

What are the impacts of this new initiative?

Enhanced Surveillance: The new observation post tower at BOP 1164 is equipped with high-resolution cameras, offering continuous live camera feed over the water and mudflats of Harami Nala. This significantly bolsters intelligence-gathering capabilities.

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Infrastructure Boost: The inauguration of the Chidiyamod-Biarbet Link Road and the foundation stone for a mooring place at Koteswar improves access and operational capacity. The Mooring Place project, in particular, will aid the BSF by allowing maintenance and berthing of bigger vessels in the Creek area.

Impenetrable Border: With the new observation posts, continuous surveillance, and improved road connectivity, the border, as stated by Amit Shah, is now considered impenetrable, ensuring no cross-border mischief.

Enhanced Naval Capabilities: The ₹257 crore Mooring Place project strengthens the BSF's marine operations, allowing for berthing, repairs, and maintenance of larger vessels, including floating BOPs.

What is unique about Harami Nala?

Geography: It's a natural water body, about 25 kilometers long, flowing from Pakistan into Kutch, south of the Vighakot sector.

Territory: Approximately 22 kilometers of the channel are on the Indian side of the International Boundary, which is uncontested.

Changing Landscape: Tidal waters from the Pakistani side are causing the channel to extend further into the Indian territory.

Economic Importance: The area is abundant in fish, especially prawns, attracting Pakistani fishing boats.

Industrial Activity: On the Indian side, away from the boundary, factories produce salt, bromide, and other chemicals using mineral-rich waters.

Challenging Terrain: Vast marshy mudflats surround it, with temperatures reaching above 50° Celsius in summer.

12. Climate phenomena and food security

Source: The post is based on the article “**Climate phenomena and food security**” published in “The Hindu” on 13th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment- climate change

News: The author discusses weather disruptions in India, focusing on the impacts of the Western disturbance and El Niño. They stress the significance of two types of water in agriculture and the necessity for India to adjust its agricultural practices and water management in response to climate change.

What weather disruptions are faced by India?

Extended Western Disturbance: This disturbance, which usually brings moisture to the western Himalaya and northern India during winter and spring, remained active late into the summer.

Landslides and Flooding: These events resulted in significant infrastructure damage and loss of life in the western Himalaya and northern India.

Affected Population: More than 25 lakh people were potentially impacted in an area estimated between 2,124 and 7,362 sq. km.

El Niño Phase: Evidence showed an intensifying El Niño phase which could influence the southwest monsoon.

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Northeast Monsoon: Studies found that 43% of heavy rainfall events in the northeast monsoon, including the devastating 2015 Chennai floods, coincided with an El Niño.

What are the two types of water in agriculture?

Green Water:

This is rain-fed soil moisture.

Used by food and cash crops.

Transpires back into the atmosphere.

Around half of the cultivated area in India depends on green water.

75% of India's daily diet water footprint is green water, highlighting the importance of rainfed agriculture.

Blue Water:

Found in rivers, lakes, reservoirs, and groundwater.

Basis for irrigation, drinking, and industry use.

Maintains ecological flows in rivers.

Dominant crops in irrigated areas, like rice paddy during the kharif season, use green water for about 35% of their needs.

What are the impacts of El Niño on India?

Weakened Precipitation: Climate-linked warming due to El Niño may weaken winter precipitation from the Western disturbance and shift it to more intense rain events.

Southwest Monsoon Influence: An intensifying El Niño phase can potentially affect the southwest monsoon, though the relationship between them has changed over time.

Rainfed Agriculture: El Niño affects rainfed agriculture by delaying rain starts, impacting sowing, and by causing higher temperatures that negatively influence plant growth and soil moisture.

Food Production: In the 2015-2016 El Niño year, soybean production in India declined by 28% from the 2013-2022 average.

Northeast Monsoon: 43% of heavy rainfall events in the northeast monsoon, including the 2015 Chennai floods, coincided with an El Niño.

How should India respond?

Shift in Crops:

Move towards less water-intensive crops like millets to reduce the vulnerability of the food system to phenomena like El Niño.

Over 30% of blue water can be saved with such shifts, though saved water might be quickly used unless policies are in place.

Alternative Strategies:

Adaptations and alternative crop strategies are now available, like switching to shorter growing cycle crops.

Advisories to farmers are crucial for switching crops.

Utilizing Forecasts:

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Both the Centre and the States, along with farmers, should benefit from forecasts about phenomena like El Niño.

Enhancements in short-term weather forecasts are vital.

Dam Management:

There's a clear need for alternative management of dams and reservoirs to minimize flood disasters and protect aquatic ecosystems.

Governance Response:

Emphasize sustainable water-sharing between humans and nature, rejuvenating rivers, and diversifying agro-food systems.

13. [May the twain meet: Look East as much as West for Indian exports](#)

Source– The post is based on the article “**May the twain meet: Look East as much as West for Indian exports**” published in the “**mint**” on **13th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

Relevance- Issues related to trade

News– India's goods exports printed 14.5% lower for the April-July period, having contracted for the sixth month on a trot in July.

Why is trade with the Asia-Pacific region(APAC) a matter of concern?

Between April and July, India's **total goods exports** contracted by **14.5%**. Exports to the APAC region experienced a more substantial decline, **down by 22.0%**.

Comparatively, the **decline in exports** to the United States and the European Union (EU) was lower at **11.5% and 4.8%**, respectively.

The slowdown in exports to the APAC region commenced earlier. In the fiscal year 2022-23, when India's overall goods exports saw **increases of 6.9%**. But, exports to APAC markets decreased by 11.2%.

Most of these regions **increased their imports** from across the globe. Hence, India's export slump cannot be attributed to **reduced regional demand**.

Furthermore, India's **non-oil exports** to the APAC region were down by 12.3% year-on-year in the past fiscal year. But, they increased to both the EU and the US.

This suggests that the decline in **India's goods exports** to APAC was not solely due to lower exports of oil but was a **broader issue**.

The **region's share** in **India's goods exports** had been diminishing for a long time. In fiscal year 2018-19, APAC accounted for 33% of India's goods exports.

However, in fiscal year 2022-23, APAC's share had **decreased to 26.6%**, while the combined share of the US and EU had **risen to 34%**.

The **trade deficit** with the region is also an issue. The APAC share in **India's goods trade deficit** was 49.6% in fiscal year 2018-19. It increased to 64.7% during April-July of this fiscal year.

How regional FTAs within the Asia-Pacific region are a cause of worry for India?

India is not a party to the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership**. It is considered as the **world's largest free trade pact**.

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India is also not a party to other significant trade agreements in the broader Asian region, namely the **Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)** and the **trade component of the IPEF**.

As tariffs among member countries within these agreements continue to decrease, India's **potential for exports** to the APAC region could encounter **additional challenges**.

Way forward-

India should maintain its **focus on the APAC region**.

The APAC region has a **nominal GDP of approximately \$32 trillion in 2022**. The APAC market surpasses both the US and the Eurozone.

S&P Global anticipates that APAC will **grow at approximately 4%**. This **growth rate trend** is likely to persist in the foreseeable future.

Therefore, India should explore ways to fully **leverage the export potential** of this region, particularly considering its **geographical proximity**.

14. Sunny Side Up – on India-Saudi Arabia MoU

Source: This post is based on the article “**Sunny Side Up**”, published in **The Times of India**, on **13th Sep 2023**.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 – Economy – Energy – renewable Energy

News: India and Saudi Arabia have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to cooperate in the field of energy.

The focus of MoU is on renewable energy and the possibility of connecting national power grids through an undersea link.

What is the Significance of the MoU between India and Saudi Arabia?

First, both countries are aiming towards transition to renewable energy (RE). Saudi Arabia aims for 50% RE by 2030, while India aims to increase its RE capacity from 175 GW in 2022 to 450 GW by 2030. The MoU explores the idea of linking national grids to manage the surge in RE capacity.

Second, it also opens the possibility of international cooperation in energy storage technology.

What are the challenges?

First, Variations in power demand throughout the day and the generation of power is dependent upon the natural forces like sunlight. It makes it difficult to manage the grid. Which is also the reason behind India's uneven state-wise RE development.

Second, Storage costs make RE less attractive financially.

15. A new direction for direct taxes

Source: This post is based on the article “**A new direction for direct taxes**”, published in Business Standard, on **13th Sep 2023**.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 – Economy – Mobilisation of Resources

News: The latest data shows a decline in the government's direct tax collections.

The government's direct tax collections declined by 0.91% in the first four months of the current financial year. This is contrary to the Budget's projection of 11.36% growth for the full year.

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What are the issues reported in the collection of direct taxes?

First, there is a shortfall in direct tax collections despite healthy profits reported by India Inc. Corporation tax collections fell by 10%.

Second, personal income-tax collections grew by only 6.6%, much lower than the projected annual growth rate of 14%.

Third, The Union Budget for 2023-24 heavily relies on the growth of direct taxes. The shortfall in direct tax collections could jeopardize the government's ambitious capital expenditure plan.

What are possible reasons behind the slowdown in direct tax collections?

Gradual cut in corporation tax rates and lower tax rates for individuals might be affecting collections. The effective tax rate for companies has come down from about 24.67% in 2014-15 to 22% in 2020-21.

Tax concessions offered to individual taxpayers have been rising steadily.

Companies earning over ₹500 crore have seen a decline in their effective tax rate from 23% to 19%.

What should be done?

There is an urgent need to understand why direct tax collections have not reflected the buoyancy in the Indian economy.

The tax department's move to send notices to potential tax evaders may not be enough to address the issue.

16. Haseeb Drabu writes: What the 16th Finance Commission needs to do differently

Source– The post is based on the article “Haseeb Drabu writes: What the 16th Finance Commission needs to do differently” published in “The Indian Express” on 14th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS2 – Issue pertaining to federalism. GS3- Government budgeting

News– The article highlights the need for relook at federal fiscal transfer due to the introduction of GST.

Why is there a need for reconsideration of federal fiscal transfer after the implementation of GST?

Earlier, the taxation system was **based on production**. Now, it is **centered on consumption**. It alters the **dynamics of federalism** both **vertically and horizontally**.

Previously, the **central sales tax** shifted the **tax burden** from wealthy **manufacturing states to consuming states**. It contributed to **horizontal imbalances**.

Now, the **destination principle** ensures that **consuming states** benefit at the expense of industrialized ones. The IGST levied during **interstate supply** of goods or services is transferred to the **destination state**.

This transition from the **origin-based tax principle to the destination-based principle** is reshaping the **power balance** among states.

However, the **federal fiscal transfer system** remains structured for the **origin-based tax era**. Its **criteria for distribution** also adhere to the previous system.

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What should be the way forward for the 16th Finance Commission?

The upcoming formation of the 16th Finance Commission should include a mandate to reassess the **principles governing tax distribution**. It should take into account the changed landscape of fiscal federalism in India.

Its **terms of reference** should reflect the **consolidation and inclusion** of the indirect tax base shared by both the Union and the states.

There is a need for reconsideration of the statutory **sharing of indirect taxes**, both in terms of **vertical and horizontal distribution**.

To align the **principle of vertical distribution** with the new system, it's crucial to redefine the **divisible pool**.

For example, the 16th Finance Commission will need to specify how **IGST** can be **fully integrated** into this pool. Currently, only IGST without any **input tax credit** is shared with the states.

There should be a **standardized basis** for including unsettled **IGST with credit in transition** into the **divisible pool**.

The altered administration of GST has led to a substantial increase and considerable variation in the reported **cost of tax collection**. It is ranging from 7% to 10%.

Therefore, the SFC should recommend a method for **calculating and distributing the cost of collecting indirect taxes** and proposing ways to reduce these costs and enhance **collection efficiency**.

Regarding **horizontal distribution**, the criteria for **distributing the divisible pool** among states will need to be reexamined.

The existing criteria have evolved in the context of a **production-based tax system**. This needs to be reconfigured to suit a **consumption-based tax system**.

The SFC should evaluate the **necessity for GST compensation**. It's crucial to reassess the **need, feasibility** of the compensation scheme in light of the **revenue performance** of GST over the past six years.

Additionally, clear guidelines should be established for allocating the remaining amount of **GST compensation cess collection** to the **divisible pool of taxes**.

Furthermore, within the **new institutional framework of federal finance**, there should be a **formal institutional relationship** between the **GST council and the Finance Commission**.

The SFC should investigate how the **GST Council** can function as a **Fiscal Council** to oversee the implementation of its award during the periods when it is not actively in operation.

17. India's unemployment challenge can't be tackled by doles as usual

Source– The post is based on the article “**India's unemployment challenge can't be tackled by doles as usual**” published in the “**mint**” on **14th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy – Employment

News– The article explains the issues of higher unemployment rate among the youth population.

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What does the statistics say about the employment scenario in the country?

According to this **PLFS data**, there has been a consistent improvement in the **employment situation** from 2017 to 2021. Both **labour-force participation and work-force participation** have increased during this period.

If we contrast the data with the previous five-year **survey on employment and unemployment** conducted in 2011-12, the situation in 2021-22 appears markedly improved.

But, **Indian unemployment rates** are higher than they were in 2011-12. The gap was particularly pronounced in 2017-18 but has since narrowed.

Unemployment rates are higher in all categories. In the case of rural males, **unemployment** has doubled since 2011-12.

What is the conventional explanation for higher unemployment rates?

India's **demonetization** of high-value currency notes in November 2016, and **GST introduction** in 2017, had a lasting impact on the economy, especially its informal sector. This is believed to contribute to the **high unemployment rate**.

Both demonetization and the COVID-19 pandemic led to **significant reverse migration** from urban to rural areas. It resulted in **increased reliance on agriculture**.

Why do the conventional explanations for higher unemployment rates do not seem to be appropriate?

Neither of these explanations is **supported by the available data**.

The number of people identifying as **"self-employed"** is higher now than in the past.

Economists recognize **three categories of self-employed workers: own-account workers, employers, and workers in household enterprises**. **Own-account workers and employers** can be considered proxies for **informal sector enterprises**.

In 2011-12, **52.2% of workers** described themselves as **self-employed**. By 2021-22, this figure had **increased to 55.8%**.

Considering the increase in the population between 2011-12 and 2021-22, the data suggests a **significant rise** in the **number of informal businesses**.

The **Periodic Labour Force Survey** provides information on the **average monthly earnings** of self-employed workers. These figures indicate an increase between 2017 and 2022.

This suggests that the severe **adverse impact of demonetization and GST** on employment is unlikely to be the **primary cause** of the rise in **India's unemployment rate**.

The **argument of reverse migration** also does not hold up under scrutiny. In 2021, a special exercise within the PLFS assessed the **impact on migration**.

The results indicated that the **migration rate** in 2020-21 was nearly the same as that in the **National Sample Survey's 64th round in 2007-08**.

Additionally, the proportion of **workers in "usual status"** describing themselves as **primarily engaged in agriculture** had decreased between 2011-12 and 2021-22.

What are the possible reasons behind higher unemployment rates in India?

Higher educational level among youth– Youth unemployment has increased significantly from 2011-12 to 2021-22, nearly doubling during this period.

As educational attainment improves, more educated individuals are less inclined to accept **unskilled jobs**.

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Expansion of social security measures- The government has increased the **distribution of food** under the **National Food Security Act**.

This reduces the pressure on individuals to immediately **seek employment**. It allows them more time to **“search for work,”** which contributes to the increase in the **unemployment rate**.

Additionally, **direct cash transfers** to farmer households and **certain vulnerable population groups** have also served as **support mechanisms**.

Therefore, the rise in unemployment can be attributed to **structural changes in the economy**.

18. Our inflation index lens is hazy but clear enough

Source- The post is based on the article **“Our inflation index lens is hazy but clear enough”** published in the **“mint”** on **14th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian economy

News- In the latest official release for August, it was reported that inflation had eased to 6.8% year-on-year from the previous 15-month high of 7.4% in July.

Why are doubts being raised on accuracy of CPI data?

The **basket of goods and services** monitored by the CPI has not been refreshed in approximately a decade. But, our **consumption habits** may have evolved.

India is primarily a nation with modest means. **Food items** make up a **substantial portion** of the basket. When combined with beverages and tobacco, food items constitute nearly **half of the index**.

The rest is composed of **categories like clothing and footwear, fuel and lighting, housing, and miscellaneous items**.

A **general formula** that was appropriate a decade ago, based on **India’s consumption expenditure survey of 2011-12**, may no longer be as accurate.

In **emerging economies**, as incomes rise, the **proportion of food expenses** in monthly budgets usually decreases, while **other expenditures** increase. Today, even low-income earners are known to pay **telecom bills**.

As the **last major consumption survey** conducted in 2017-18 was discarded by the government due to discrepancies. There is a lack of a clear understanding of **consumption patterns** for revising the CPI basket.

Why is CPI index still relevant for showing inflation trends?

CPI data may not depict a clear picture of **inflation scenario**. But, it does not **diminish its usefulness**. An **updated index** may not significantly alter inflation readings.

The inflation index doesn’t need to reflect **absolute truth** as an **indicator of trends**. What matters is not the **clarity of the picture** but the **direction and pace** of its change.

As long as a central bank can grasp **price fluctuations and stabilizations**, there is no need to doubt **CPI index**.

19. Banking investments – New norms will impart stability

Source: The post is based on the article **“Banking investments – New norms will impart stability”** published in **Business Standard** on **14th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Banking Sector

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Relevance: RBI's new guidelines for investment in the banking sector.

News: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has recently released updated investment norms for the banking sector, aiming to enhance regulatory oversight.

The new framework aligns with global standards and best practices, aiming for a balanced approach to recognizing gains and losses in fair value.

About the New Guidelines

The new guidelines require banks to categorize their entire investment portfolio into **three categories:** Held-to-Maturity (HTM), Available for Sale, and Fair Value through Profit and Loss (FVTPL).

This will exclude investments in joint ventures and subsidiaries while securities held for trading will fall under the FVTPL subcategory.

The new framework introduces a dedicated trading book for banks and eliminates the previous limit on the held-to-maturity (HTM) portion of the investment portfolio.

This change will give banks more flexibility in managing their investments, boosts demand for corporate bonds, and improve earnings stability.

However, banks must be cautious with their investment portfolios under the new rules, as freely moving securities in and out of the Held-to-Maturity (HTM) category won't be allowed.

Reclassification will be strict, needing approvals from the bank's board and the RBI, which will be seldom granted.

Additionally, in any fiscal year, **the sale of HTM securities cannot exceed 5% of the portfolio's opening value without RBI approval.**

The new framework also includes detailed rules for securities transfers between categories and clear guidelines for categorizing and valuing securities.

Banks must establish an investment fluctuation reserve, which can be included in Tier-II capital and enhances the banking system's capacity to absorb losses.

Overall, this framework is expected to enhance disclosure, contributing to greater stability in the banking system.

Why were the new guidelines needed?

The current regulations for valuing investments in banks have been old and in place since 2000.

Further, **RBI's decision to come up with new guidelines has been due to the lessons learnt from the US,** where inadequate investment regulation contributed to bank crises.

Although Indian banks aren't facing the same risks, revising the regulatory framework based on experience will improve the Indian banking regulatory structure.

20. Protecting floodplains is the need of the hour

Source: The post is based on the article "**Protecting floodplains is the need of the hour**" published in "The Hindu" on 14th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Disaster and disaster management

News: The author discusses the increasing problem of floods in India due to climate change and poor land management. Many areas are being constructed upon, reducing floodplain space. Other countries use better flood management strategies, which India could learn from. Strong political action is needed to protect the environment and prevent further disasters.

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Why are floods becoming more frequent in India?

Climate Change Impact: Due to global climate shifts, there's an increase in intense and frequent floods in India. For instance, the 2013 floods in Uttarakhand, the 2014 floods in Kashmir, and the 2015 floods in Chennai highlight the growing problem.

Rapid City Expansion: Cities in India are expanding quickly and without proper planning. This haphazard growth disregards the natural topography, increasing flood risks. The devastating Chennai floods in 2015 are a prime example of this.

Occupation of Floodplains: Building on floodplains reduces the river's capacity to contain water. Encroachments, especially in regions like Uttarakhand, contribute to increased flood risks. The 2013 floods in Uttarakhand were partly due to such activities.

Environmental Neglect: While India has protective environmental laws, they aren't always enforced. Encroachments on floodplains, like in Chennai, underline the negative impact of this oversight.

What are the initiatives taken by India to handle floods?

Disaster Management Act, 2005: India primarily relies on this Act to address flood management, although it's designed to handle multi-hazard risks and doesn't focus exclusively on floods.

National Green Tribunal Directive: After the 2013 Uttarakhand floods, a 2015 directive from the National Green Tribunal barred construction within 200 m along the banks of the Ganga to protect floodplains.

Uttaranchal River Valley (Development and Management) Act, 2005: This Act intends to regulate mining and construction in river valleys. However, violations are common, impacting the environment.

Central Policy Measures: While India has central policies for floodplain protection, they are non-binding on states, leading to inconsistent enforcement.

What should be done?

Embrace Flood Risk Management: Adopt strategies from countries like Germany, the U.K., and the Netherlands that focus on flood risk management rather than just flood protection.

Regulate Construction on Floodplains: Strictly implement directives like the one from the National Green Tribunal, which barred construction within 200m along the Ganga banks.

Ensure Environmental Impact Assessments: Proper evaluations must be conducted before permitting constructions, especially in flood-prone areas.

Holistic Climate Change Adaptation: Integrate various laws concerning land use, water body preservation, and environmental impacts into a coherent strategy.

21. Expanding the Indian economy, the green way

Source- The post is based on the article **"Expanding the Indian economy, the green way"** published in **"The Indian Express"** on **15th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance- Issue related to climate change

News- The Centre is planning to set up the Indian Carbon Market (ICM) by establishing a national framework that will help in decarbonising the domestic economy by pricing GHG emissions via trading in carbon credit certificates.

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What is the carbon credit?

A **robust carbon trading network** is one of the solutions to address the **climate emergency**.

Carbon credits are **temporary “permits”** that allow an organization to emit a **specific quantity of CO2** in a given year.

This system enables companies with low or no emissions to sell these credits on the market through a **carbon trading framework or carbon exchange**. By doing so, they can **compensate for the emissions** of another entity that is willing to purchase these credits.

What is the importance of carbon credit?

Certain industrial companies and sectors such as cement, chemicals, iron and steel production, and non-ferrous metals are facing **challenges to decarbonize**. They have **limited options**.

Decarbonization in these industries is more costly compared to sectors like transportation and power generation.

Carbon credits offer a **valuable means** for companies to achieve their **sustainability objectives**. These organizations can either acquire **carbon credits** or **support initiatives** that generate **carbon credits**.

What are some facts about the Indian Carbon Market (ICM) being planned by the Indian government?

The **draft framework for the Indian Carbon Credit Scheme 2023** has been recently released by the central government.

The **Bureau of Energy Efficiency** has been assigned the responsibility of developing the **Carbon Trading Scheme** in collaboration with the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change.

The Centre's draft notification does not include **provisions for the procedures, regulations, or guidelines** governing the operation of carbon markets. This responsibility will be entrusted to a **National Steering Committee chaired by the Secretary of the Ministry of Power**.

ICM will be subject to regulation. It will also **offer flexibility** to companies operating in **challenging-to-decarbonize sectors**.

What are the benefits associated with the Indian Carbon Market?

First, ICM will attract investments for **transitioning** to a **low-carbon ecosystem**. It will also enable India to achieve its target of reducing the **emissions intensity of its GDP** by 45% by 2030, compared to the 2005 levels.

Second, the introduction of carbon credit trading will provide a significant boost to the **energy transition efforts** due to its **broader coverage** of potential energy sectors across the country. The Indian Carbon Market (ICM) will play a significant role in **decarbonizing the commercial and industrial sectors**.

Third, The decision by the Centre will also lead to **increased awareness, transformation, and innovation** within industries that are difficult to decarbonize. Companies motivated by **incentives and penalties** will start incorporating **environmental impact** as a critical factor in their **strategic planning**.

As carbon-related tariffs like the **Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)** begin to exert a direct influence on trade, businesses will need to consider both **domestic and international repercussions**.

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22. Express View: Checking Nipah

Source– The post is based on the article “**Express View: Checking Nipah**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **15th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and Technology

Relevance- Communicable diseases

News– The Nipah virus has surfaced in Kerala for the fourth time in the past five years.

What are some facts about the Nipah virus?

It may not spread as easily as influenza or Covid. But, it can quickly **become deadly**. In severe instances, individuals experience **respiratory distress and inflammation of the brain**. The **mortality rate** can reach as high as 75 percent.

There is currently no vaccine available to protect against this pathogen. **Treatment options** are primarily focused on **alleviating the symptoms**.

The Nipah virus was initially identified during an epidemic that affected **pig farmers in Malaysia and Singapore** back in 1999.

Research conducted by the ICMR has indicated that **fruit bats** serve as the **natural reservoir** for this virus.

Human-to-human transmission can occur through **close contact**, either at home or in hospitals.

Each outbreak increases the potential for the **virus to mutate**. It raises the possibility of a more **efficient transmission strain**. The World Health Organization classifies Nipah as a **virus of concern**.

Way forward-

The World Health Organization (WHO) also recommends that countries located in Nipah hotspots should create **strategies to predict, monitor, and manage outbreaks**.

It is crucial to gain insights into what is happening within the **virus’s animal reservoir** before it crosses over to infect humans.

There is a need for **collaborative efforts** across different fields, involving professionals in human, animal, and environmental health.

It is essential to **identify patterns** of the **virus’s circulation** among fruit bats and document the instances when it jumps between species.

23. The New Delhi Declaration and Paris Agenda show a way forth

Source– The post is based on the article “**The New Delhi Declaration and Paris Agenda show a way forth**” published in the “**mint**” on **15th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

News– At the end of June, a historic summit on international solidarity concluded the Paris Agenda for People and the Planet. African leaders amplified this dynamic by adopting the Nairobi Declaration during the first Africa Climate Summit in Kenya.

What are some facts about the Paris agenda?

It envisioned a **world without poverty**, where the **health of our planet** is protected, and **vulnerable nations** are **empowered** to confront the challenges posed by **climate change and conflicts**.

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Achieving these objectives necessitates the **mobilization of diverse financial resources and unity** among nations.

What are the four principles that should guide the Paris agenda?

- It is imperative that no nation is compelled to make a decision between **eradicating poverty** and **safeguarding and conserving** the environment.
- There is a need to recognize the **varying needs** of different countries. They should pursue **diverse pathways** to achieve the objectives outlined in the **2015 Paris climate agreement**.
- There is a pressing need for **additional financial resources** to aid **vulnerable economies**. It will enable them to elevate their populations out of poverty while simultaneously **preserving the environment**.
- Tackling contemporary global challenges and mitigating inequality, will depend on the **expansion of private capital flows** to emerging and developing economies.

What is the way forward for the Paris agenda?

There is a strong need for a **substantial financial stimulus**. The world has already achieved the target of **\$100 billion worth of special drawing rights** to be channelled to the world's most vulnerable countries, especially in Africa.

Governments capable of providing **additional SDR rechanneling mechanisms** should contribute more.

There is a need to enhance the **efficiency of utilising** these resources. It is crucial that each dollar lent by multilateral development banks (MDBs) is matched by at least one dollar of **private financing**.

There is a need to enhance the **timeliness and predictability** of the **debt restructuring coordination mechanism** for low-income countries, commonly referred to as the **G20's Common Framework for Debt Treatments**.

Furthermore, discussions regarding its extension to lower-middle-income countries are imperative.

Accelerating **debt suspension** in countries **experiencing debt distress** is also crucial.

The **G20 Common Framework** has already yielded positive results in the cases of Chad and Zambia. It should be **utilized more extensively**.

Countries should stand by each other in **times of disaster**. It necessitated the development of **specific tools to bolster resilience**, including the inclusion of a **climate-crisis clause in debt contracts**. All **financial institutions and stakeholders** must collaborate to fulfill it.

Part of this collaborative effort should involve **coordinating multilateral development banks** (MDBs) and **public development banks** within the **global network of development banks** known as **'Finance in Common.'**

Cooperation regarding the **energy transition** can be achieved through the **Climate Club**, established by the G7 to fulfill the objectives of the Paris climate agreement.

To meet our climate obligations, there is a need to explore **new avenues for international taxation**. Governments will need to crack down on **financial flows** that evade **legitimate tax systems**.

Developing nations require **equitable partnerships** that empower them to add value by processing raw materials and critical minerals within their borders.

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There is a need for substantial **replenishment of the International Development Association** expansion of the **IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility**, and increased funding for the World Bank and other **concessional facilities** offered by the IMF.

There is a need for a **new international finance mechanism for forests** to finance ecosystem services. It will be essential to **mitigate or reduce various risks**, particularly **foreign-exchange risks**, associated with such investments.

To ensure that international commitments translate into **tangible achievements**, there is need for a **joint working committee** comprising international and regional organizations, countries, and civil societies to monitor this roadmap.

24. Disentangling the 2030 global renewable energy target

Source: The post is based on the article “**Disentangling the 2030 global renewable energy target**” published in “The Hindu” on 15th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy- infrastructure (energy)

News: The article addresses the challenges and consequences of the global target set at COP28, which aims to triple renewable energy capacity by 2030. It highlights the unequal burden on developing countries and stresses the importance of developed nations committing to more equitable targets.

What is the current status of renewable energy?

Global Renewable Energy Status:

Installed Capacity: In 2021, the global installed capacity of renewable energy sources (RES) was 3026 GW, constituting 39% of the total capacity from all sources.

Electricity Generation: Renewable energy accounted for 28% of total electricity generation. Of this, more than half was from hydropower, while solar contributed 13% and wind added 23%.

Target: The COP28 proposal aims to triple global renewable energy capacity to about 9000 GW by 2030.

India's Renewable Energy Status:

Growth Rate: Electricity consumption in India grew annually at 6.3% between 2010 and 2019.

Future Goals: At COP26, Prime Minister Narendra Modi declared a target for India to reach 500GW from non-fossil fuel sources by 2030.

What are the major issues regarding global energy targets?

Ambitious Goal: Tripling the renewable energy capacity by 2030 from the 2021 levels would mean installing around 6000 GW of renewable capacity in a short span, surpassing the total energy capacity of 2021.

Discrepancy in Generation: While renewable energy sources (RES) constituted 39% of global capacity in 2021, they only contributed 28% to actual electricity generation.

Hydropower Limitations: Most renewable energy generation comes from hydropower, but constructing new hydro plants may exceed the 2030 timeline.

Inequitable Burden: The proposed targets could unfairly place higher demands on developing countries like India, while developed nations like the US and EU might contribute minimally based on their current growth rates and phase-out plans.

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Lack of Transparency: The origin and analysis backing the COP28 renewable energy target are not fully transparent, with the proposal closely mirroring an inequitable scenario from the International Renewable Energy Agency.

What should be done?

Transparent Analysis: The origin and rationale behind the COP28 renewable energy goal need clearer transparency, avoiding undue influence from reports like that of the International Renewable Energy Agency.

Equitable Distribution: The burden of the renewable energy target should be distributed fairly among countries. Developed nations like the U.S. and EU should adopt absolute targets that reflect their responsibility and historical emissions.

Consider Growth Rates: The diverse electricity consumption growth rates across countries should be taken into account. For instance, India's growth rate of 6.3% versus the EU's decline of 0.3%.

Commit Developed Countries: Developed countries, especially the U.S. and EU, should commit to phase out fossil fuels and adopt concrete renewable energy targets, easing the transition for developing nations.

25. PMMSY: bridging gaps in the fisheries sector

Source: The post is based on the article "**PMMSY: bridging gaps in the fisheries sector**" published in "The Hindu" on 15th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Agriculture- Economy of animal rearing

News: The article talks about Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), which has made substantial investments in the Indian fisheries sector over three years. It has focused on technology, expanding into new areas, and aiding the well-being and development of fishers and related businesses, bringing about significant transformation.

What initiatives has the Indian government taken to improve the fishing community?

Separate Ministry: Prime Minister Narendra Modi initiated the systemic development of the sector by carving out a dedicated Fisheries Ministry.

Financial Boost: A significant sum of ₹20,050 crore was allocated for the Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY) as part of the Atmanirbhar Bharat package.

Addressing Gaps: PMMSY targeted critical gaps in the fisheries value chain, from fish production to post-harvest infrastructure and marketing.

Strategic Priority Areas: The scheme emphasized marine fisheries, inland fisheries, welfare of fishermen, infrastructure, cold water fisheries, ornamental fisheries, aquatic health management, and seaweed cultivation.

Technological Infusion: Young entrepreneurs, especially women in Kashmir, are rearing cold water trout using recirculatory aquaculture systems.

Expanding Fisheries: 20,000 hectares of pond area is now under inland aquaculture, with saline wastelands in Haryana and Rajasthan being converted for aquaculture.

Empowering Women: Fisherwomen have ventured into ornamental fisheries, pearl culture, and seaweed cultivation, with a ₹127-crore Seaweed Park inaugurated in Tamil Nadu.

Infrastructure and Research: The PMMSY has enabled the establishment of 900 fish feed plants, 755 hatcheries, and is supporting research in shrimp genetics and breeding.

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26. Broadening the field- Science awards should aim to encourage more young scientists

Source: The post is based on the article “**Broadening the field- Science awards should aim to encourage more young scientists**” published in “The Hindu” on 15th September 2023.

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

News: The article talks about the delayed announcement of the Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (SSB) Prizes for scientists by CSIR. It also mentions the government’s past consideration of reducing such awards and the importance of having greater diversity among the recipients.

About Shanti Swarup Bhatnagar (SSB) Prizes

Origin and Prestige:

Initiated by the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR).

Over 50 years old and viewed as the “Indian Nobel.”

Award Components: Cash prize, citation, and salary perks.

Eligibility: Scientists under 45 with notable contributions in various scientific fields.

Recent Announcement Delay:

Traditionally announced on CSIR’s foundation day, September 26.

Almost a year-long delay this year.

Why is there a delayed announcement of the SSB Prizes?

This Year’s Delay: The announcement took almost a year longer than usual.

Government’s Viewpoint: Ministry of Home Affairs felt there were too many science awards from various ministries, which could reduce their prestige. This led to a consideration of pruning prizes for scientists.

Proposed Change: The government contemplated introducing a singular major award, akin to a ‘Nobel Prize’.

Outcome:

No new award was announced.

The government decided to retain the SSB Prizes, but the uncertainty surrounding its future caused concern among scientists and contributed to the delay.

What should be done?

Retain the SSB Prizes: Concern arose from the idea to prune prizes. Retaining the SSB Prizes is crucial due to their significance.

Promote Diversity Among Awardees:

All 12 winners this year were male, primarily from centrally-funded institutions like IITs.

More recognition should be given to women and researchers from state universities.

Expand Award Opportunities:

Reducing awards isn’t the solution. Instead, focus on increasing opportunities to honor diverse deserving scientists.

Prioritize commitment to diversity and provide opportunities beyond privileged groups.

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Clear Communication:

Address delays and uncertainties by transparently conveying the future and importance of the awards to the scientific community.

27. Changing the way the postman knocks

Source: The post is based on the article “**Changing the way the postman knocks**” published in “The Hindu” on 15th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy- infrastructure (Communication)

News: The new Post Office Bill (2023) revises the old 1898 Act, granting the postal department increased pricing and service autonomy. It also permits the interception of items for security purposes, introduces digital addressing for future delivery methods such as drones, and eliminates the government’s exclusive letter delivery rights.

Why is there a need for a new Post Office bill?

Outdated Legislation: The Indian Post Office Act from 1898 was antiquated and no longer reflected the evolving role of post offices in the current era.

Expanding Scope of Services: With the post office’s network becoming a vehicle for delivering a range of citizen-centric services beyond just mail, there was a need for a legal framework that supports these expanded services.

Market Flexibility: The postal department needed the ability to respond swiftly to market demands and competitors. The old Act’s constraints on pricing didn’t allow for this dynamic pricing approach.

Preparing for Future Technologies: The traditional system of addressing might become obsolete with advancements like digital addressing and drone deliveries. The legislation needed to anticipate and incorporate these changes.

What are the new provisions in the 2023 Post Office Bill?

Pricing Autonomy: The postal department can now set service prices without requiring parliamentary approval, allowing for quicker market response.

Expanded Services: Beyond mail, the post office’s role has broadened to various citizen-centric services, backed by a strong legal framework.

Security Enhancements: The government can intercept, open, or detain postal items for reasons such as state security, public order, or contraventions of the Act.

Digital Addressing: The Bill introduces standards for digital addressing using geo-spatial coordinates, potentially revolutionizing delivery methods.

Removal of Exclusive Rights: The government’s exclusive privilege to convey letters is removed, resolving long-standing ambiguities between ‘letters’ and ‘documents’.

Future-Proofing Deliveries: With digital addressing, the Bill hints at futuristic delivery methods, like drone deliveries.

What challenges are associated with the proposed Post Office Bill (2023)?

Security Limitations: Even though the Bill allows items to be intercepted for security reasons, India Post’s market share is less than 15% in the courier/express/parcels (CEP) industry. This limits the effectiveness of these security provisions.

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Uncontrolled Courier Segment: The Bill lacks provisions requiring medium and small courier operators to register with a designated authority. With no such requirement, controlling the movement of contraband goods in parcels sent by couriers remains a challenge.

Ambiguity in Implementation: The idea of replacing physical addresses with digital codes using geo-spatial coordinates is futuristic. The practical application and public acceptance of this could be challenging.

Market Dynamics: The removal of the government's exclusive right to deliver letters acknowledges couriers but also intensifies competition and market dynamics for India Post.

What should be done?

Extend Oversight to Couriers: Given the dominance of courier firms in the market, similar legislation should be applied to them to ensure uniformity in security measures, especially as India Post holds less than 15% of the CEP market.

Require Courier Registration: Medium and small courier operators should be mandated to register with a designated authority. This would help monitor and control the movement of contraband goods in parcels more effectively.

Reinforce India Post's Role: To remain competitive, India Post should leverage its strengths and heritage, possibly focusing on its expanded citizen-centric services and bolstering its market presence.

28. Fuel for thought – Mr Gadkari's statement reflects a valid policy concern

Source: The post is based on the article “Fuel for thought – Mr Gadkari's statement reflects a valid policy concern” published in **Business Standard** on **15th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment – Pollution

Relevance: Measures taken to reduce vehicular emission

News: The government is taking various measures to discourage the sale of diesel vehicles in order to control the mission.

Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari has also urged the automobile industry to move away from diesel vehicles, warning of increased taxes.

What measures have been adopted by the government to discourage the use of diesel vehicles?

First, it imposed a 28% GST rate on both diesel and petrol cars, with an additional 22% cess on sports utility vehicles (SUVs), making the total tax on such vehicles 50%.

Second, the government's fuel price reforms have reduced the price gap between diesel and petrol from around 16.78 rupees per liter to approximately 7.1 rupees per liter. As a result, the market share of diesel cars has decreased significantly from 48% to about 20%.

Third, a committee recommended a ban on diesel four-wheelers in cities with over one million residents. However, it's unclear if the government has accepted this proposal.

Moreover, **after the introduction of Bharat Stage-VI emission norms**, major Indian automakers like Maruti, Hyundai, and Honda decided to halt diesel vehicle production.

Must Read: [Transport Minister mentions tax on diesel vehicles: Why is diesel under pressure?](#) and [Ban on diesel vehicles by 2027: Reasoning and Challenges – Explained](#)

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What more can be done to control the emission?

India, the world's third-largest carbon emitter, recognizes that road transportation, especially diesel vehicles, is a major source of emissions.

Hence, to combat this, promoting the transition to biofuels or electric transport is crucial. This shift may involve consumer-focused electric vehicle subsidies and rethinking green energy policies to reduce thermal energy reliance in the green revolution.

29. With an increase in taxpayer base, closing the tax gap

Source– The post is based on the article **“With an increase in taxpayer base, closing the tax gap”** published in **“The Indian Express”** on **16th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Government budgeting

Relevance- Issues related to taxation

News– The article explains the changes in Indian tax policy landscape in recent years

Which significant developments have occurred in India's tax policy landscape?

There has been adoption of the **Goods and Services Tax** and the introduction of **faceless assessments**.

The **number of taxpayers** has surged by 64% between 2014 and 2022, now totalling 93.7 million. This increase is notable across various taxpayer categories.

Over the past five years, more taxpayers have been **submitting their returns**. Various reasons drive this change. It includes the **mandatory need for returns** related to travel and loans, a growing **inclination to claim deducted taxes**, and the **formalisation of the economy**.

The number of **tax returns indicating zero taxes** has also risen. It has **reached 66 percent** in the fiscal year 2020-21.

Direct tax collections have outpaced both the average of the previous decade and the GDP growth in three of the last five years. A **tax buoyancy factor of 2.52** indicates that there have been **significant improvements in tax compliance**.

What are the contributing factors towards the rise in direct taxes?

The rise in direct taxes can be attributed to the increased **number of taxpayers** and **increased reported average incomes** in tax returns.

In the fiscal year 2020-21, nearly a **quarter of tax returns** disclosed **gross incomes** falling within the range of **Rs 5,50,000 to Rs 9,50,000**.

This represents a **notable shift from the 2015-16** period when **one-third of gross incomes** reported in returns fell within the **Rs 2,50,000 to Rs 3,50,000** range.

What was the impact of Covid-19 on tax collections?

The effects **extended across two fiscal years**. Consequently, **taxes paid** on business incomes and overall tax collections experienced a decline between 2019 and 2021, despite the **increase in gross incomes**.

The impact of the economic slowdown was not **evenly distributed** among different income groups and categories. In the fiscal year 2019-20, the number of tax returns and reported incomes contracted for **specific income brackets**.

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30. Syed Ata Hasnain on Anantnag attack: Dying embers, but terrorism threat not over

Source– The post is based on the article “**Syed Ata Hasnain on Anantnag attack: Dying embers, but terrorism threat not over**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **16th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Internal Security

Relevance- Terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir

News– Over the last six months, encounters with Pakistan-sponsored terrorists in the region immediately north and south of the Pir Panjal range have been frequent. Army has lost several brave soldiers in these incidents.

What is the current situation of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir?

The recent occurrences represent the **fading remnants of terrorism**, despite Pakistan’s efforts to revive them.

In the four years following the **amendment of Article 370**, significant progress has been made by concentrating on eradicating **Pakistan’s networks involved in proxy warfare**.

This has involved **targeting over-ground workers, reducing infiltration, diminishing local recruitment, and accelerating development efforts**.

Several factors that contribute to supporting terrorism have witnessed a **significant decrease**. **Infiltration and local recruitment** have seen a dramatic reduction.

The **counter-infiltration measures** in the Kashmir Valley are **highly effective and multi-layered**. Consequently, there has been a shift in the actions of terrorists toward the borders of Jammu and Punjab.

These borders serve as routes for **smuggling narcotics, weapons, and equipment**.

The triggers for **negative sentiments** have decreased. **Public funerals** for terrorists, both foreign and local, are no longer allowed. Efforts to **empower the youth** have also intensified substantially.

Why would it be incorrect to claim that the issue of terrorism in Jammu and Kashmir has been entirely resolved?

Pakistan has invested **considerable resources, time, energy, and personnel** in conducting this **proxy war** for over three decades. It is unlikely to stop these efforts easily.

Following August 5, 2019, there was a **decrease in violence**. It led to a misconception among the public that the **proxy war** had nearly ended.

The absence of violence does not equate to **normalcy**. It is a **multi-faceted concept**. Over the course of 30 years, terrorism and proxy warfare have given rise to **covert networks** that continue to operate.

It will take a **considerable amount of time** to attain the desired state of normalcy. Pakistan will attempt to **reignite separatism** through the **remaining elements of terror**.

Way forward-

It is essential to maintain **realistic expectations**. A region that has **experienced abnormality** for over three decades will not easily **overcome negative sentiments**.

It will require time and **sustained efforts in outreach and the promotion of patriotism**. More influential speakers, writers, and intellectuals should **engage with the youth** to bolster their aspirations.

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The “**all of government approach**” adopted in Jammu and Kashmir is **proving effective**. But the **national electronic media** also needs to **contribute positively** to this effort.

31. IAF takes delivery of first C295: How this deal kicks off ‘Make in India’ scheme for military aircraft

Source– The post is based on the article “**IAF takes delivery of first C295: How this deal kicks off ‘Make in India’ scheme for military aircraft**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **16th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Security

Relevance- Issues related to armed forces

News– The Indian Air Force (IAF) on Wednesday (September 13) received the first of the 56 C295 aircraft at the Airbus production site in Seville, Spain. It will replace its ageing Avro-748 fleet.

What is the C295 aircraft?

The C295 is a versatile tactical transport aircraft capable of performing a wide range of missions.

These missions include **transporting troops and cargo**, conducting **maritime patrols**, providing **airborne warning, surveillance, and reconnaissance**, facilitating **medical evacuations**, serving as a **VIP transport**, and assisting in **airborne firefighting**.

The aircraft has the capacity to **carry payloads** weighing up to nine tonnes. It can accommodate up to 71 personnel while maintaining a **maximum cruise speed** of 260 knots. It is equipped for **air-to-air refuelling**.

It is powered by two **Pratt & Whitney turboprop engines**. It can **cruise at altitudes of up to 30,000 feet** and can take **off and land quickly** on **unpaved, soft, and sandy/grassy airstrips**.

What is the timing for C295 arrival?

In September 2021, India formally confirmed the procurement of **56 Airbus C295 aircraft** at a total cost of Rs **21,935 crore**.

The **initial 16 C295s** will be assembled in Seville. The first aircraft is slated for delivery in May 2024, followed by the next 14 until August 2025.

The **remaining 40 aircraft** will be manufactured and assembled in **collaboration with Tata Advanced Systems Limited** located in Vadodara, Gujarat.

What is the significance of procurement of these aircrafts?

Firstly, it will serve as a replacement for the ageing **Avro fleet of the Indian Air Force (IAF)**, which was originally acquired back in the 1960s.

This replacement will substantially enhance the **IAF’s capabilities in air transport**. It will allow for the **efficient transportation** of troops and materials to various regions within the country.

This acquisition marks the initiation of India’s ‘**Make in India**’ **Aerospace program** within the private sector. It involves the **domestic manufacturing** of these aircraft.

Until now, military aircraft production in India has been a monopoly of the **state-owned Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL)**.

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It will stimulate **India's aerospace sector**. It will generate approximately **15,000 highly skilled jobs and an additional 10,000 indirect employment opportunities** over the course of the next decade.

What is the level of indigenous of the 40 C295?

Except for major components such as the engine and avionics, Airbus will facilitate the **transfer of manufacturing technology** to Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) for most other parts.

This approach is expected to enable the production of **95 percent of the aircraft** within India in the coming years.

The aircraft will feature **domestically developed radar warning receivers and missile approach warning systems** created by Bharat Electronics Limited.

The **countermeasure dispensing system** has been supplied by **Bharat Dynamics Limited**. The airframe of the medium transport aircraft comprises over **14,000 parts and components**. **3,500 parts** are manufactured by Tata each year.

It is anticipated that the **32nd aircraft**, set for delivery in the first quarter of 2029, will be a **fully Indian-manufactured C295**.

What is the current status of C295 manufacturing in India?

The 40 C295 aircraft are intended for production in India at the **Vadodara facility**.

Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) has established a factory in Hyderabad, where the manufacturing of **major airframe components** will commence this year.

Once the major sections of the aircraft are assembled at the **Hyderabad facility**, they will be transported to the **Vadodara facility** next year. There, they will be equipped with **engines, avionics, and other crucial components**.

A **training facility** has been established in Agra, which is expected to **become operational** in late next year.

32. A GM crop decision that cuts the mustard

Source: The post is based on the article "**A GM crop decision that cuts the mustard**" published in "The Hindu" on 16th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- agriculture- food security

News: The article discusses the importance and benefits of genetically modified (GM) crops, especially GM mustard in India, for improving food production, reducing edible oil imports, and supporting farmers' incomes and self-reliance in agriculture.

What is the current status of GM crops?

Global Status of GM Crops:

GM crops are seen as essential for global food and nutritional security, especially in a changing climate.

72 countries have adopted GM crops for various uses like food, feed, or cultivation.

Major crops include maize, soybean, cotton, and canola, but expansion to other crops is ongoing.

Economic gains from GM crops between 1996-2018 amounted to \$224.9 billion.

Over 16 million farmers globally benefit from GM crops, with 95% in developing countries.

India's Status of GM Crops:

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Bt cotton, commercialized over 20 years ago, is a successful GM crop in India.

India recently approved the cultivation of a GM mustard hybrid, DMH-11, developed at the University of Delhi South Campus.

The introduction of GM mustard aims to reduce edible oil imports, promoting self-reliance in agriculture.

What is GM Mustard Hybrid, DMH-11?

GM Mustard Hybrid, DMH-11:

Origin: Developed at the Centre for Genetic Manipulation of Crop Plants at the University of Delhi South Campus.

Yield: Offers higher vigor and yield, addressing India's edible oil deficit.

Technology: Utilizes the barnase/barstar system; this method involves removing male fertility in one parent and restoring it in the offspring.

Special Trait: Contains a herbicide tolerance gene used both for selecting genetically transformed lines and for hybrid seed production.

What is the significance of GM Mustard Hybrid, DMH-11?

Tackling Oil Deficit and Imports: Helps address India's edible oil deficit where 60% of demand is met by imports, potentially reducing the oil-import burden which was approximately ₹1.17 lakh crore.

Increased Production: Offers higher yield and vigor, crucial for boosting domestic edible oil production.

Economic Impact: Enhances the economic well-being of farmers through increased crop yield.

Innovation in Agriculture: Symbolizes a significant advancement in India's genetic engineering, ushering in new crop varieties with better traits.

Diversity in Breeding: The barnase/barstar-based hybrid introduces variety in mustard breeding, diversifying India's traditionally narrow genetic base.

Promoting Self-Reliance: The cultivation of DMH-11 signifies a move towards agricultural self-reliance and sustainability, reducing external dependencies.

33. Being people-centric – on government spending

Source: The post is based on the article “**Being people-centric**” published in “Business standard” on 16th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy- Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources.

News: The article discusses how, despite India's government spending a significant percentage of its GDP, it doesn't always achieve better outcomes in areas like health, education, and infrastructure compared to other countries that spend less.

What are the major concerns with India's government spending?

Inefficient Spending According to IMF:

As per the International Monetary Fund's data, India spends 28% of its GDP, but the country lags in sectors like health and education.

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In comparison, Bangladesh spends only 14.5% of its GDP but shows better life expectancy and schooling outcomes.

Misleading Data:

A higher percentage of GDP spending might not mean more actual spending per individual.

Some Southeast Asian nations, with a lower GDP percentage, possibly outspend India on a per-capita basis.

Service Quality Issues:

Services such as education and healthcare in India, despite substantial funding, often face quality concerns.

Growing Fiscal Concerns:

Over recent years, India's government revenue as a percentage of GDP has decreased.

This trend leads to an expanding fiscal deficit and a rise in public debt, with agencies like Fitch emphasizing these fiscal challenges.

What should be done?

People-Centric Programs: Emphasize Prime Minister Modi's vision of making programs more people-focused, ensuring citizens truly benefit.

Infrastructure and Basic Amenities: Accelerate investments in transport infrastructure, supply of electricity, tap water, and provide amenities like lavatories and clean cooking fuel.

Financial Incentives: Launch incentive programs to boost investments in select manufacturing sectors, encouraging economic growth.

Growth-Centric Approach: While focusing on people's welfare is essential, prioritizing GDP-centric growth is also crucial to increase revenue and fund welfare programs.