



9 PM

Compilation

9th to 14th October, 2023

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General Studies Paper – 1

General Studies - 1

1. A census for a new deal

Source: The post is based on the article “A census for a new deal” published in “The Hindu” on 9th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS1 – Salient features of Indian Society

News: The article discusses the role of caste and religion in Indian politics, especially focusing on a caste survey from the Bihar government. This move is viewed as a strategy to navigate political support, while critics label it as a revival of old, divisive politics.

What is the role of caste and religion in Indian politics?

Caste and Religion Significance: Caste and religion have been pivotal in Indian politics for a long time.

Recent Development: The Bihar government released a caste survey, backed by various political parties, aiming to use historical caste structures for new political gains.

Influence on 2024 Elections: This renewed emphasis on caste and religious identity is expected to shape the political dynamics of the upcoming 2024 general elections.

Economic Disparity: Different castes have varying economic statuses. For example, only 5% of upper castes belong to the upper-middle-class segment, compared to 3% of OBCs and 1.4% of Dalits.

What is Mandal 2.0, and how is it different?

Mandal 2.0:

Mandal 2.0 is a modern political strategy that still focuses on caste.

Unlike old caste politics, it also looks at issues of class and economic status.

Address Class Issues:

It aims to help the “precarariat,” a group stuck between poverty and middle-class status.

This group includes large portions of OBCs, Dalits, and Muslims.

Mandal 2.0 Different from Old Politics:

Old caste politics, known as “Mandal politics,” was often short-term and focused on electoral gains.

It didn't make a big impact on things like poverty reduction or power structures.

Mandal 2.0 seeks to create broader political support and address socio-economic inequalities.

It seeks to utilize caste identities and alternative symbolic capital to articulate politics of upward mobility for marginalized groups.

How are political alignments shifting along caste lines?

Shift Towards Larger Caste Platforms:

Political entities, like Jats and Marathas, are moving towards broader caste platforms for more extensive political influence.

The Maratha-Kunbi quota stir, and farmers' agitation show a trend of caste unification for common causes.

Leaders Supporting New Alliances:

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Political figures, such as Sharad Pawar, are endorsing these larger caste coalitions, indicating influential backing.

Lower OBCs Reassessing Affiliations:

Lower OBCs are pondering their stance, weighing the advantages between adopting a 'Hindu' platform or an 'OBC' platform.

This reflects a strategic reconsideration within these groups regarding their political trajectory.

Impact on Political Strategy:

These adaptations in caste alignments hint at a reshaping of Indian political strategies and associations.

It suggests that different castes are exploring new political affiliations and platforms to better serve their socio-economic goals.

2. Women MPs' contribution has increased in Parliament

Source: The post is based on the article "**Women MPs' contribution has increased in Parliament. Data proves it**" published in "Indian express" on 11th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- Society- Social empowerment

News: The article discusses the positive impact of policies by Indian government on women and highlights how women in Parliament, especially from BJP party, are actively questioning the government and focusing on key issues like healthcare and education.

How have Indian government policies impacted women?

Health Benefits: Increased access to LPG cooking fuel has improved women's health and well-being. This shift from traditional cooking methods has had direct health benefits.

Safety Improvements: Enhanced toilet accessibility has ensured better safety and health for women, reducing risks associated with open defecation.

Economic Empowerment: Policies like the Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana have primarily benefitted women, with a majority being women account holders. This has provided them with banking facilities and financial independence.

Property Ownership: Under PM Awas Yojana, many houses are registered under women heads of families, furthering their economic empowerment.

Active Participation in Politics: Women in Parliament have been more active, especially in the 16th Lok Sabha. Data shows they raised nearly as many questions as their male counterparts, signifying their increased role in governance.

What role do women leaders play in Parliament?

Engagement in Parliament: In the 15th Lok Sabha, women MPs asked fewer questions (135) compared to male MPs (250). This disparity was notably reduced in the 16th Lok Sabha, where women MPs asked 218 questions, nearly mirroring the 219 questions asked by men.

Focus on Vital Social Issues: Women MPs often concentrate on crucial areas like healthcare, education, roads, and MSMEs, prioritizing the welfare of the more vulnerable segments of society.

Intricate Party Dynamics: Women MPs from the BJP asked a median of 355 questions in the 15th Lok Sabha, starkly contrasted with the INC women MPs, who asked only 58. In the 16th Lok Sabha, BJP women MPs continued their active engagement by asking a significant number of questions (346) even to their own governing party.

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Exercising Accountability: Regardless of the government in power, women MPs exhibited a commitment to holding the government accountable, demonstrating empowerment and active participation in democratic processes.

3. IIT-B's 'vegetarian tables' policy

Source: The post is based on the article "IIT-B's 'vegetarian tables' policy: Vegetarianism of purity promotes segregation, hierarchy and even violence" published in **Indian Express** on **11th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus: GS1- Society- Salient features of Indian Society.

News: The article discusses the ongoing tension and changes in India regarding vegetarianism, particularly rooted in caste and religious beliefs. It talks about how traditional strict segregation in dining and living based on vegetarianism is slowly changing, especially in urban areas. However, there's still a visible divide and instances of discrimination based on food choices, even resulting in social and institutional incidents.

How is vegetarianism evolving in India?

Urban Evolution: In urban areas, there's a growing trend of vegetarians and non-vegetarians dining together, indicating a softening of strict vegetarian norms.

Chicken's Acceptance: Chicken has become a middle-ground meat. It's now more acceptable in traditionally vegetarian spaces.

Caste Influence: Historically, dietary choices were deeply influenced by caste, emphasizing purity. This is slowly eroding, though remnants still persist.

Public Spaces: Examples like IIT Mandi show institutions promoting mixed dining, breaking past segregations.

Incidents of Divide: Situations like the denial of office space to Trupti Devrukhkar in Mumbai and a student fined at IIT Bombay for violating dietary rules highlight the lingering divides.

What are the issues associated with Indian dietary choices?

Shame Culture: Meat and sanitary pads are hidden and packaged similarly, reflecting an ingrained shame associated with these items in certain societal sections.

Militant Vegetarianism: Extreme adherence and promotion of strict vegetarian practices sometimes escalate into social aggression and even violence, rooted in caste-based and hierarchical beliefs.

Societal Segregation: Militant vegetarians uphold a persistent segregational attitude, sometimes even leveraging arguments about environmental and animal welfare to substantiate their stance.

Academic Conservatism: Some academic spaces, exemplified by incidents at IITs, manifest conservative and superstitious dietary politics, such as the Director of IIT Mandi linking landslides to meat consumption, reflecting a resistance to embracing inclusive and rational practices.

General Studies Paper –2

General Studies - 2

1. Why there are so few women in banking

Source: The post is based on the article “Why there are so few women in banking” published in **Business Standard** on 9th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues associated with Women

Relevance: Issues with women’s representation in banking sector in India

News: The article discusses the current state of women’s representation in India, with a specific focus on the banking sector.

What are some of the facts related to women representation?

India: In the World Economic Forum’s 2023 Global Gender Gap report, India secured the 127th position out of 146 countries in terms of gender parity.

-According to the ILO, in India, as of 2021, 82 percent of women worked in the informal economy, and the gender pay gap stands at 27 percent in 2023.

-The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has found that there is just 24 percent representation of women across all scheduled commercial banks.

-As per the RBI Deputy Governor, India’s women workforce participation is among the lowest in the world, and it is declining.

-As per a study, India has the potential to boost its GDP to \$770 billion by 2025 if it provides equal opportunities to women.

Globally: Women now hold 32.4% of senior management positions in mid-market businesses globally, which is a rise of just 1 percentage point in the past one year. **According to the WEF,** it will take 132 years to close the gender gap globally.

Moreover, in India’s software sector, women have made significant progress, with a 77 percent increase in female employees compared to a 62 percent rise in male employees. However, the same level of progress is not seen in the banking sector.

How have women progressed in the banking sector in India?

After Banks’ Nationalization: After nationalization, it took over three decades for a woman to become the CEO of a commercial bank in India.

Tarjani Vakil achieved this milestone in 1996 at the Export-Import Bank of India, while at the RBI, **Kishori J Udeshi became the first woman deputy governor** in June 2003.

In the Last Decade: In the last decade, the presence of women in India’s banking sector has increased.

For example, in 2010, women constituted 17% of employees in public sector banks (PSBs), with just 2.7% in executive roles and by 2021, the proportion of women employees in PSBs rose to 27%.

However, **there has been minimal change in the number of women working** in private and foreign banks.

Gender Balance Index 2023: As per the index, gender imbalance is a concern within the RBI as well. **This index reveals that the Asia-Pacific region,** particularly in financial institutions, faces significant challenges in achieving gender balance.

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As per the index, the region has the second-lowest representation of women in leadership positions in financial institutions globally.

What can be the way ahead?

To attain gender parity, companies should prioritize flexible working options, including extended maternity leave and childcare support, along with hybrid and remote work arrangements.

Such flexibility has been proven to boost women's presence in senior management.

Furthermore, the rising focus on **environmental, social, and governance (ESG)** norms is encouraging companies to build diverse leadership teams, as diversity is becoming a key factor to secure capital.

2. How the Digital India Act will shape the future of the country's cyber landscape

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"How the Digital India Act will shape the future of the country's cyber landscape"** published in **The Hindu on 9th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 – Governance – Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.

News: This article discusses the recent announcement of the **Digital India Act 2023 (DIA)** which aims to address the ever-evolving digital landscape in India. The article highlights its significant provisions and the associated challenges in their implementation.

What was the need of the DIA?

The DIA, which will replace the Information Technology Act of 2000 (IT Act, 2000), is designed to address the challenges and opportunities presented by the dramatic growth of the internet and emerging technologies. Its primary motive is to **bring India's regulatory landscape in sync with the digital revolution of the 21st century**.

This digital revolution includes the explosion of **India's internet user base to 850 million**.

Changes such as the evolution of the nature of internet usage, the emergence of various intermediaries and the proliferation of new forms of user harm, such as **cyberstalking, trolling, and doxing** have also occurred.

The DIA recognizes these changes and aims to provide a **comprehensive legal framework** to address them.

What are the key provisions of DIA?

Firstly, it emphasizes 'Online **safety and trust**' with a commitment to **safeguarding citizen's rights** in the digital realm. At the same time, it aims to remain **adaptable to shifting market dynamics and international legal principles**.

Secondly, it recognizes the importance and provides guidelines for responsible use of **"New-Age technologies" such as Artificial Intelligence and Blockchain**: It aims to promote ethical AI practices, data privacy in blockchain applications, and mechanisms for accountability.

This ensures a **balance between fostering innovation and safeguarding against potential harm**.

Thirdly, it upholds the concept of an **"Open Internet"** (i.e., the internet being free and open to all, and not under the control of any government or organization): It strikes a balance between accessibility and necessary regulation.

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Lastly, regarding Accountability of online platforms: It contemplates a review of the “**Safe Harbour**” principle, which shields platforms from liability related to user-generated content.

What are the various challenges associated with the DIA?

There are certain aspects of DIA that require a critical evaluation. These include:

- 1) **Impact on innovation and the ease of doing business** due to stricter regulations, particularly in emerging technologies: This may lead to less investments and entrepreneurship.
- 2) **Impact on the freedom of expression of users** due to the review of the “**safe harbor**” principle: Platforms may adopt a more cautious approach.
- 3) Challenges with regard to **effective enforcement**: This will require **substantial resources, expertise, and infrastructure**.
- 4) Another challenge is **balancing the interests of various stakeholders**, including the rights of tech giants as well as citizens.

What should be done?

Therefore, while the DIA is a progressive move, its implementation and potential impacts require **constant monitoring and adaptability** to avoid unintended consequences.

This forward-looking stance will not only be beneficial for citizens and businesses but also position India as a **responsible player in the global technology landscape**.

3. Hangzhou happiness- Indian sportspeople are measuring up to world standards

Source: The post is based on the article “**Hangzhou happiness- Indian sportspeople are measuring up to world standards**” published in “Business standard” on 9th October 2023.

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

News: The article discusses India’s impressive performance at the Hangzhou Asian Games, highlighting their 107 medal wins across various sports, and noting both achievements and areas of inconsistency.

India’s Performance at the Hangzhou Asian Games

Impressive Medal Count: India secured 107 medals, with a breakdown of 28 gold, 38 silver, and 41 bronze, elevating its rank to fourth from the previous eighth position in 2018.

Top Performers: China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea secured the first, second, and third positions respectively, showcasing their robust sports capabilities in the Asian Games.

Standout in Athletics: Neeraj Chopra grabbed the spotlight by winning gold in javelin throw, while athletics as a whole contributed 29 medals, including six gold.

Triumphant Hockey Team: The men’s hockey team shone brightly, grabbing gold and notably defeating Pakistan with a 10-2 score, avenging past defeats.

Historic Badminton Victory: The duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty bagged the country’s first Asian Games doubles gold in badminton, marking a historic win.

Performance in Other Sports: Despite impressive performances in archery, shooting, and other sports, certain reliable stars in boxing and badminton underperformed, sparking discussions about consistency.

Challenges: India met with challenges like hostile local crowds and unusual refereeing, which added hurdles to their path, yet emerged successfully in various events.

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4. The New Delhi Declaration was a win for us and the world at large

Source: The post is based on the article “The New Delhi Declaration was a win for us and the world at large” published in **Live mint** on 10th October 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 significant achievements and leadership during its presidency at the G20 Summit in New Delhi. It highlights consensus on global issues like sustainable development, digital transformation, climate change, and inclusive growth. India effectively brought nations together, emphasizing shared commitments, especially considering the interests of the developing world and enhancing multilateral cooperation.

What are the major concerns addressed by the New Delhi Declaration?

Sustainable Growth: Focusing on startups and MSMEs as engines for strong, sustainable growth.

Financial Inclusion: Endorsing the G20 2023 Financial Inclusion Action Plan, which seeks to enhance financial accessibility for individuals and MSMEs, especially in vulnerable groups.

Digitalization: Adopting principles for digitalizing trade documents and fostering digital upskilling and reskilling through a comprehensive G20 Toolkit.

Global Health: Developing an Interim Medical Countermeasures Coordination Mechanism to ensure access to medical aids like vaccines and also recognizing traditional and complementary medicine.

Climate Change: Committing to triple the renewable energy technologies capacity worldwide by 2030, and affirming the G20 High-Level Voluntary Principles on Hydrogen.

Women’s Empowerment: Establishing a new Working Group aimed at empowering women, with its first meeting scheduled during Brazil’s G20 presidency next year.

Multilateralism: Enhancing global cooperation and multilateral development banks, and increasing representation from developing countries in international financial institutions.

How did India handle the G20 presidency?

Facilitating Dialogues: Conducting over 200 meetings in 60 cities, involving a myriad of discussions on global issues.

Inclusive Participation: Engaging over 25,000 delegates from more than 120 nationalities, emphasizing inclusive international participation.

Highlighting Priorities: Making Sustainable Development Goals a central priority and bringing a focused approach towards global sustainable development.

Encouraging Consensus: Successfully uniting leaders from various nations to agree on the New Delhi Declaration despite diverse viewpoints.

Emphasizing Multilateralism: Pushing for enhanced multilateral development and involving more voices from developing countries in global decision-making.

Addressing Various Sectors: Exploring and addressing critical global sectors, such as digital transformation, healthcare, and climate change, effectively.

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5. Russia's loss can be India's gain in clinical trial shift

Source: The post is based on the article “Russia's loss can be India's gain in clinical trial shift” published in “Business standard” on 10th October 2023.

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

News: The article discusses how geopolitical issues in Russia and Ukraine are halting clinical trials, and suggests that these could be moved to India. Although India has potential and has made regulatory improvements, challenges like delayed site start-ups and historical regulatory concerns are hurdles to be addressed to attract global pharma companies for conducting more clinical trials.

What have been India's challenges in hosting clinical trials?

Slow Site Initiation: Starting trial sites in India takes a long time, typically about 5-6 months. This delay reduces India's appeal for global clinical trials.

Regulatory Hurdles: Even after the introduction of the New Drugs and Clinical Trial (NDCT) Rules in 2019, there's uncertainty among pharmaceutical companies. They need to see how these new rules are implemented on the ground.

Delayed Approvals: Some government sites in India don't begin their review in the Ethics Committee until the Central Drugs Standard Control Organisation (CDSCO) gives approval. If CDSCO's approval comes within its 90 working day timeframe (4.5 calendar months), some sites still can't join the trial because it's already over globally.

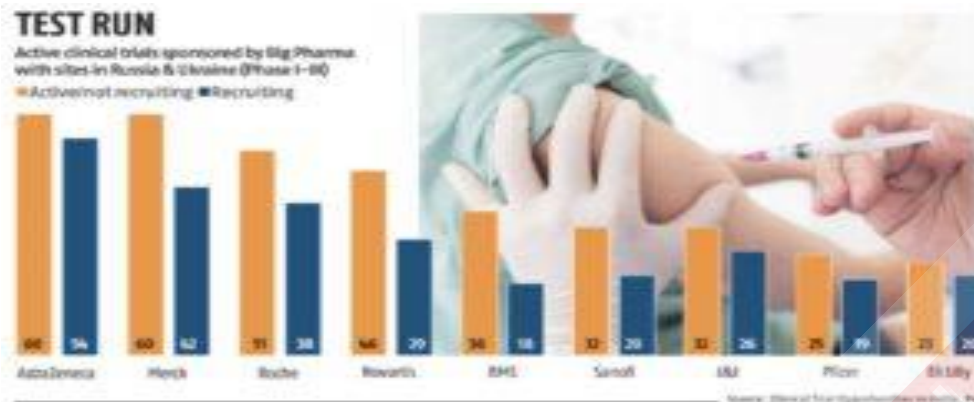
Past Concerns: Around 2014, Biocon had to move its clinical trials to Europe, which was 10-20 times costlier than conducting them in India.

What changes have been made in India's clinical trial regulations?

Introduction of NDCT Rules: In 2019, the New Drugs and Clinical Trial (NDCT) Rules were introduced to enhance the regulatory framework around clinical trials in India.

Improvement in Site Numbers: Since the establishment of the NDCT Rules, and up until 2022, the number of sites for conducting trials in India has increased by 40%.

Streamlining Approvals: Efforts have been made to smooth the approval processes, including developing online platforms and easing some approval processes, thereby promoting growth in trials.



How can India become the new hub for clinical trials?

Leverage Current Opportunities: With clinical trials halting in Russia and Ukraine, big companies are looking for alternatives. India, having a high disease burden, is a potential candidate for these relocations.

Increase Contribution: Despite being populous, India's contribution to global trials has been around 4%. There's scope to amplify this number significantly.

Optimize Regulatory Processes: Although the NDCT Rules of 2019 have brought improvements, India must ensure quicker and predictable site initiation and regulatory approvals to attract global trials.

Promote the R&D Ecosystem: A clinical trial ecosystem can generate high-end jobs and promote research and development in the nation, making it attractive for international companies.

Showcase Stability: Emphasizing India's stable and consistent regulatory systems can attract global pharma giants.

6. Law Commission age of consent recommendations threaten to criminalise the young

Source: This post has been created based on the article "Law Commission age of consent recommendations threaten to criminalise the young" published in **The Indian Express** on 10th October 2023.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Social Justice — Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

News: This article discusses the undesirable consequences of the current age of consent as provided under the POCSO Act, 2012 and the flaws in the Law Commission recommendations keeping this provision unchanged.

Judicial references have called for reviewing the criteria for the age of consent to sexual activity to deal with cases where consent was present. However, the 283rd report of the Law Commission of India (LCI) **has advised against changing the existing age of consent** under the **Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act**.

What are the issues with the current provisions on the age of consent?

POCSO imposes a **mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years for statutory rape** without regard to whether the minors, including those between 16-18, consent.

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This has magnified the volume of prosecutions against adolescents engaged in non-coercive consensual sexual activity. This has resulted in devastating outcomes, primarily for adolescents and youth from **marginalised populations**.

Data shows that criminalisation primarily harms the **poor and the marginalised**, with devastating consequences for **girls**.

The State has no obligation under the POCSO to provide the basic minimum required for the survival of the ‘survivor’.

In **Veekesh Kalawat vs State of Madhya Pradesh** (2023) it was noted that a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years for an underage husband resulted in destroying families in rural Madhya Pradesh, leaving the wife and children to the vagaries of social exploitation.

What are the recommendations of the report?

The LCI recommendations favour retaining the age of consent at 18 years, to criminalise both abuse and non-coercive consensual sex, even when this occurs between peers.

It mitigates the issues due to this by also recommending **judicial discretion** to award less than the mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years and **provides guidelines for determining types of cases that are befitting of sentence reduction**.

What are the flaws in the proposed mitigation?

First, the “close-in age” exception is not available as a defence for acquittal but only for sentence reduction. Criminalisation and incarceration will still happen.

Second, a new term, “tacit approval”, is introduced to replace “consent”. Consent is defined in law, backed by jurisprudence. The use of “tacit approval”, without a definition, is confusing.

Third, a checklist of circumstances to guide whether or not exemption can be applied has **caveats** that include circumstances listed include pregnancy, marital status, family acceptance, good behavior, absence of criminal antecedents and likely references to inter-faith and inter-caste relations.

These suggest that judicial discretion is guided in favour of underage sexual relations that occur within **socially conforming marriages** backed by familial support.

Another drawback of the report is that **stakeholder consultations were limited**, inputs from public health experts, gynaecologists, child psychologists, counsellors, and shelter homes were missing.

What should be the way forward?

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) calls for age-appropriate sexuality education, access to confidential medical counselling, and prohibits laws from criminalising consensual sexual activity with peers.

The US, Canada, Japan, Australia and South Africa have lower ages of consent and additionally, protect adolescents from shame and stigma for consensual sexual activity through close-in-age exceptions.

With the LCI overlooking these issues, the matter rests with the courts to address on a case-to-case basis, and the **continuation of public dialogue**.

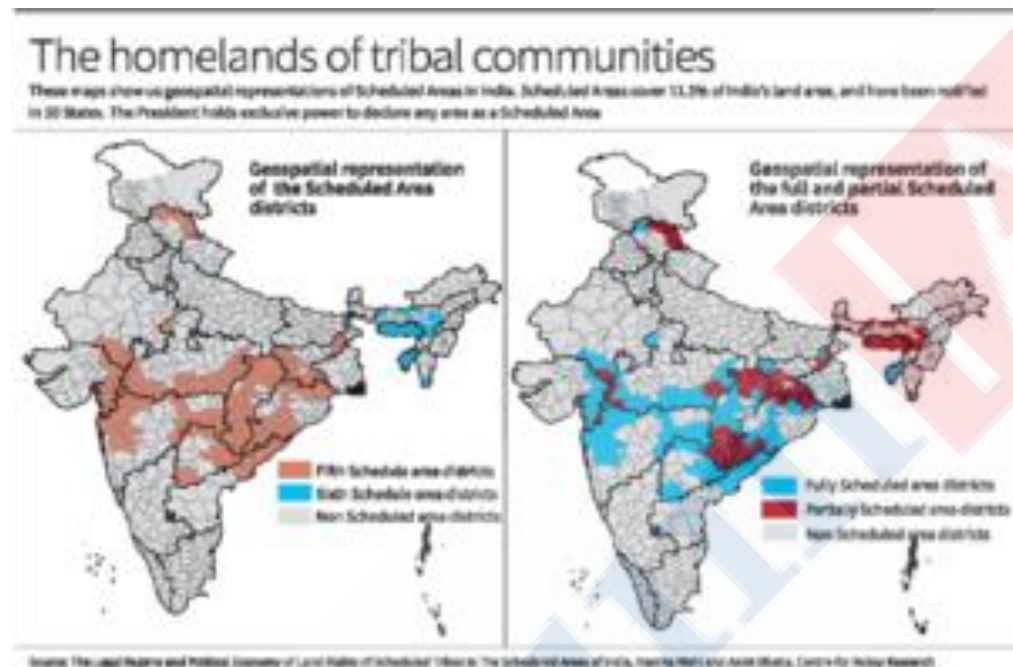
The provision should ensure protection of the young from sexual abuse, while ensuring they are not punished for consensual sexual activity with peers.

7. The state of India's Scheduled Areas

Source: This post has been created based on the article “The state of India's Scheduled Areas” published in **The Hindu** on **10th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Social Justice — Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes

News: This article discusses the Scheduled Areas — their status, how they are identified and what more needs to be done to safeguard Scheduled Tribes in India.



What is the status and constitutional provisions for Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India?

India's 705 Scheduled Tribe (ST) communities — making up **8.6% of the country's population** — live in 26 States and 6 Union Territories.

Scheduled Areas cover **11.3% of India's land area**, and have been notified in 10 States: Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Himachal Pradesh.

Article 244 pertains to the administration of Scheduled and Tribal Areas.

Article 244(1) provides for the application of **fifth Schedule** provisions to Scheduled Areas notified in any State other than Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. The exclusive powers to declare any area to be a Scheduled Area lies with the **President**.

The Sixth Schedule applies to the States of Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram as per **Article 244(2)**.

What are the reasons for the exclusion of STs from Scheduled Areas?

Several villages have been left out from Scheduled Area status in the 10 States and in other States with Scheduled Tribe (ST) populations.

Delay in Indian government's approval for proposals by the State governments is an issue.

Another reason cited for excluding certain tribal areas is the **absence of viable ST-majority administrative units**.

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As a result, **59% of India's STs remain outside the purview of Article 244**. Hence, they are denied rights under the laws applicable to Scheduled Areas, including the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act 2013 and the Biological Diversity Act 2002.

How are Scheduled Areas governed?

The **President of India** notifies India's Scheduled Areas.

States with Scheduled Areas need to constitute a **Tribal Advisory Council (TAC)** with up to 20 ST members.

The TAC advises the Governor on matters referred to them regarding ST welfare.

Apart from this, the **Union government** can give directions to the State regarding the administration of Scheduled Areas.

The **Governor** can repeal or amend any law enacted by Parliament and the State Legislative Assembly in its application to the Scheduled Area of that State.

He/ She also submits an annual report to the President.

The Governor can also make regulations especially to prohibit or restrict the transfer of tribal land and regulate the allotment of land and money-lending.

Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, or PESA, 1996 empowers the gram sabhas to exercise substantial authority through direct democracy.

However, these powerful provisions have largely remained a dead letter.

How are Scheduled Areas identified?

Neither the Constitution nor any law provides any criteria to identify Scheduled Areas. However, based on the **1961 Dhebar Commission Report**, the norms for declaring an area as a Scheduled area are — **1)** preponderance of tribal population; compactness and reasonable size of the area; **2)** a viable administrative entity such as a district, block or taluk; and **3)** economic backwardness of the area relative to neighboring areas.

Compactness means that all the proposed villages need to be contiguous with each other or with an existing Scheduled Area.

No law prescribes the minimum percentage of STs in such an area nor a cut-off date for its identification.

The **Bhuria Committee** noted that the most resource rich tribal-inhabited areas have been divided up by administrative boundaries. This has pushed them to the margins and led to arbitrary politico-administrative decisions.

However, **PESA** finally settled this ambiguity in the law. The Act defined a 'village' as ordinarily consisting of "a habitation or a group of habitations, or a hamlet or a group of hamlets comprising a community and managing its affairs in accordance with traditions and customs". The **Forest Rights Act, 2006** also adopted this definition. As a result, the definition of a village expanded beyond the Scheduled Areas to include forest fringes and forest villages as well.

However, **Gram Sabhas is yet to demarcate** their customary boundaries on revenue lands **in the absence of a suitable law**. FRA 2006 requires them to demarcate 'community forest resource'.

What should be done?

Firstly, all habitations outside Scheduled Areas where STs are the largest social group will need to be notified as Scheduled Areas irrespective of their contiguity.

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Secondly, the geographical limit of these villages will need to be **extended to the 'community forest resource' area** on forest land under the Forest Rights Act 2006 where applicable, and to the **customary boundary** within revenue lands.

Finally, a redrawing of the geographical limits of the revenue village, panchayat, taluka, and district so that these become Scheduled Areas fully.

8. Mental health and the floundering informal worker

Source: This post has been created based on the article “**Mental health and the floundering informal worker**” published in **The Hindu** on **10th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Social Justice — Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

News: This article discusses the prevailing issue of informal workers suffering from economic and physical vulnerabilities which in turn, lead to mental health issues.

The theme of World Mental Health Day (October 10) this year is ‘mental health as a universal human right’. However, the issue of the mental health of informal workers has largely gone unnoticed.

How are work and mental health related?

Decent work influences mental health in a positive way.

However, **unemployment, unstable or precarious employment, workplace discrimination, or poor and particularly unsafe working environments** pose a risk to a worker’s mental health.

Workers in **low-paid, unrewarding or insecure jobs, or working in isolation**, are more likely to be victims of mental health issues.

Informal workers undergo mental distress due to accumulating debt and rising health-care costs, lack of food security, lack of access to livelihood and financial instability.

According to the **United Nations Development Program (UNDP)**, unemployment and poor-quality employment have been detrimental to mental health.

What is the situation in India with regards to the mental health of informal workers?

India’s informal workforce accounts for **more than 90%** of the working population. This sector is characterized by:

- 1) Lack of regulatory protection
- 2) Unsafe working environments
- 3) Long working hours
- 4) Little access to social or financial protections
- 5) High uncertainty
- 6) Discrimination

— all these factors contribute to undermining mental health and limit their access to mental health care.

Women in the Informal sector: Over 95% of India’s working women are engaged in informal work, often without social protection, in addition to **suffering patriarchal structures and practices**.

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Elderly in the Informal sector: The Census of India 2011 shows that **3.3 crore elderly people are working post-retirement in informal work.**

The absence of proper financial, healthcare and social security can severely impact their physical and mental health.

Youth: A study by **Lokniti (Centre for the Study of Developing Societies)** indicated that youth between 15 to 34 years are highly susceptible to negative emotions. Youth unemployment, along with the stigma attached to it, significantly impacts their mental health. An **ILO** report highlights how young workers are shifting to more precarious and informal work, accepting less pay and poorer working conditions, and sometimes, exiting the labour force altogether.

Policy decisions such as slashing of funding of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS) and absence of universal social security as a goal in the **Code on Social Security 2020** is also detrimental.

What needs to be done?

India's budgetary **allocation for mental health** is currently **under 1% of the total health budget** and has over-focused on the digital aspect. This has to be optimized.

Strengthening of community-based, people-centred, recovery-oriented and human rights-oriented care has been suggested by the **World Mental Health Report 2022.**

With this phase of **demographic dividend**, it is important to focus on the quality of employment and long-term social security.

There is also an urgent need for proactive policies to improve mental health recognition and action. This is critical in upholding the basic human right to good health, including mental health, and in achieving **SDG 3 on 'good health and well-being'** and **SDG 8 on 'decent work for all/economic growth'**.

9. Economics Nobel: Let's talk gender inefficiency

Source: The post is based on the article "**Economics Nobel: Let's talk gender inefficiency**" published in **Mint** on **10th October 2023.**

Syllabus: **GS 2 – Social Issues – Issues associated with Women**

Relevance: reasons behind low female workforce.

News: The COVID-19 pandemic has led to discussions about the potential of flexible work to address India's low female workforce participation.

The Nobel Prize recipient, economist Claudia Goldin, has conducted research on women's labor market performance in the US. She provided valuable insights into this matter and other gender-related issues.

What were the findings of Claudia Goldin's research?

U-shaped pattern: Goldin's research reveals a U-shaped pattern in the labor participation of married women in the U.S. This participation declined as the Industrial Age separated homes and workplaces but increased with the rise of the service sector.

This highlights that economic growth alone is insufficient for achieving gender equality.

Structural Challenges: Globally, only half of women are in paid jobs compared to 80% of men, and women earn less. In the U.S., as more women joined the workforce in the 20th century and the economy improved, **the issue of women earning less than men was overlooked.**

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Therefore, **her research underscores the importance of recognizing the challenges women encounter when an economy undergoes structural changes.**

Societal Factors: She explored family dynamics and women's expectations. Factors like marriage and domestic duties, along with unclear career paths after motherhood, influenced women's choices.

The availability of contraception, like birth control pills, allowed women to delay childbirth and make career choices, promoting investment in women's education.

However, despite progress, the gender pay gap persists, and **Goldin's research suggests that changing women's expectations is still essential to achieving equality in the workforce.**

How is Claudia Goldin's research relevant for India?

Although Indian women have different social experiences from the US, it is likely that major factors highlighted by Goldin's research have contributed to the decline in their workforce participation in India, along with other complex factors.

10. The end of the two-state solution

Source: The post is based on the article "The end of the two-state solution" published in **The Hindu** on **10th October 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: reasons behind Palestine-Israel conflict

News: The Jewish-Arab (Palestine) conflict is a longstanding historical issue with a solution that is clear but difficult to attain.

Read – Israel Palestine Conflict – Explained

What is the solution to Jewish-Arab conflict?

The solution to the Jewish-Arab conflict can be achieved by dividing the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea into two separate countries.

Historically, Jews accepted this idea, while Arabs rejected it. However, **there is now support for a two-state solution from the Arab world and Western nations.**

Despite this, Israel now seems hesitant to create a sovereign Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza with East Jerusalem as its capital.

Why is Israel now hesitant to create a sovereign Palestinian state/against two nation solution?

Fear of Increased Attack: The Israeli-Palestinian conflict involves many stakeholders, but the crucial ones are the Palestinian and Israeli people, with the Israeli public being the key stakeholder.

Hence, the main question is whether recent Hamas attacks will make Israelis support for a Palestinian state. Some believe this, but others fear that a two-state solution could enable more effective attacks by Palestinians.

Stance of Hamas: Hamas doesn't believe in the idea of an Israel nation making, while, Israel fears that peace may result in a single Palestinian state without Israel.

Radical Israelis Group: The challenge lies with Palestinians to convince Israeli voters that they'd live peacefully with Jews if they had their own state. Because, some radical Israelis have always opposed Palestinians having their own state.

Must Read: Israel-Palestine Conflict and India-Explained

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What can be the way ahead?

Palestinians, living under Israeli occupation, have suffered greatly. So, they've resorted to causing harm to make Israelis notice their pain. **However, this cycle of violence only makes the Israelis less likely to end the occupation.**

Further, Hamas' recent terror attacks have increased Israeli suspicion, leading them to see a sovereign Palestinian state as a threat to Israel's existence.

Hence, **to achieve their own state, Palestinians must convince Israelis that they will live peacefully alongside.** However, this is a tough challenge.

11. The essentials of G20's corridor initiative

Source: The post is based on the article "**The essentials of G20's corridor initiative**" published in **Business Standard** on **11th October 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations – Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

Relevance: About the India Middle East Europe Corridor (IMEEC)

News: The article explains about the India Middle East Europe Corridor (IMEEC).

Read more about IMEEC – India Middle East Europe Corridor-Explained, China's BRI Now Faces A Credible Indian Challenger and India-Middle East-Europe Corridor: The way to a new world order

What is the IMEE Corridor?

Read Here: India-Middle East-Europe mega economic corridor: What is the project and why is it being proposed?

Currently, IMEE is seen as a logistic corridor. However, if participating countries invest more in it, it may also get transformed into an economic corridor.

IMEEC corridor closely resembles the Spice Route from centuries ago when imperial Rome traded for spices and jewelry from India.

The plan of IMEEC goes beyond the flow of physical goods to energy flows between countries. There are talks about a special power line to Sri Lanka. Also, **there is a proposed plan of sharing renewable energy** between the countries.

What is the significance of IMEEC for India?

1) A significant reduction in logistics costs at certain points along the route, 2) a chance to lead in the construction and operation of the rail segment, which could enhance India's position, and 3) it will lead to a shift for India from the previous India-Iran-Russia INSTC with Iran's Chabahar Port at its center.

What are the challenges?

Bureaucratic Hurdles: One of the challenges that the IMEEC will face is **reducing bureaucracy along the route.**

For example, a container from Mumbai to Hamburg will have to be loaded and unloaded at six different places, and there will be border checks for illegal activities in all 15 countries involved in the IMEEC.

It is therefore important to have a "single-pass" system in place to make the system more efficient.

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Funding: The only part to be constructed is a new rail line across the Arabian Peninsula, estimated to cost ₹78,000 crore. **Given the economies involved, this cost is manageable.**

What is the way ahead?

India, as the third-largest emerging economy is a key component of the IMEEC.

However, it should also consider involving neighboring subcontinent nations, extending the line from Mumbai to ports like Chittagong, Colombo, and including India's proposed International Container Transshipment Port in the Andamans.

Recent reports also suggest including western Indian ports like Kandla, JNPT, Mundra, **and East African ports, given the African Union's G20 involvement.**

12. Women want change, society needs change

Source: This post has been created based on the article “**Women want change, society needs change**” published in **The Hindu** on **11th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Social Justice — Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

News: This article discusses the necessity of the recent Women's Reservation Act in enabling gender parity. It also highlights the privileges enjoyed by women in leadership positions and changes in regressive ideas required for women emancipation.

Global Gender Gap Report 2023 concluded that at the current rate of progress, it will take 131 years to close the global gender gap; and 149 years in South Asian countries including India.

What are some misplaced criticisms of the policy of women's reservation?

Reservation is the most effective form of affirmative action and equity is the first step to equality. Excuses such as it leading to inefficiency or incompetency are simply means to guard spaces from ousted classes.

Incompetencies, even if they arise, are short term, and are removed soon after opportunity for skill building is made available.

Statistics show that women perform much better than men in academics, more women graduate from colleges than men, and more women enter the workforce than men.

In contrast to this trend, the number of women is sharply lower in leadership positions not because of their incompetence, but because of the **hegemony of men**.

Across the world, women **are appreciated by society in supportive and emotional roles**, but very seldom in leadership roles. The world hates and denigrates ambitious women.

In the Indian context, India was early to adopt universal adult suffrage, but the participation of women in the country's polity still remains minimal. Hence, affirmative action was needed.

In light of this, the **Women's Reservation Bill, 2023**, cleared overwhelmingly by both Houses, was a ground-breaking event.

The present Bill is the first step towards actualizing gender parity.

What has been the socio-economic background of women in leadership roles?

Historical evidence points out that most women who have assumed leadership roles did not get there by sheer industry, competence and intelligence.

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Historical evidence also shows that most women in leadership positions have a mix of privileges — of **higher education**, the support of **influential mentors or families**, or belong to **upper classes or castes**, or **nepotistic advantage**.

They were allowed only for the convenience of men who were disqualified from assuming these positions, or, if it served some political agenda.

In India, women leaders were, most often, just convenient choices.

What is the issue with privileged women in leadership positions?

Privileged women who assume leadership are **not supportive or empathetic** to the aspirations of those women who do not even have access to basic needs.

For instance, the All-India Women's Conference, the Women's Indian Association, and the Central Committee of the National Council of Women in India demanded neither discriminatory nor favorable treatment based on gender in legislative representation in the Round Table Conference.

The biggest block in the realizing of gender parity is the **regressive views** held by men and women. It is time to quickly set right historical wrongs. Women want change. Society needs change. And there is no reason why it should be late.

13. Mass ageing poses a challenge we've never faced before

Source: This post has been created based on the article “**Mass ageing poses a challenge we've never faced before**” published in the **Live Mint** on **11th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: **GS Paper 2 Social Justice — Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections** of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

News: This article discusses the emerging trends and the consequent challenges of the demographic trend of ageing. It also highlights the trends in India and their possible solutions.

Ageing is becoming the dominant global demographic trend.

In 2022, there were nearly 800 million people aged 65+ years comprising 10% of the world's population. This is likely to increase to **16% by 2050** and nearly **25%** by the end of the century.

What are the reasons for this trend?

Rapid and accelerating ageing is taking place on account of **declining fertility and increasing longevity**.

Global life expectancy has more than doubled over the last century. At the same time, **fertility has dropped in every country**. For instance, India's fertility rate has more than halved to 2.0 in just 4 decades.

What are the opportunities associated with this change?

Experience of the elderly with a **wide range of functional capabilities** can be utilized. If done systematically and creatively, they can be converted into an asset.

What are the challenges associated with this change?

Financial burden in **low and middle-income countries** due to the changing age-distribution, coupled with **climate change**.

The biggest challenges are related to **income security, healthcare** and ensuring **lives of dignity** for the elderly.

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What does the situation in India look like?

India has the **2nd largest population of elderly** at nearly 100 million. By the end of this century, this will rise to 330 million.

This will lead to **issues of elder care, health systems** and **income and pension security**.

Other important issues are the **extension of retirement age, increasing employer contribution to pensions**, and providing **incentives for household savings and elder care**, while at the same time focusing on providing **employment to youth**.

Another complication is a stark difference between states in demographic structure. States with higher GSDP per capita, like Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu, have fertility rates well below 2.0, while Uttar Pradesh has a fertility rate of 2.4 and Bihar of 3.0.

Additionally, **women** outlive men by about 3-4 years on average, which further leads to the income security problem.

Defined benefit pensions (DB, where benefits of income and healthcare are assured) have given way to Defined Contribution plans (DC, where tax-advantaged contributions are made). DB plans are unaffordable to employers and DC plans are generally insufficient to cover the cost of increases in lifespan. The net result is a **household deficit for elder care**.

What can be the solutions to these challenges?

Firstly, increasing the productive lifespan of people by raising the retirement age.

Secondly, healthcare and wellness will need to be strengthened including early-motherhood prevention and mitigation of lifestyle diseases. As school-going children decrease, schools will need to be closed and hospitals built instead.

Thirdly, a **'calorie' mindset** should give way to a **'balanced nutrition' mindset** to increase health spans and lessen the financial burden.

Lastly, an increase in permissible contributions to DC plans will be required, to increase the magnitude of savings.

14. We need evidence-based traditional medicine

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"We need evidence-based traditional medicine"** published in **The Hindu** on **11th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: **GS Paper 2 Social Justice — Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.**

News: This article discusses the difference between modern and traditional medicine. It presents a case for an evaluation of these traditional therapies based on modern science, and the incorporation of their useful parts in medicine instead of straight rejection.

What is Modern medicine?

Modern medicine became science-based from the late 19th century when advances in technology made the study of the human body more accurate. It led to safe anesthesia and surgery.

Self-correction is the strength of modern medicine. Therapies found to be ineffective are abandoned and are accepted if found effective.

What is the basis of Ayurveda?

Like many traditional medical systems, Ayurveda was limited in its understanding of how the human body works due to the lack of available technology.

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However, its emphasis on reason-based diagnoses **and therapies on a sound understanding of the human body.**

How does Ayurvedic medicine differ from modern medicine?

In modern drug development, the isolation of the active principle is used. Thus, **most modern medicines are a single ingredient** and only a few are combinations.

On the other hand, **Ayurvedic medicines are commonly combinations**, and it is uncertain how these combinations interact with each other.

What should be done?

- 1) Ayurvedic medicines should be evaluated by methods of modern science to increase their acceptability. Therefore, **new investigational methods and trial designs** should be facilitated by the Ministry of AYUSH.
- 2) An evidence-based appraisal of all traditional medical systems, retaining what is useful, and then integrating them into one clear system should be carried out.
- 3) Denouncing traditional medical systems completely should be avoided. For instance, the **Nobel-winning anti-malarial artemisinin** was produced based on a 1,600-year-old text of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

15. The Maldives, the evolution of a democracy

Source: This post has been created based on the article “**The Maldives, the evolution of a democracy**” published in **The Hindu** on **11th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 International Relations — India and its neighborhood-relations

News: This article discusses the recent Maldives election results. It also highlights its consequences on India-Maldives relations and offers solutions to tackle those challenges.

What is the history of democracy in Maldives?

A multiparty democracy under a new constitution began in Maldives in 2008.

Abdulla Yameen, the pro-China president, served his full term (2013–18).

He was followed by Ibrahim Mohamed Solih, the architect of ‘India First’ policy, who served from 2018 till 2023.

Following his defeat, he will hand over the presidency to Mohamed Muizzu, the opposition candidate.

What lies ahead for the new administration?

In external relations, it will have at least three choices: revert to the ‘**India Out**’ campaign of former President Yameen; continue the ‘**India First**’ policy of the outgoing President; or **balance relations** with its key partners, especially China and India.

What are the changed dynamics in front of the new government with respect to India?

- 1) The **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** which Maldives had accepted under his leadership, is in serious trouble.
- 2) India’s steady help to Sri Lanka during the Sri Lankan financial crisis.
- 3) The Islamic constituency will note the changed equations between India and the Gulf States.
- 4) The waning of a bankrupt Pakistan, which has long nurtured extremism in the Maldives.

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What are the conditions in favour of India?

The next phase of regional diplomacy may be complex but its past achievements offer hope.

At the people's level, a **positive mindset prevails towards India**. This is due to extensive development work and numerous small community development projects, such as community centres, parks, and ferries between islands.

Maldivian youth have been to India for training and capacity-building programmes in the past.

India is a major source of tourism, imports and investment.

It is also the **first responder** every time an emergency strikes the Maldives.

What more should be done?

First, the **Colombo Security Conclave** (comprising India, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Mauritius, Bangladesh and the Seychelles) should be strengthened in terms of maritime security and Blue Economy.

Second, India should invite Maldives as an observer at the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (**BIMSTEC**).

Finally, there is need for India's strategic community and media organizations to take a greater interest in the vital neighbour, building **bridges of mutual understanding and trust**.

16. The impact of Claudia Goldin's work

Source: This post has been created based on the article "**The impact of Claudia Goldin's work**" published in **The Hindu** on **11th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: **GS Paper 2 Indian Economy — Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.**

News: This article discusses the work of Claudia Goldin on women's participation in the labour market, recently awarded the Noble Prize in Economics, 2023.

Professor Claudia Goldin's work is the first comprehensive account of women's earnings and labour market participation through the centuries.

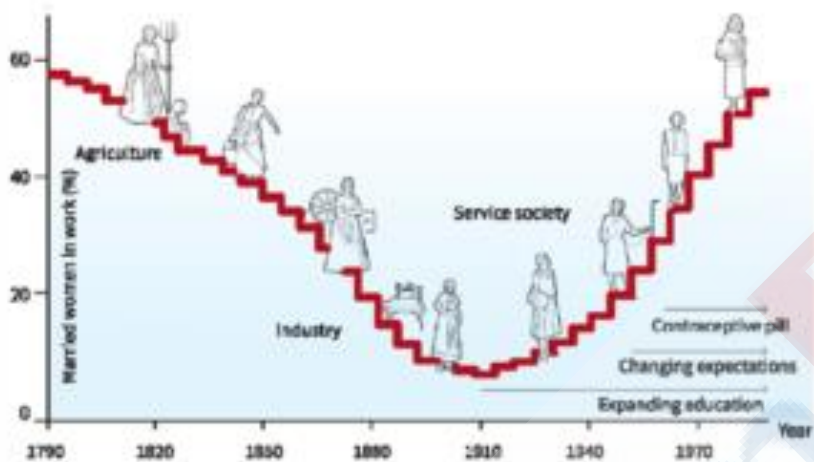
Read more – [Claudia Goldin wins 2023 Economics Nobel Prize for research on workplace gender gap](#)

She is only the 3rd women to have won the Economics Nobel and the 1st to do it solo.

What are the findings of her research?

The U-shaped curve

The economic growth in varied periods did not translate to reduced gender differences in the labour market. A lot of factors have influenced and still influence the supply and demand for female labour



Source: The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences

Professor Goldin studied archives of about 200 years of USA to demonstrate how and why **gender differences in earnings and employment rates have changed over time**.

The most significant observation was that female participation in the labour market **exhibits a U-shaped curve** instead of an upward trend. In other words, economic growth did not translate to reducing gender differences in the labour market.

She demonstrated that several factors have influenced and still influencing the supply and demand for female labour. These include:

- 1) Opportunities for combining paid work and a family.
- 2) Decisions (and expectations) related to pursuing education and raising children.
- 3) Technical innovations
- 4) Laws and norms
- 5) Structural transformation in an economy.

How did female participation move between agrarian and industrial era according to her research?

The **participation of married women** decreased with the transition from an agrarian to an industrialised society in the early 19th century. It started to increase again with the growth of the services sector in the early 20th century.

According to her, following two factors form the basis of the claim that historically, there is **no positive connection between female participation in the labour force and economic growth**:

- 1) She observed that female participation in labour force was incorrectly assessed and incorrectly stated in public data. According to her, the proportion of women in the labour force was much greater in the 1890s than was shown in the official statistics.

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2) She also observed that prior to industrialisation in the 19th century, women were more likely to participate in the labour force. This was because industrialisation had made it harder for married women to work from home since they would not be able to balance the demands of their family.

What made the female labour force participation increase?

The beginning of the 20th century marked the upward trajectory for female participation in the labour force.

According to her, **technological progress**, the **growth of the service sector** and **increased levels of education** brought an increasing demand for more labour.

However, social stigma, legislation and other institutional barriers limited their influence. **Two important factors** in this regard, are, namely, **marriage** (the practice of firing and not hiring women once married) and **prevalent expectations** about their future careers.

How did marriage and prevalent expectations play a role in women's employment rate?

In the early 20th century, **women were expected to exit the labour force upon marriage**. Later, married women would return to the labour force once their children were older.

However, their lack of investment in education earlier in life was detrimental to their career.

The **exit for an extended period after marriage** explains why the average employment level for women increased by very little, despite the massive influx of women into the labour market.

Another pivotal factor was the introduction of **birth control pills**. This created conditions for women to plan their careers better.

However, this did not lead to the disappearance of the earnings gap between men and women.

According to her research, **pay discrimination** (that is, employees being paid differently because of factors such as colour, religion or sex) **increased significantly with the growth of the services sector** in the 20th century.

Apart from this, she has also brought up the **issue of couple equity** in the house, and the importance of **sharing housework**.

17. EC on wrong track asking parties to detail fiscal costs of 'populism

Source: The post is based on the article "Spent Thought- EC on wrong track asking parties to detail fiscal costs of 'populism'. That's a matter between voters & govts" published in "Times of India" on 11th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity- Election commission

News: The article critiques the Election Commission's idea to make political parties reveal the cost of their promises, arguing it's unnecessary due to existing financial checks. It emphasizes the need for greater transparency in political funding, highlighting issues with electoral bonds.

What is the Election Commission's new proposal?

Election Commission's Fiscal Proposal:

Chief Election Commissioner, Rajiv Kumar, introduced a new idea.

Wants political parties to explain the costs of their election promises through a pro forma.

Purpose Behind the Proposal:

The aim is to safeguard voter rights by providing clear fiscal information.

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Kumar likens last-minute promises by parties to a “tadka” of populism.

In Practical Terms:

Political parties will have to quantify the financial impact of their promises.

Trying to ensure parties consider the fiscal implications of their commitments.

Why is the proposal criticized?

Lack of Meaningful Information:

The pro forma is based on assumptions and might not give useful details to voters.

Skepticism arises because any fiscal data provided will likely be theoretical or estimated.

Existing Fiscal Controls:

Critics highlight that states in India already have financial checks and controls.

Example: Rajasthan’s debt-GSDP ratio was within allowable limits at 37.7%, complying with existing Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) laws.

Different Priority:

The critics suggest more focus is needed on transparent political funding, not fiscal promise checks.

18. Use of draconian laws against media outfits shows process can be punishment

Source: The post is based on the article “Vivek Katju writes: **Use of draconian laws against media outfits shows process can be punishment**” published in **Indian Express** on 11th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Security – role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

News: The article discusses the importance of legal fairness when investigating media outlets and organizations suspected of illegal activities, like taking funds from foreign entities for propaganda. It emphasizes ensuring rigorous evidence, limiting collateral damage, and timely legal processes, highlighting a case of a media organization accused of accepting “tainted funds” from Chinese entities.

What is the situation with the media outlet?

Media Outlet Under Scrutiny:

The outlet faces allegations of accepting funds from Chinese entities.

Authorities believe this could lead to propaganda-driven content.

Charges Leveled:

Funds might have come from arms of the Chinese propaganda machine.

Suspicious arise that such funds might influence the outlet’s stance on national issues.

Outlet’s Defense:

The media organization denies all accusations.

They assert that their content doesn’t support a pro-China line and invite reviews.

Investigation Status:

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The legal process is still ongoing.

Several individuals linked to the media organization have been questioned about the allegations.

Why is legal fairness important?

Ensuring Just Investigations: Legal fairness prevents unjust punishments and ensures organizations or individuals aren't mistreated. **For instance**, the article highlights it's unconscionable to detain individuals for years only to have them released due to lack of evidence.

Upholding Democratic Values: Fair legal processes uphold the foundational values of democracy. Protecting innocents from punitive legal actions safeguards the ethical integrity of the Republic.

Mitigating Collateral Damage: Careful and just investigations limit unintended consequences and protect uninvolved individuals.

Ensuring Accountable Use of Laws: Draconian laws, when applied, require utmost caution and sound evidence. The objective is to avoid instances where the legal process becomes a punishment in itself due to extensive durations and potential harm to reputations.

What are the challenges with legal proceedings?

Issue of Timely Judgement: Legal proceedings, especially in India, are often criticized for their slow pace. Many undertrials linger in jail for extended periods before their case is heard.

Bail Accessibility: For laws where bail is hard to procure, early decision-making is crucial but not always possible. The distinction between regular bail-denying cases and those due to apathy or poverty is blurred.

Becoming Punitive: The extended duration of legal processes can itself become a form of punishment. Individuals and entities may face social and financial repercussions even before a legal verdict is achieved.

Impact on Uninvolved Parties: Legal proceedings might unintentionally envelop individuals who aren't directly involved. The wide net of investigations and questioning can cause collateral damage to people's lives and reputations.

19. Generic drugs are everywhere – and that's a problem

Source: This post has been created based on the article "" published in **The Indian Express** on **12th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Social Justice — Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

News: This article discusses the issue of unbranded generic drugs and the related problem of substandard and spurious drugs. It also highlights the need for Good Manufacturing Practices in the pharmaceutical sector to tackle these challenges.

What are some allegations raised with respect to pharmaceutical companies?

Manipulation of trials, hiding of side effects, establishing monopolies through patents and other means, bribing doctors and harming patients.

Asymmetric information with respect to pharmaceuticals leads to uninformed choice, and health-care costs for patients are also unnecessarily increased.

However, there is only a small amount of truth in all these allegations.

The real issue is the cost of drugs, since medicines account for a large share of costs, especially if it is out-of-pocket.

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Unregulated markets where tax evasion, spurious and substandard drugs, non-adherence to temperature and lack of other quality controls takes place, are also a cause of concern.

What are the different types of medicine?

Broadly, medicines are of three types:

- (1) Still on patent and therefore, a brand;
- (2) Off patent and generic, but nonetheless produced by a reputed company, with a brand;
- (3) Off-patent, generic and unbranded.

For a particular course of treatment, there may be a choice and substitution between (1), (2) and (3), with variations in side effects as well as prices.

What is the status of pharmaceutical manufacturing?

Out of the 8,500 drug-manufacturing MSMEs, only 2,000 are GMP-compliant (GMP = Good Manufacturing Practices).

Enforcement of the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, and also the **lack of enforcement**, increases the problem.

Mashelkar Committee 2003 on drug regulatory issues had stated that, “the extent of **substandard drugs varied from 8-10%** and spurious drugs (fake, counterfeit drugs) are less than half a percent.”

What are the issues with unbranded generic medicine?

Additional health costs of substandard generic drugs not taken into account: Unbranded generic medicines are being pushed through **Jan Aushadi outlets** due to their prices being cheaper. However, there is a **health cost of substandard drugs** which is not being taken into account.

Undue Influence by big pharma companies: Pharma companies may lobby and influence pharmacies which will sell these generic medicines, just like they do with doctors.

A lack of information about the effects of unbranded generic medicines hampers patients' freedom of choice.

20. Concerns about govt.'s fact check unit

Source: This post has been created based on the article “**Concerns about govt.'s fact check unit**” published in **The Hindu** on **12th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Governance — Government policies and interventions

News: This article discusses the recent decision of the government to set up a ‘Fact Check Unit’ (FCU) – its provisions as well as the issues noted by the Bombay High Court.

The Bombay High Court recently reserved its verdict in a petition, challenging the **constitutionality of the Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Amendment Rules, 2023**.

The Rules permit a Fact Check Unit (FCU) to identify “fake or false or misleading” online content “related to the business of the Central Government” and demand its removal.

Petitioner's argument: The petitioners contend that the provision would enable **government-led censorship** and empower it to be the “prosecutor, the judge, and the executioner” of what constitutes the ‘truth’ online.

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Govt's argument: Defending the provision, the government has argued that the FCU will only notify intermediaries or online platforms that the content they are hosting is fake, false, or misleading. The intermediaries can choose to take it down or leave it up with a disclaimer.

What does the amendment say?

The amendment brings about significant changes to provisions dealing with the responsibilities of intermediaries.

Intermediaries are now under obligation to make “reasonable efforts” to ensure that users do not share any information”. Which is “identified as fake or false or misleading by a fact check unit of the Central government” in respect of “any business of the Central government.”

Failure to comply will lead to losing the “**safe-harbour protection**” under **Section 79 of the IT Act, 2000**, which exempts intermediaries from liability for any third-party content on their platforms.

What issues did the High Court find with the amendment?

- 1) **Lack of necessary safeguards:** The Court observed that it **lacks necessary safeguards**. They do not offer protection for fair criticism of the government.
- 2) **Ambiguous terminology:** It also highlighted the **ambiguity** surrounding the term “any business of the Central government.”
- 3) **Unconstitutional consequences:** Court remarked that if the **consequences of a law are unconstitutional**, it must be done away with **no matter how sound the motives** were.
- 4) **Violation of Article 14:** Another argument is that it **violates Article 14** by discriminating between false news about the government and other false news.
- 5) **PIB already fact-checks:** A **sudden need for an FCU** was also questioned; pointing out that the Press Information Bureau (PIB) has been efficiently fact-checking for years.
- 6) **Subjectivity of provisions:** The Court also said that terms in the amendments are **subjective and open to various interpretations**.
- 7) **Violates the principles of natural justice:** There is no provision that provides an opportunity for an aggrieved intermediary to justify or defend the flagged content.
- 8) **Lack of remedy:** The Court also said that even the user whose post has been removed or whose account has been suspended after being flagged by the FCU.

21. UN Security Council reform is a song in a loop

Source: This post has been created based on the article “UN Security Council reform is a song in a loop” published in **The Hindu** on **12th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: **GS Paper 2 International Relations — Important International institutions, agencies and fora – their structure, mandate.**

News: This article discusses the structural issues of equity and representation in the **UN Security Council**, and the various challenges associated with reforming the organisation.

The issue of fundamental reforms of the UNSC has resurfaced at the ongoing General Assembly session.

UN's Secretary-General António Guterres mentioned that the world has changed, but not the institutions. This prevents the effective addressing of problems.

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What are the issues of equity in representation at the UNSC?

- 1) **Do not represent Present realities:** 5 permanent members enjoy the privilege of a veto, merely because of winning a war 76 years ago. The UNSC reflects the geopolitical realities of 1945 and not of today.
- 2) **Disproportionate under-representation of countries:** Out of 193 member-states of the UN, **only 15 members (less than 8%)** are represented in the UNSC. **Europe**, which accounts for only 5% of the world's population, controls 33% of the seats.
- 3) **Funders not represented: Japan and Germany** have been the 2nd and 3rd largest contributors to the UN budget but are still referred to as 'enemy states' in the UN Charter.
- 4) **Major players not represented:** States such as **India**, despite its huge population, share of the world economy, or contributions in kind to the UN (through participation in peacekeeping operations, for example), are not represented.

What are the various challenges in reforming the UNSC?

- 1) **Lack of support from small countries:** These make up more than half the UN's membership but have been indifferent to reform due to lack of incentive.
- 2) **Lack of support from medium and large countries:** They are against the select few trying to become permanent members due to a spirit of competition, historical grievance or simple envy.
- 3) **Difficult procedure:** The procedure to amend the UN Charter is very difficult. Any amendment requires a two-third majority, and further has to be ratified by two-thirds of the member states.
- 4) **Power of veto:** Any ratification also has to be supported by all of the existing permanent five members.
- 5) **In the case of India:** China won't like diluting its status as the only Asian permanent member; Pakistan, is also opposed; and Indonesia seems to feel diminished by the prospect of an Indian seat.
- 6) **In the case of Brazil:** Argentina and Mexico opposed due to Brazil not representing the largely Hispanic Latin America.
- 7) **In the case of Africa:** Rivalry between Nigeria (largest democracy), South Africa (largest economy), and Egypt (oldest civilization).

What shows the ineffectiveness of the UNSC?

Failure to prevent conflict: In the **Ukraine conflict**, a Permanent Member of the Security Council invaded a sovereign state and the Council proved powerless.

Misuse of Veto Power: Russia's veto has blocked resolutions on Ukraine, Syria and North Korea. Similar **obstructionism by the West** has affected proposals to reform the World Bank and IMF.

UNSC should not be allowed to fade into ineffectiveness and irrelevance as it is the only global system that brings all countries together on a common platform.

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22. Next Up, The Khaki Ceiling – on women representation in police

Source: This post has been created based on the article “Next Up, The Khaki Ceiling” published in **The Times of India** on **14th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Social Justice – Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

News: This article discusses the need and the possible positive impact of increasing women’s representation in India’s police in the wake of the recent Women’s Reservation Bill.

Why is political representation of women not enough?

The women’s reservation bill is a giant step ensuring women will now be represented more in Indian legislatures, but **safety at home and in the streets** is still a concern.

Countries like **Rwanda, South Africa and Mexico** rank high when it comes to women in parliaments. But they are not safe places for women to be in.

For instance, women leaders in **Rwanda** came to the fore because of an unplanned shortage of men due to civil war, however, the masculine ethos and cultural prejudice have not changed.

Similarly, **South Africa** has among the highest recorded rates of sexual violence in the world.

Why is there a need for increasing representation of women in the police?

1) **Lower crimes against women:** If women in Parliament and police work together, crimes against women would fall. For instance, **Sweden, Australia and the Netherlands** show that these countries protect women’s interests best because they are well represented both in their parliaments and in their police.

2) **Lack of Empathy:** Male Police officers cannot handle cases of crime against women with the empathy they deserve.

3) **Increased filing of cases:** When it comes to filing crimes against women, women police officers are more active and willing. This may be because women find it easier to open up to another woman.

4) **More crimes against women come to light:** If women had a sympathetic policewoman’s ear, more women would come forward.

Keeping this in mind, **Punjab police** established **Saanjh Shakti and Punjab Police Mahila Mitter Committee**. Here, a woman can approach an all-women helpdesk to register her complaint.

After Parliament, women must be at least one-third of the police, to push back stubborn patriarchy and ensure safety of women.

23. Remembering Karthyayani Amma: The poster girl of Kerala’s adult literacy drive

Source: This post has been created based on the article “Remembering Karthyayani Amma: The poster girl of Kerala’s adult literacy drive” published in **The Indian Express** on **14th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Social Justice – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education, Human Resources

News: This article discusses the state of female education in India and the inspiring story of Kerala’s Karthyayani Amma, who recently passed away.

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In India's adult literacy drive, Karthyayani Amma's success in Kerala (her successful clearing of Class X exams) has continued to motivate individual aspiration and institutional support.

What is the state of female education in India?

Statistics show how, despite a surge in literacy among women in India since Independence, the "Gender Gap" in Education still persists.

According to the 2011 Census:

- 1) Adult literacy rate for women in rural areas is at 50.6% compared to 74.1% for men.
- 2) Similarly, it is 76.9% for women in urban areas, and 88.3% for men.

Over the years, one of the highest improvements in literacy rates has been among rural women, achieved through the implementation of adult literacy programmes. Kerala has been a role model in this.

24. In SC, questions of foetal viability and rights of unborn child

Source: This post has been created based on the article "In SC, questions of foetal viability and rights of unborn child" published in **The Indian Express** on 14th October 2023.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Social Justice – Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

News: This article discusses India's abortion laws and its criticisms. It highlights the recent Supreme Court case on abortion with reference to the foetus "viability test".

The Supreme Court is hearing a married woman's request to end her 26-week pregnancy. The case has travelled to two different Benches, raising crucial questions on the decisional autonomy of a woman to abort, and the legislative framework.

What is the case about?

A married woman, who already has two boys, argued that the pregnancy was unplanned. According to her, her family income is insufficient to support another child, and that she is under medication for post-partum depression.

Earlier, a 2-judge Bench allowed the termination of the pregnancy. The court reasoned that an unwanted pregnancy due to failure of contraceptive methods is the same as a forced pregnancy.

However, AIIMS, Delhi, wrote to the SC that it would need a directive on whether a foeticide can be done before termination since the **foetus is "currently viable"**.

Later, the case went before a 3-judge Bench headed by the Chief Justice of India (CJI).

What is the law on abortion?

The **Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act (MTP Act)** allows termination of pregnancy in 3 stages:

- 1) Termination of pregnancy **up to 20 weeks** is allowed on the advice of **1 doctor**.
- 2) If a pregnancy is **20-24 weeks**, the right to seek abortion is determined by **2 registered medical practitioners** as an exception, but only under certain categories. MTP Act lists **7 categories of forced pregnancies**, including statutory rape in case of minors or sexual assault; women with disabilities; or when there is a change in marital status of women during pregnancy.
- 3) **After 24 weeks**, a **medical board** must be set up in "approved facilities", which may "allow or deny termination of pregnancy" **only if there is substantial foetal abnormality**.

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What are the complications in this case?

The contentious issue in this case was that it is a 26-weeks pregnancy, beyond the permissible gestational limit prescribed in the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act, 2021.

The court has allowed termination **beyond 26 weeks** in several cases. However, the difference in this case seems to be the marital status of the woman, which indicates that the **conception is consensual** and not a forced pregnancy in that sense.

However, in the case of a consensual relationship too, the court has allowed termination in the past.

The court cited **“transformative constitutionalism”** that promotes and engenders **societal change**, and said that “the law must remain cognizant of **significant changes in family structures**”.

What is the foetus “viability test”?

The landmark **1973 US Supreme Court verdict in Roe v Wade** that made abortion a constitutional right **allowed abortion up to the point of foetal viability**, that is, the time after which a foetus can survive outside the womb.

Indian courts have read the MTP Act liberally, but the **test of “foetal viability” as a benchmark** to allow abortion is **new** in India.

What are the arguments in favour of allowing the abortion in this particular case?

1) This request was a matter of right over individual bodily autonomy, to exercise a reproductive choice, and seeking support from the State for safe abortion services. These demands have been endorsed by India in the **1994 Cairo Declaration on Population and Development**.

2) CJI D Y Chandrachud’s observation in the **2022 Ms X case** that “every pregnant woman has the intrinsic right to choose to undergo or not to undergo abortion without any consent or authorisation from a third party”, underscoring **reproductive autonomy**.

What is the criticism of India’s abortion laws?

1) The criticism of India’s law is that the decision to terminate after 20 weeks is shifted to doctors and not the woman.

2) There is also a need to balance between the **“rights of a woman”** when it comes to abortion, and the **“rights of the unborn child”**. **The Indian legal framework on reproductive rights tilts to the side of the woman’s autonomy** more than towards the rights of the unborn child.

25. A war that ends the Saudi-Israel ‘normalisation’ process

Source: This post has been created based on the article **“A war that ends the Saudi-Israel ‘normalisation’ process”** published in **The Hindu** on **14th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 International Relations – Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests.

News: This article discusses the negative fallout of the recent Hamas attack on Israel on the normalization of bilateral relations between Israel and Saudi Arabia.

The recent Hamas attack on Israel has firmly overturned Israeli efforts, supported by the United States, to promote a normalisation of relations with Arab states (especially Saudi Arabia) without considering the Palestinian issue.

The Gaza war has placed the Palestinian issue at the centre of West Asian politics.

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What were the conditions demanded from USA by Saudi Arabia for normalization of relations?

The normalisation deal depended on 3 conditions that Saudi Arabia had placed before USA:

- 1) **U.S. approval for a civilian nuclear programme** that provides for uranium enrichment within the country.
- 2) **U.S. security guarantee** for the country.
- 3) **Sales of advanced weapons.**

In return, U.S. had insisted that Saudi Arabia back U.S. interests on oil prices, dilute its ties with China and deepen strategic engagement with the U.S.

What were the various concerns regarding Saudi Arabia's demands?

- 1) Saudi Arabia's credentials as an **authoritarian state**.
- 2) Possibility of Saudi Arabia developing its own **nuclear programme**.
- 3) Saudi Arabia's **poor human rights** record at home and in Yemen.
- 4) Concerns about Saudi insistence that arms supplies be accompanied by **a transfer of technology** to develop its arms industry.

Palestinian interests and concerns did not figure in these normalisation discussions.

What is the Iran angle?

There are arguments that Iran has instigated the Hamas attacks to block Saudi Arabia's normalisation initiative with Israel.

However, this argument has little credibility.

This is because Saudi-Iran ties had already been normalised under **Chinese mediation**: embassies have been re-opened, high-level visits conducted and economic cooperation expanded.

What is Saudi Arabia's changed foreign policy stance in the context of the Hamas attacks?

Saudi Arabia has recognised that peace and stability in the region are not possible without Palestinian interests being addressed.

Saudi Foreign Office mentioned the dangers of the explosion of the situation as a result of the occupation, the **deprivation of the Palestinian people of their legitimate rights** and the repetition of systematic provocations.

Lately, Saudi Arabia has been pursuing its foreign policy engagements in terms of its own interests, without any U.S. involvement. This reflects its assertion of **strategic autonomy**.

It rejected the U.S. interest in building an anti-China coalition globally and an anti-Iran cabal regionally. Also, it did not heed to U.S.'s wishes on oil prices or diluting its comprehensive strategic ties with China.

Promoting the Palestinian cause will now form an important part of this foreign policy approach.

26. Inquilab Forever- Who's in charge, if everyone's protesting?

Source: The post is based on the article "Inquilab Forever- Who's in charge, if everyone's protesting?" published in "The Times of India" on 14th October 2023.

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

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News: The article discusses Jadavpur University authorities protesting against their own students over disagreements on student representation, likening it to various leaders who have protested while in power.

What are the issues at Jadavpur University?

Issues at Jadavpur University:

Protests by Authorities: Unusually, the university's leaders, including the acting vice-chancellor and several professors, are protesting against their own students. This is a unique situation where those in power are adopting protest tactics typically used by those they govern.

Representation Disagreement: The central issue is about student representation. Students demanded representation on the welfare board and the anti-ragging committee, but their request was denied by the authorities.

Authority Reaction: The university officials were not only unhappy with the students' demands but were also aggrieved by the students' "expression and behaviour", which further intensified the conflict.

Leadership Vacuum: With both students and university authorities involved in protests, there's uncertainty about who's managing the institution and how decisions are being made.

27. India and Maldives ties: Despite China, bound by history and geography

Source: The post is based on the article "India and Maldives ties: Despite China, bound by history and geography" published in "Indian express" on 14th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- International relation- India and its neighbourhood- relations.

News: The article discusses the deep-rooted relationship between India and Maldives, highlighting the historical, economic, and strategic connections. It mentions challenges faced by Maldives like religious extremism and governance issues and emphasizes India's consistent support.

How are the geographical and social aspects of Maldives characterized?

Geography:

Maldives consists of over 1,200 islands.

It covers 90,000 sq km, of which 99.6% is the sea.

India, its closest neighbour, is 70 nautical miles away.

Social Aspects:

Maldives boasts a high literacy rate of 98%.

The constitution permits only Sunni Muslims to be citizens.

The nation faces challenges like growing religious extremism, drug abuse, and patronage traditions.

There's a concern about the increasing trend of religious extremism.

What is the significance of India and Maldives' relationship?

Significance for India

Maritime Security: Maldives provides a strategic position against threats like piracy and terrorism on the high seas.

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Economic Interaction: India has been a steadfast economic partner to Maldives. The State Bank of India has been pivotal in developing Maldives' tourist economy and is the largest bank there.

Defensive Partnerships: Through defense cooperation, such as joint exercises like Ekuverin and Ekatha, India fortifies its regional stability and power.

Humanitarian Role: By being the first responder in crises, India fortifies a positive and protective image in the region.

Significance for Maldives

Resource Provider: India supplies Maldives with essential items, including food staples and construction materials, stabilizing the island nation's resources.

Socioeconomic Support: Indian professionals, especially teachers and doctors, have a pivotal role in Maldivian society, contributing to education and health.

Security and Safety: India has proven to be a reliable ally in crises, such as coups and natural disasters, ensuring Maldives' national security.

Economic Development: India invests in key infrastructural projects like the greater Male connectivity, promoting Maldives' socio-economic growth and stability.

What might the future hold for India-Maldives relations?

New Leadership: Mohamed Muizzu, with a background in Western education, is the president designate.

Past Leadership's Influence: Former President Yameen, noted for pro-China policies, is under house arrest, but his policies' effects linger.

Political Dynamics: While elections bring promises, real-world governance could influence Muizzu away from drastic alterations in India-Maldives relations.

Historical Lessons: Past costly mistakes, like the \$270 million payout in the 2012 "GMR out" campaign, underscore the importance of stable relations with India.

28. Methodology of Global Hunger Index has been rightly criticised. But conversation must go on

Source: The post is based on the article "Methodology of Global Hunger Index has been rightly criticised. But conversation must go on" published in **Indian Express** on 14th October 2023.

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

News: The article discusses India's ranking and issues in the Global Hunger Index. It highlights government criticisms, the struggles with undernutrition, and challenges in implementing food security and nutrition policies, emphasizing the need for reliable data.

Why is India's GHI ranking problematic?

India's Rank: India is placed 111th out of 125 countries in the Global Hunger Index (GHI).

Government's Objection: The Indian government strongly disagrees with the ranking and is upset about it.

Methodology Issues: The government points out that three out of four indicators in the GHI focus on children's health, which may not reflect the whole population's status.

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Small Sample Size: The argument also includes criticism of the small sample size of 3,000 for determining the proportion of undernourished people, calling it non-representative.

Previous Rank: Notably, India has fallen four places from its rank in the previous year.

What are the challenges faced by India in addressing malnutrition?

Social Inequalities: Social disparities, particularly affecting marginalized communities, limit access to nutritional schemes and benefits.

Economic Inequalities: Economic barriers make it hard for poor people to access nutritious food and benefits from government schemes.

Gender Discrimination: Discrimination against women and girls often results in them having less access to necessary nutrition.

Incomplete Data: Lack of updated and complete data on household spending and consumption hampers the creation of effective policies.

Inadequate Diets: A high percentage of children (89% between 6-23 months) do not receive a minimum acceptable diet, indicating policy reach and effectiveness issues.

Widespread Anaemia: The persistence of anaemia across various demographic groups poses an additional health and nutrition challenge.

What should be done?

Address Criticisms: While the government criticizes the Global Hunger Index, acknowledging and addressing the persistent undernutrition issues is vital.

Focus on Micro-Nutrients: Scholars suggest moving beyond just calorie intake to also focus on vitamin and micro-nutrient deficiencies in diet policies.

Empower Women: Emphasizing women's empowerment is essential as it significantly impacts household nutrition and health decisions.

Update Data: Current data on per capita household spending is over 10 years old; updating this data will facilitate better policy-making.

Make Data Public: The results of the Consumer Expenditure Surveys (CES) 2022-23 need to be made public to enhance transparency and understanding of household consumption.

Enhanced Implementation: Improved and more inclusive implementation of policies like Poshan 2.0 is necessary to effectively combat malnutrition and hunger.

29. Balancing policy- India must pressure Israel to act responsibly in the face of terror

Source: The post is based on the article "Balancing policy- India must pressure Israel to act responsibly in the face of terror" published in **The Hindu** on 14th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- International relation- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.

News: The article discusses India's response to a violent attack by Hamas on Israeli citizens. India's Prime Minister expressed solidarity with Israel but also advised observing international humanitarian law. India maintains a careful stance, supporting both Israel and the Palestinian cause, while ensuring the safety of its citizens in the conflicted region.

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How did India respond to Hamas' attack on Israel?

Immediate Reaction to the Attack: Prime Minister Narendra Modi of India quickly expressed solidarity with Israel after Hamas' attack, both through tweets and a conversation with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Citizen Safety Actions: India, concerned for its 18,000 citizens in Israel due to the conflict and retaliatory strikes, chartered flights to bring them home safely.

Formal Statement's Stance: The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) issued a statement condemning Hamas' violence but also reminded Israel of its obligation to adhere to international humanitarian law and expressed its consistent position on the Palestine issue.

How has India interacted with Israel and Palestine in the past?

Establishing Diplomatic Ties: India formed full diplomatic relations with Israel in 1992, but has also continuously supported the Palestinian cause.

Historical Visits and Interactions: In 2017, Prime Minister Modi visited Israel, becoming the first Indian Prime Minister to do so, and in 2018, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu visited India. Additionally, Modi was the first Indian Prime Minister to make an official visit to Palestine.

Taking a Stand in International Decisions: In 2017, India voted against the U.S. and Israel's attempt to unilaterally declare Jerusalem as the Israeli capital, showcasing its balanced diplomatic stance.

What challenges does India face now?

Navigating Diplomatic Tensions: India has the difficult task of managing diplomatic relationships, showing solidarity with Israel after the Hamas attack while upholding its continuous support for the Palestinian cause.

Humanitarian and Legal Advocacy: The call from Israel for a mass evacuation of over a million residents from Gaza, coupled with its aggressive response to Hamas, positions India in a delicate situation of endorsing the importance of international humanitarian law amidst complex geopolitical dynamics.

Safeguarding Indian Citizens: Ensuring the safety and organized evacuation of 18,000 Indians in Israel amidst the conflict and the ongoing aggressive encounters between Israel and Hamas presents logistical and diplomatic hurdles.

General Studies Paper –3

General Studies - 3

1. Beyond the bond market's message

Source: The post is based on the article “Beyond the bond market's message” published in **Business Standard** on **9th October 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development

Relevance: Economic challenges for India arising from shifts in the US economy.

News: The article discusses ongoing developments in the US economy and their potential implications for India.

What are some of the changes happening in the US economy?

Bond Market: The US bond market has crashed since March 2020, with 10-year and 30-year Treasury bonds losing 46% and 53%, respectively. It resembles the worst stock-market losses in history.

Interest Rates: Initially, there were expectations that the US Federal Reserve would reduce interest rates due to moderated inflation.

However, now the Fed is not inclined to cut rates as long as the US economy remains strong and there might even be a rate hike.

Note: Bond prices and bond yields are inversely correlated, i.e., when bond prices crash, yields go up.

What impact do these economic changes in the US have on India?

When bond yields rise, equity prices fall. This makes equities become less attractive and their prices drop.

As a result, **foreign investors have been selling Indian equities in large amounts recently due to increasing US bond yields.** The surge in oil prices has further impacted equity markets.

However, unlike the past, where a weak US economy would negatively affect developing markets like India, the situation has changed now. **The Indian bond market has been stable due to favorable economic conditions and good fiscal management.**

More domestic savings are entering the Indian market through mutual funds and provident funds, countering the selling of bonds by foreign investors.

For example, in August and September, foreign investors sold a net of ~47,300 crore in Indian bonds, but domestic institutional investors bought a net of ~45,300 crore, almost balancing the foreign selling.

What are other concerns for India?

First, the global economy is slowing down, which is a major concern for India. China, Europe, and the US are facing economic challenges. India, which relies heavily on exports, may have its economy affected due to the reduced global demand for its goods. This could also weaken the rupee.

Second, rising oil prices are another major concern for India. **Russia and OPEC have cut production, which is driving up prices.** Oil prices rose sharply in July-September, and they could rise again due to the conflict between Israel and Palestine.

What can be the course of action?

India's fiscal condition and ability to fund 10 trillion rupees allocated for infrastructure spending in the 2023-24 Budget will determine the course of its economy and markets.

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However, **higher borrowing costs, rupee pressure, and lower tax collection could also affect these projects.** Hence, it's crucial to closely monitor these factors as they could impact India's economic growth.

2. Building an India for manufacturers

Source: This post has been created based on the article “Building an India for manufacturers” published in **The Indian Express** on **9th October 2023.**

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Indian Economy — Indian Economy and issues relating to growth, development and employment

News: This article discusses the changing scenario of India's services sector, its bright prospects and its utility in countering the issues of the manufacturing sector.

India's services sector is undergoing two major changes which could define the trajectory of the country's growth. One is **fast-evolving services exports** to the rest of the world. The second is the **rapid transformation of domestic services.**

Another exciting development is a sign of these **new services rising up the value chain and moving into manufacturing.**

What is the changing landscape of India's services exports?

There has been a rise in India's services exports due to various reasons:

- 1) The pandemic-induced “**Work From Home**” increased the demand for tech capability across firms and led to growth in the IT Services sector.
- 2) **Broadening of both the services provided and the service providers.** India is no longer restricted to just call centers or software solution provider. It has moved up the value chain to include services ranging from accounting, legal, HR, business development, design, and R&D.
- 3) Not just large IT firms, even **mid-sized IT firms** have been gaining market share and **consulting firms** are growing their services export.
- 4) **Global Capability Centers (GCCs)** of India: India now has the world's largest share in GCCs.

What are Global Capability Centers (GCCs)?

GCCs have traditionally provided tech and IT support to their parent MNC companies, but have gradually moved up the ladder to higher-value-added services like legal, audit, design and R&D.

Will the boom in the services exports last?

It is possible that the growth in India's IT services exports slows down over the next few year due to **slowing global growth.** However, once global growth bottoms out, India's services exports can begin to grow fast again.

There are several reasons for this:

One, there is a **change in attitude** about getting **work done from “home”.**

Two, India has the **skilled workforce** for a variety of services, ranging from engineering to design. This has become possible due to internet penetration, young and digitally savvy demographics, and improvements in education.

Three, India offers **cost-competitiveness.**

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Finally, India is at a **tipping point** from which growth in services exports will tend to be even stronger. This is demonstrated by examples of economies whose share in global services exports is much higher than India's, like **USA, UK, Germany, and Ireland**.

Reasons behind this include **reaching scale** which leads to both pull and push factors that lead to even higher growth. Also, many **multinationals are increasing their footprint** in India.

Additionally, companies have begun **increasing the range of services**. And some, especially in sectors such as medical equipment, electronics, and precision manufacturing, are even moving into manufacturing.

What is the changing landscape of India's domestic services?

India has an impressive **"Digital Public Infrastructure"**.

Tech start-ups are utilizing it using a variety of business models. Over time these startups could move from services into manufacturing and agriculture.

How can service sector companies solve the issues of the manufacturing sector?

The reason behind India's jobs problem is a **slow-moving low- and medium-tech manufacturing sector**.

Digital infrastructure can be used to solve problems that small manufacturers face.

Start-ups could help small firms gain **access to formal credit**, cheaper **raw materials**, bigger final **markets**, better **warehousing and logistics**, and enhanced **quality checks**. In this way, they are incentivized to expand.

There is also evidence of the "new" domestic services companies **moving into manufacturing**. For e.g., those in the transport, procurement, and e-commerce sector.

3. What caused the flood in Sikkim?

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"What caused the flood in Sikkim?"** published in **The Hindu** on **9th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: **GS Paper 3 Environment** — Environmental pollution and degradation; **Disaster and disaster management**.

News: This article discusses the causes and consequences of the recent Sikkim Glacier Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) and provides suggestions to mitigate such disasters in the fragile ecology of the Himalayas.

The recent flood in Sikkim as a result of a glacier-lake outburst left more than 25 people dead and many more are still missing.

The voluminous outflow destroyed the **Chunghang dam**, which is critical to the **Teesta 3 hydropower project**, and rendered several hydropower projects along the river dysfunctional.

What is a Glacier Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF)?

GLOFs are instances of large lakes formed from the melting of glaciers, suddenly breaking free of their moraines — natural dams that are formed from rock, sediment and other debris.

There are an estimated **7,500 glaciers in the Himalayas** and GLOFs have been associated with major disasters through the years. Previous instances of GLOFs include the 1926 Jammu and Kashmir deluge, the 1981 Kinnaur valley floods in Himachal Pradesh and the 2013 Kedarnath outburst in Uttarakhand.

Among the Himalayan States in India, **Sikkim has the highest number of glaciers**. Climatologists have warned that they could be responsible for GLOFs.

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What triggered the Sikkim GLOF event?

There is uncertainty regarding the immediate causes behind the GLOF event.

According to the **National Disaster Management Agency**, the primary reason for the sudden surge appears to be a likely combination of **excess rainfall and a GLOF event**.

A huge ice-capped feature is near the lake's north. There is speculation that heavy rainfall might have tipped the moraine to collapse and triggered the flood.

There is also a suggestion that a **series of earthquakes in Nepal** on October 3 might have played a role.

However, the **inaccessibility of the terrain and the limitations of satellite imagery** make it difficult to ascertain the causes with surety.

What was the resulting damage?

The major consequence of the flooding was the destruction of the **Chungthang dam**.

All bridges downstream to the Teesta-V hydropower station were submerged or washed out, disrupting communication. All connecting roads to the project sites as well as parts of the residential colony have been severely damaged.

Heavy siltation due to the floodwaters kept hydropower projects in downstream West Bengal shut.

The flood also destroyed bridges, water pipelines, sewage lines and houses.

Are such events likely in the future?

Several studies have warned of both the **frequency and severity** of GLOF events in the Himalayas increasing exponentially in the future.

This is more so because the **Himalayan ecosystem is the most fragile in the world** and any disruption in managing these resources will have a problematic outcome.

The fragility of the Himalayan ecosystem is also being disturbed through **hydropower and other dams**.

Rising temperatures are leading to a **wetter future** and **contributing to climate change-led extreme events**. GLOF is an outcome of warming of the region.

What should be done?

Greater care in planning and executing dam and other infrastructure projects is required due to the risk of GLOF-like events.

GLOF events can be anticipated as we can monitor changes in the size of lakes. Hence, **“Early Warning Systems” (EWS)** are implementable.

This would require a **coordinated approach** such as multiple agencies promptly sharing satellite images (that are trained towards the Himalayas) and a **network of sensors** to provide adequate warning.

4. Revisiting the rail gauge debate

Source: This post has been created based on the article **“Revisiting the rail gauge debate”** published in **The Hindu** on **9th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Indian Economy — Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways, etc.

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News: This article discusses the advantages and disadvantages of the Broad-Gauge railway network vis-à-vis the Standard Gauge railway network.

What is the current status of railway gauge in India?

The predominant railway network in India is **Broad Gauge (BG)** with a **width of 1.676 metres**.

However, the **rapid rail transport system (RRTS) in Delhi**, the high-speed rail line between Mumbai and Ahmedabad, and various **metro rail systems** are being made on **Standard Gauge (SG) of 1.435 m width**.

India followed a **uni-gauge policy since the 1990s** and almost all the routes were converted to BG.

However, by the end of the 20th century, a Cabinet resolution left the **decision on the choice of gauge to individual State governments**.

The Standard Gauge was also endorsed by **E. Sreedharan**, then Managing Director (MD) of the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation, and thereafter began to be used more often in the country.

What are the arguments in Favour of Standard Gauge (SG) and their criticism?

1) The most prominent factor in favor of SG is its **universality**, i.e., most metro rail networks are based on SG.

However, metro rail systems in a number of cities and countries run on other gauges too.

2) It is also argued that the SG **requires less space**.

However, since most metro rail systems today are built on elevated structures, the land required for pillars on roads for both SG and BG is the same.

3) Another argument in favour of SG is the **availability of the latest technology for coach design** as it is the prevalent system in developed countries.

However, this argument doesn't hold now as India has its own **indigenous** semi-high-speed train designs (such as the **Vande Bharat** series).

4) Another argument is the **cost of the project** since SG is assumed to be a cheaper system.

However, as per an assessment, the BG system will be cheaper by around 10% per unit capacity compared to SG.

What are the arguments Against Broad Gauge (BG) and their criticism?

One objection to BG is the **higher turning radius** with a consequent **reduction in speed and throughput (i.e. the number of trains that can pass through in unit time)**.

However, the **additional time taken on BG would be negligible** (between 1.5%-3%) since speed restrictions are confined to curves, which are a small part of the total route.

Similarly, **throughput** would be **similar for both**. This is because throughput depends on the minimum time gap permitted between two successive trains. This is based on braking distance and acceleration which **depend on the train design and not the gauge**.

What is the main argument in Favour of the BG?

The most important argument concerns the **integration of new rail networks with the existing ones which carry 8 billion passengers annually**.

Integrating the two networks will help passengers and cargo **move seamlessly**. Such a flexible system would also be helpful in situations of emergency.

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What should be done?

Taking into account the above factors, the government should re-examine the issue with a view to **building all future rail systems in BG**. This will prevent the creation of incompatible islands of the new rail networks amidst the existing ones.

5. With food inflation limited to dal roti, why govt policy may need changes

Source: The post is based on the article “**With food inflation limited to dal roti, why govt policy may need changes**” published in “Indian express” on 9th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy- inflation

News: The article discusses rising food prices in India, particularly in cereals and pulses, and how this inflation is a concern for the Reserve Bank of India and the government, especially with upcoming elections. It also explores the issues in the vegetable oil and milk sectors, suggesting a balanced approach to manage inflation and support both consumers and producers might be needed.

Why is the Reserve Bank of India worried?

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is worried due to rising food prices.

Overall retail inflation is at 6.8%, exceeding RBI’s target of 4% and the upper tolerance of 6%.

Notably, prices of cereals and pulses, staple foods in India, have surged to 11.9% and 13% respectively in August.

These inflation issues come at a sensitive time with national elections scheduled in six months.

What’s the issue with inflation in India?

Rising Food Prices: Food prices in India have surged, showing a 9.9% increase year-on-year in August. Key staples like cereals have spiked by 11.9% and pulses by 13% during the same period.

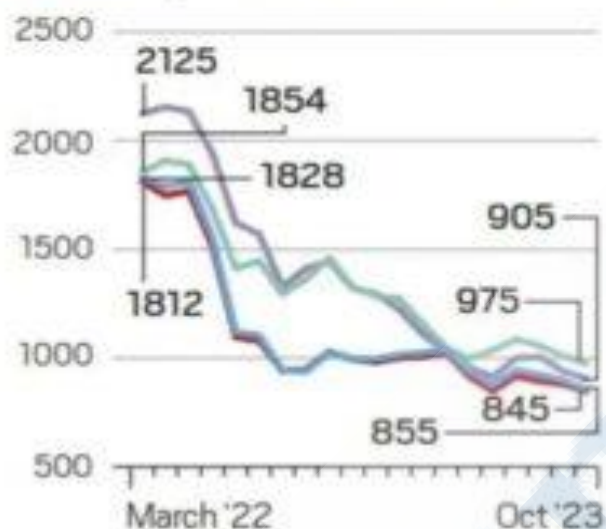
Vegetable Price Fluctuations: Inflation was very high for vegetables, with tomatoes showing a drastic inflation rate of 202.1% in July. However, tomato prices have eased, now being Rs 20 per kg, down from Rs 130 two months ago.

General Retail Inflation: Overall retail inflation is notably higher than the upper tolerance of 6%. This rise in inflation is particularly concerning as national elections are approaching in six months.

VEGETABLE OIL PRICES CRASH

Average global vegetable oil prices (\$/tonne)

■ Crude palm oil ■ RBD palmolein
■ Crude soyabean oil ■ Crude sunflower oil



Source: Solvent Extractors' Association of India

What should be done?

Balancing Consumer and Producer Interests: The government needs to ensure food prices do not spiral, especially with the national elections just six months away.

There's a need to balance between maintaining lower prices for consumers and ensuring producers are not adversely affected.

Addressing Vegetable Oils Issue: With soyabean trading below the government's minimum support price, despite a good crop, there's pressure to raise the import duty on vegetable oils.

Navigating Milk Sector Challenges: After prices soared in the milk industry during a shortage, there is now a surplus due to increased production. Ensuring dairy farmers are not adversely impacted by the drop in prices for products like ghee will be crucial.

6. Our inflation fight calls for a fiscal pullback too

Source: The post is based on the article "Our inflation fight calls for a fiscal pullback too" published in "Live mint" on 9th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy- inflation

News: The article discusses the Reserve Bank of India's strategies under Governor Shaktikanta Das to control inflation, keeping it at 4%, and its impact on the market, amid challenges like volatile global crude oil prices and geopolitical instability.

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What is the RBI's current stance on inflation?

Clear Target: RBI, under Governor Das, is aiming to achieve a 4% inflation rate, making it a clear, defined goal.

Recent Inflation Data: The retail inflation was slightly troublesome at 6.8% in August, and RBI is focused on bringing it down.

Unchanged Repo Rate: The repo rate is kept steady at 6.5% to maintain a consistent policy.

Selling Government Bonds: RBI plans to sell government bonds in the open market as a strategy to manage monetary conditions and indirectly control inflation.

What challenges does the RBI face in controlling inflation?

Volatile Oil Prices: The conflict in West Asia is causing global oil prices to fluctuate, which can impact India's inflation.

Geopolitical Instability: Events like the unrest in West Asia create uncertainty and can affect various economic factors, complicating inflation management.

Fiscal Policy Decisions: The government's spending and fiscal policies, especially with the goal to reduce its budget deficit to 4.5% of GDP by 2025-26, will influence inflation and RBI's strategies.

Upcoming Elections: With general elections scheduled in 2024, there could be shifts in governmental spending, which could disrupt RBI's efforts in controlling inflation.

Global Economic Conditions: U.S. short-term bonds now yield 5%, and such global economic variables might influence the Indian financial market, presenting additional hurdles for RBI's inflation management.

7. Trading for a greener tomorrow- The way forward to meet the nationally determined contributions is a well-regulated domestic emission trading mechanism

Source: The post is based on the article "Trading for a greener tomorrow- The way forward to meet the nationally determined contributions is a well-regulated domestic emission trading mechanism" published in "Business standard" on 10th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment- climate change

News: The article discusses India's new Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS). This scheme lets companies earn credits for reducing greenhouse gas emissions beyond set targets, which they can sell to other businesses that fail to meet targets. It aims to encourage a market-driven approach to reducing the country's overall emissions, aligning with international environmental commitments.

What is the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)?

Introduction: India introduced the CCTS under the Energy Conservation Act, 2001, to manage greenhouse gas emissions.

Functioning:

Companies exceeding their emission reduction targets earn credits.

Each credit represents a reduction of one tonne of carbon dioxide equivalent (CO₂e).

Companies that don't meet targets can buy these credits from others.

Goal:

To develop a transparent domestic carbon credit market.

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Align with India's aim to fulfill its NDCs by 2030 and be net-zero by 2070.

Administration:

Oversight by Ministry of Power (MoP) and Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change (MoEF&CC).

Managed by agencies like the Bureau of Energy Efficiency (Bee) and the Central Electricity Regulatory Commission (Cerc).

Relevance: The CCTS encourages a market-driven approach, helping India achieve its environmental commitments.

How is the CCTS different from past international agreements?

Kyoto Protocol:

Only developed countries (Annex-1) had strict emission reduction targets from 2008 to 2020.

Developing countries participated but without specific targets.

Paris Agreement (from 2020):

All countries, both developed and developing, declare their intended NDCs every five years.

No legally binding targets, but a "naming and shaming" principle encourages adherence.

NDC commitments can be revised but only upwards.

Emission Trading After Kyoto Protocol:

Emission trading picked up in the EU and some developed areas but not much in the developing world.

Some projects in developing countries, including India, participated in the voluntary global carbon credit market.

CCTS in India:

Launched in June, operating under the Energy Conservation Act, 2001.

Aims to create a regulated, domestic carbon credit trading market.

Entities reducing emissions beyond targets earn carbon credits, which they can sell.

Intends to align with India's NDCs for 2030 and net-zero ambition by 2070.

What challenges and details need addressing in the CCTS?

Identifying Sectors and Entities: It's unclear which sectors and entities are obligated under the CCTS.

Defining Target Methodology: More information is needed on how the overall national-level NDC greenhouse gas emission targets will be disaggregated at sectoral and entity levels.

Ensuring Effective Monitoring: The mechanism for monitoring, reporting, and verifying greenhouse gas emissions is not elaborated upon.

Determining Certificate Criteria: Criteria for issuing carbon credit certificates and their validity period remain unspecified.

Addressing Potential Market Fragmentation: Additional targets, such as the use of non-fossil-based energy, might fragment the carbon market, a situation considered undesirable.

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Maintaining Measurement Consistency: It is imperative to use a uniform measurement unit, specifically in terms of tonnes of CO₂e, to prevent discrepancies.

How could the CCTS be improved moving forward?

Increase Participant Categories: Allow more entities like financial institutions and traders to provide liquidity and aid in better price discovery.

Introduce Futures Trading: Permit futures trading in carbon credits on regulated commodity derivatives trading exchanges.

Expand Scope Gradually: The scheme could eventually cover more GHG emissions sources like agriculture and waste management.

Limit Foreign Participation Initially: Restrict foreign entities' participation and carbon credits export until India is on track with its NDC commitments.

Avoid Participation in Global Carbon Credit Market: Projects in India should initially not participate in the voluntary global carbon credit market to prioritize local needs.

8. Tragedy in Sikkim- The catastrophe underlines big dam weaknesses

Source: The post is based on the article “**Tragedy in Sikkim- The catastrophe underlines big dam weaknesses**” published in “Business standard” on 10th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Ecology and environment & disaster management

News: The article discusses the dangers and issues associated with big dams in India, particularly in the Himalayas. It connects recent flooding tragedies to factors such as climate change, poor dam management, and inadequate disaster communication. The article highlights the urgency of reevaluating dam policies and practices in light of the growing and unpredictable environmental threats.

What are the problems with big dams in the Himalayas?

Sikkim Disaster: A glacial lake in Sikkim burst, causing damage to the Teesta-III hydropower project and resulting in over 82 deaths. This tragedy showcased the dangers of dams when hit by unexpected natural events.

Disruption of Ecosystem: Hydropower projects in the Himalayas, like those on the Teesta, disturb the region's delicate ecosystem. This can be worsened by poor engineering practices and the dumping of construction waste into river beds, which blocks natural drainage channels.

Climate Change Threat: The Himalayas are experiencing unpredictable and intense rainfall due to changing climate patterns. This increases risks such as glacial lake outburst floods (Glofs).

Concerns Raised: Local activists have long warned about the environmental and safety issues of the Teesta's extensive damming. The recent catastrophe validates their concerns, emphasizing the need for caution and better dam management.

What should be done?

Review Policies: There is an urgent need to revise big dam management policies in light of the repeated tragedies and the evident impacts of climate change, ensuring that safety and environmental conservation are prioritized.

Improve Coordination: Better communication and coordination between dam management systems and meteorological departments are crucial. The use of available satellite imagery and data to predict and manage potential glacial lake outburst floods (Glofs) and heavy rainfalls can mitigate damage and save lives.

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Prioritize Safe Engineering: Ensuring that all hydropower projects, including the 47 along the Teesta, adhere to safe engineering norms and sustainable practices, can protect the fragile Himalayan ecosystem and prevent further disasters.

Effective Communication: Timely and effective communication of potential threats downstream to allow for evacuation and preparation can significantly reduce the impact on communities and save lives in future incidents.

9. Jingoism cannot protect Jammu and Kashmir

Source: This post has been created based on the article “Jingoism cannot protect Jammu and Kashmir” published in **The Indian Express** on **10th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Internal Security — Security challenges and their management in border areas.

News: This article discusses the current internal security challenges in Jammu & Kashmir in light of the recent Anantnag encounter which led to the death of India’s security personnel. It also proposes greater vigilance, stronger security infrastructure, and not jingoism to counter this threat from across the border.

What are the different kinds of intelligence used for anti-terrorist operations?

To deal with the challenges of conducting anti-terrorist operations in deep forest mountainous terrains, 2 kinds of intelligence inputs guide counter-terrorist operations on the ground – **human intelligence** and **technical intelligence (humint and techint)**. Techint is further subdivided into **communication (comint)** and **image intelligence (imint)**.

While humint inputs need to be analysed very cautiously before being acted upon, techint inputs are more reliable and precise.

Army units in the Kashmir Valley have limited access to reliable humint since they come from different regions and lack knowledge of the local language, ethos and terrain.

The local police — the civil thanas and state police special branch (CID) — can utilize humint better.

At the same time, it’s not easy to raise reliable human intelligence assets especially in Kashmir. There is a risk of the sources playing a double role to serve their masters from across borders.

What is the role of external state actors in terrorism in J&K?

A vital aspect of terrorist violence in J&K is it being driven, guided and financed from across the borders by the **Pakistan Army and ISI**.

They are known to motivate, train and infiltrate suicide squads with the help of **espionage networks** hiding in our country. They also pay these suicide squads handsomely.

However, Pakistan today is under tremendous pressure because of the condition of its economy.

What should be done?

- 1) **Sports should be kept away** from our animosity against the Pakistani army and government. Jingoistic calls to stop playing against the Pakistani cricket team should be avoided.
- 2) **Remotely guided rockets launching unmanned air vehicles (UAVs)** is a good option if LeT strikes inside our territory, instead of launching air and naval attacks on Pakistan.
- 3) It would be neither prudent nor realistic to look to foreign powers (such as USA, China) to resolve our internal security challenges.

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- 4) It would also be naïve to believe that Pakistan will give up militancy in J&K and restore peace if we talk with them. **We must strengthen our security infrastructure.**
- 5) **Pak ISI sleeper cells** spread all over our country must be detected and neutralised.
- 6) Sections of Muslim youth should be **deradicalised** by releasing them from the stranglehold of mullahs in madrasas and mosques and providing them access to schooling. For e.g. in Kashmir, the **Peer Muridi (Sufi) form of Islam** has been overshadowed by the Wahabi sect.
- 7) India should also try its best to win the **hearts and trust of the Kashmiri Muslims** who will benefit from **increased tourism**. They should be made to realize that violence is costing them dearly.
- 8) **Career options outside J&K** should be offered to Kashmiri youth willing to leave their homes to earn livelihoods.
- 9) In counter-terrorist operations, it is wiser to divide the force and use smaller contingents for the commander to keep watch from a safe distance.

10. Lessons from 2016 demonetisation

Source: The post is based on the article “**Lessons from 2016 demonetisation**” published in **Business Standard** on **11th October 2023**.

Syllabus: **GS 3 – Indian Economy – Money & Banking**

Relevance: reasons behind the success of the withdrawal of 2,000-rupee currency notes.

News: The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced to withdraw all 2,000-rupee currency notes in May 2023, reminding people of the 2016 demonetization. Last week, the withdrawal deadline passed, and the operation was much smoother than the 2016 one.

What is the current situation regarding the deposit of 2,000-rupee notes?

Over 96% of the 2,000 denomination notes have been either exchanged or deposited, with over 87% being deposited and not exchanged.

There were also no long queues or significant disruptions like 2016 demonetization.

What factors contributed to the successful withdrawal of all 2,000 denomination currency notes?

Legal Tender Status: In 2016, the 500 and 1,000 denomination notes were declared no longer legal tender overnight. However, in 2023, the 2,000 denomination notes remained legal tender even after the withdrawal deadline ended. This caused less panic among the people.

Size of Withdrawal: **The 2016 demonetization was much larger in scale than the 2023 one.** In 2016, over 86% of the currency with the public was withdrawn, while in 2023, only less than 11% had to be exchanged or deposited.

Communication: Clear and transparent communication was key to the success of the 2023 currency withdrawal. The RBI and commercial banks worked together effectively to ensure the smooth implementation of the policy.

According to the RBI, the decision to withdraw 2000-rupee notes was part of the “**Clean Note Policy,**” as they had reached the end of their expected lifespan.

In contrast, the 2016 demonetization suffered from poor communication, which led to confusion and worry.

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Freedom to use the old notes: In 2016, there were restrictions on using the old notes, which was not the case in 2023 with the 2,000 denomination notes.

Time Period: The 140-day exchange window in 2023 helped to reduce panic, unlike the 2016 demonetization, when people only had 52 days to exchange their 500 and 1,000-rupee notes.

Additionally, in 2023, banks had to deal with just 1.78 billion notes over 140 days, a much smaller task than managing 21 billion notes in 52 days during the 2016 demonetization.

Unified Payments Interface (UPI): The success of the 2023 currency withdrawal can also be attributed to the rapid expansion of the digital payment network, UPI, in recent years.

This expansion accelerated the process of withdrawing 2,000 denomination currency notes much smoother and reduced potential disruptions in the withdrawal.

Must Read: [Withdrawal of currencies: need and challenges – Explained](#)

What is the way ahead?

The RBI applied lessons learned from the 2016 demonetization in the 2023 withdrawal of 2,000 notes, contributing to its successful execution.

11. The EU's CBAM has lent urgency to fair carbon prices

Source: The post is based on the article “**The EU's CBAM has lent urgency to fair carbon prices**” published in “Live mint” on 12th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Ecology and environment- Pollution (carbon trading)

News: The article discusses the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM), which affects imports by considering their carbon emissions and pricing. This mechanism may disadvantage developing countries like India, due to differing carbon pricing and emissions standards, potentially conflicting with the Paris Agreement's principles.

What is the EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM)?

Introduction Date: The CBAM was introduced by the European Union on October 1, 2023.

Covered Goods: It focuses on specific goods like iron, steel, aluminium, cement, fertilizer, and electricity.

Reporting Requirements: Importers must report:

Direct and indirect carbon emissions of these goods.

Production methods.

Carbon price paid in the country of origin.

Penalties: If emissions aren't reported, penalties range from €10-50 for each tonne of unreported embedded emissions.

BAM Certificates: Starting January 1, 2026, importers will need to buy BAM certificates. These account for the price differences in emissions between the EU and the exporting country.

Purpose: The CBAM aims to balance the carbon emissions pricing between the EU and imported goods, potentially impacting the competitiveness of developing countries' exports.

What are the impacts of CBAM on developing countries?

Competitiveness Concerns: The World Bank and UNCTAD highlight potential reductions in the competitiveness of exports from developing countries to the EU, especially for India.

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Reporting and Financial Strain: These countries need to report detailed carbon emissions data and face financial penalties for non-compliance, which may strain resources.

Emission Price Differences: CBAM accounts for the differences in emissions prices between the EU and exporting countries. **For example**, even if Indian aluminum or steel products have similar emissions to those produced in the EU, exporters must pay the price differential, which can disadvantage them.

Inconsistent with Paris Agreement: Developing countries argue that CBAM challenges the principles of the Paris Agreement by demanding equivalent carbon emissions pricing, despite agreed differential emission reduction obligations, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).

Climate Transition Costs: The mechanism might inadvertently cause exporters from developing countries to financially contribute to the EU's climate transition, opposing the principles of common but differentiated responsibilities in global climate agreements.

What are the concerns regarding carbon emission pricing?

Demand for Equivalence: The EU's CBAM seeks equivalent pricing of emissions, which raises concerns due to varying carbon pricing among different countries.

Contradiction with Paris Agreement: Countries have agreed to diverse emission reduction obligations, known as Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, whereas CBAM enforces a common pricing structure, possibly violating this principle.

No Global Standard: There are over 70 carbon pricing initiatives globally, but no universally agreed principles for measuring and accounting for the price of emissions.

Unfulfilled Commitments: Developed countries promised \$100 billion annually in climate finance for developing nations by 2020 under the Paris Agreement, a commitment that remains unfulfilled.

Differential Obligations Ignored: CBAM potentially disregards the principle that countries with historically high emissions have higher obligations than developing countries, as established in the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change.

What are the existing emission charges and regulations?

India's Emission Charges and Regulations:

Renewable Purchase Obligations (RPO): India has regulatory mechanisms like RPO under the Electricity Act, which mandates certain entities to source a portion of their electricity from renewable sources.

Specific Energy Consumption (SEC): Under the Energy Conservation Act, SEC norms help regulate the energy use in industries.

Coal Cess: India imposes a coal cess of ₹400 per tonne on domestic and imported coal as an emission charge.

Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS): The government is planning a CCTS, which should enhance the adoption of market-based pricing for emissions in India.

At a Global Level:

Various Carbon Pricing Initiatives: Globally, there are over 70 carbon pricing initiatives, as per the World Bank, reflecting a wide array of approaches to managing and pricing emissions.

WTO's Sliding Scale Proposal: WTO Director General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala proposed a scheme that categorizes countries into four, based on their development status and historical emissions, influencing the carbon price they would pay.

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Paris Agreement Commitments: Under the Paris Agreement, countries have submitted Nationally Determined Contributions, reflecting their self-set commitments and approaches towards reducing emissions, which implicitly involves varied pricing and managing mechanisms for carbon emissions.

12. Freebies: A zero-sumgame

Source: The post is based on the article “Freebies: A zero-sumgame” published in “Business standard” on 12th October 2023.

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

News: The article discusses the negative impacts of government subsidies and policies on farmers in India, especially in Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh. It highlights issues like harmful stubble burning practices, pollution, and public health crises, linking them to political unwillingness to revise old, harmful subsidy policies.

What are the negative impacts of government subsidies and policies on farmers in India?

Stubble Burning Issues:

Farmers now burn stubble to prepare fields due to limited time between harvests.

This practice leads to severe pollution and respiratory health problems for local and distant populations.

Water Table Depletion:

Subsidies on water and electricity led farmers to excessively grow water-intensive paddy crops.

This has drastically reduced water tables in areas like Punjab, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh.

Economic Strain on States:

In Punjab, the addition of more freebies, like electricity, has resulted in a significant state debt, which is 50% of the state's domestic product.

Subsidy Dependence:

Many subsidies, originally meant to be temporary, have become perceived rights by farmers, making them hard to remove or adjust.

This reliance affects the availability and quality of other crucial services, such as education and healthcare.

Misaligned Incentives:

Subsidies encourage practices not always beneficial in the long term, like growing crops unsuitable for the region due to short-term financial gains.

What should be done?

Alter Crop Choices: Discourage water-intensive paddy cultivation in regions like Punjab by revising subsidies.

Support Sustainable Alternatives: Consider alternatives like distributing solar cookers instead of continuing cooking gas subsidies to reduce ongoing costs and utilize renewable energy.

Revisit Subsidy Structures: Restructure subsidies so they don't become permanent and strain state finances, ensuring they are sustainable and targeted to genuine needs.

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Address Timely Harvesting: Promote and financially support the development and use of short-duration hybrid crops, like those from the Pusa Institute, to allow timely sowing and harvesting without rushing processes.

Facilitate Stubble Management: Enhance state incentives for using farm equipment that can clear fields without resorting to stubble burning, protecting both the environment and public health.

13. The lucky cohort- Unlike those born in the 1940s and 50s

Source: The post is based on the article “**The lucky cohort- Unlike those born in the 1940s and 50s**, the current generation can no longer take global peace and lifelong economic progress for granted” published in “**Business standard**” on 12th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy- growth and development

News: The article discusses significant global progress and challenges experienced since 1940, highlighting remarkable advancements and prosperity from 1940-2000. It also addresses negative impacts such as environmental damage, economic shifts, and social issues in more recent decades. The article suggests that the 1940-50 birth cohort may be the luckiest ever, experiencing numerous benefits and facing fewer global-scale challenges.

Why are the 1940-50 cohorts considered lucky?

The 1940-50 cohorts are considered lucky for several reasons:

Extended Peace: They experienced nearly 78 years of relative global peace after World War II.

Decolonization Benefits: From 1946 to 1966, decolonization brought self-governance to many regions, like Asia and Africa, spreading its advantages globally.

Prosperity Surge: There was a notable increase in world prosperity due to trade and technological advances after 1950.

Health and Longevity: Life expectancy soared worldwide, rising from 45 years in 1950 to 73 years in 2022, marking a significant improvement in global health and longevity.

Economic Improvements: The cohort witnessed major economic improvements, with global extreme poverty dropping significantly, from 38% in 1990 to below 10% in 2019.

Education Accessibility: Access to education and its subsequent benefits became more widespread, contributing to overall well-being.

What are the negative impacts of global prosperity and well-being?

Negative impacts of global prosperity and well-being include:

Environmental Damage: Over 200 years of fossil fuel burning has led to global warming and various climate change issues.

Resource Depletion: The planet's natural resources have been significantly depleted due to the surge in global prosperity.

Extreme Weather: The frequency of extreme weather events, like floods and forest fires, has dramatically increased in recent years, damaging lives and livelihoods.

Economic Strains: Despite overall growth, economic problems like the global financial crisis of 2008-10 have arisen, slowing world economic progress.

Employment Challenges: Technological advancements, while beneficial, have also brought employment challenges, such as labor-saving technologies making certain jobs redundant.

14. **Good, Do Better – For India, to be the fastest growing major economy isn't enough**

Source: The post is based on the article “**Good, Do Better – For India, to be the fastest growing major economy isn't enough. Real change needs 8% growth**” published in **The Times of India** on **12th October 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development

Relevance: measures needed for India to increase its growth rate.

News: According to the latest forecast by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), India is the fastest growing major economy in the world.

What are the key takeaways from the IMF's forecast?

As per the IMF, India is expected to grow at 6.3% in 2023-24, followed by China at 5%. India's growth rate is expected to remain the same next year, while China's growth rate is expected to slow down to 4.2%.

The IMF also said that global growth has outperformed expectations of March-April 2022, due to the resilience of the Indian economy.

However, while India has shown remarkable economic growth, it's important to note that there is a substantial gap with China, as China's GDP is approximately five times greater.

Hence, to surpass China in contributing to global GDP, **India would need to sustain an 8% growth rate for several years.**

What are the challenges present with India in increasing its GDP growth rate?

The Indian economy needs to address structural challenges to push up the trend in growth from about 6.5% to 8%.

The government's jobs data shows that a part of the labor force has gone back to agriculture, the sector with the lowest productivity.

In 2022-23, agriculture's share of the workforce was 45.8%, over three percentage more than 2018-19, while only 11.4% of the workforce was in manufacturing.

This shift limits the potential for growth in private consumption, a critical part of the economy.

What can be the way ahead?

India needs to boost investment in traditional sectors like mining and utilities, which have a wider economic impact.

This is important because the focus on tech and manufacturing has led to construction surpassing manufacturing in job creation, which is concerning.

Hence, to close the economic gap with China and fulfill India's geopolitical ambitions, **a structural transformation is needed** to have a greater impact on global growth.

15. **Spring cleaning – Fixing grey areas is good, but the GST regime needs a broader reform plan**

Source: The post is based on the article “**Spring cleaning – Fixing grey areas is good, but the GST regime needs a broader reform plan**” published in **The Hindu** on **12th October 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Fiscal Policy

Relevance: About the recent decision of the GST Council and associated challenges.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October [Second Week] 2023

News: In a recent meeting, the GST Council clarified the tax status of various goods and services.

What decision were taken by the GST Council?

The Council reduced the GST on molasses from 28% to 5% to lower cattle feed costs and improve cash flows for sugar mills.

The Council also decided not to tax extra neutral alcohol (ENA) used for alcoholic liquor.

Moreover, the GST Council has met more often this year and cleared up a number of tax issues, including harmonizing age requirements for the president and members of the GST Appellate Tribunals.

What are the concerns present with the GST Council?

The major concern for consumers and producers is the Council's plan to discuss the future of the GST Compensation Cess and its replacement with a surcharge.

This cess was originally introduced to compensate states for revenue losses during the first five years of GST.

However, it was extended on items like aerated drinks, tobacco products, and automobiles until March 2026 **as a response to the revenue loss** caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Must Read: [Recommendations of 52nd GST Council Meeting](#)

What steps can the GST Council take to address the concern?

Although it is good to discourage consumption of certain harmful goods by levying a cess, introducing a new cess should be part of a larger plan to simplify the complex GST system.

This simplification plan was started two years ago, but it has not made progress, even though the government has been collecting a lot of tax revenue from the GST.

Hence, **the Council should think about simplifying the complex multiple-rate structure of the GST and bringing excluded items like** electricity, petroleum, and alcohol under the GST.

16. India needs to go nuclear

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"India needs to go nuclear"** published in **The Indian Express** on **12th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Indian Economy — Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways, etc.

News: This article discusses the need for an expansion of nuclear energy in emerging economies, especially India and proposes a strategy for the same. It highlights the importance of nuclear energy in tackling the issues of rising energy demand and tackling climate change.

Economic growth leads to a greater demand for energy. Since India's economy is growing rapidly, there will be a significant growth in our energy consumption which is already the 3rd-highest globally.

What is the need for clean nuclear energy?

1) Rising Energy Demand: The total clean energy requirement to support a developed India would work out to around **more than 4 times our present energy consumption**.

2) Impact on Climate: Most of this energy consumption will be based on **fossil energy**, which is a major contributor to global warming. Considering this, there is now a global consensus to reach net-zero before a 2045-2070 time frame.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October [Second Week] 2023

Failure to tackle this dual challenge would mean either **compromising on development** or **failing to realise the net-zero target** or both.

One of the most important solutions is a **rapid scale-up of nuclear energy**. It is the **cleanest and safest of energies**, with **negligible waste** due to a closed nuclear fuel cycle.

Based on a study by **Vivekananda International Foundation** and **IIT-Bombay**, a developed India would need **2000 GW nuclear energy** to reach net-zero.

However, there is a major implementation challenge, as well as lack of determination and requisite policy/management framework.

What strategy should be followed to rapidly scale up nuclear energy?

Firstly, more projects of the **indigenous Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor (PHWR)** should be implemented leveraging multiple PSUs in addition to NPCIL.

Secondly, indigenous **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)** should be built at sites that would be vacated by retiring coal plants.

Thirdly, smaller PHWR units can be offered as partially-owned captive units for energy-intensive industries such as metals, chemicals, and fertilizers.

Fourthly, reactors for direct hydrogen production without electrolysis should be developed for cheaper green hydrogen.

Fifthly, 2nd and 3rd stage nuclear-power programme should be sped up to **utilize India's Thorium**.

Finally, emerging-economy countries should see rapid deployment of new nuclear-energy capacity to credibly address climate-change.

What should be done?

India's PHWRs are globally competitive both in terms of **performance and capital cost**.

Focus on Thorium: Thorium fuel in PHWR can make these reactors even more attractive in terms of economics, safety, waste management and proliferation resistance.

International Cooperation: India should pilot **international co-operation** for global efforts to address the challenges.

Policy Support: It should be guided by **bold policy support** that provides a **level-playing field** for nuclear energy on par with renewable energy.

Emerging-economy countries, where one expects maximum net growth in energy consumption, should see rapid deployment of new nuclear-energy capacity to address climate-change.

17. The economic mosaic

Source: The post is based on the article "**The economic mosaic**" published in **Business Standard** on **14th October 2023**.

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

Relevance: Findings of the RBI survey on key economic sector

News: The RBI has recently conducted a survey of consumer and business opinions, offering insights beyond just growth and inflation figures.

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What are the key findings of the survey?

Manufacturing Sector: The manufacturing sector lags the rest of the economy, and there's no evidence of it growing faster. Capacity utilization in manufacturing is stuck in the low 70s, indicating a lack of investment in new manufacturing capacity that could boost economic growth.

Further, new orders for manufacturers have dropped significantly, with growth falling from 40% to almost zero in the past four quarters. However, despite this, the business expectations index is at its highest level since 2015-16.

Inflation: Consumer surveys show that people are still not very optimistic about the economy. Inflation is a major concern, with more than 80% saying that prices are rising faster.

Further, consumers are spending more on essentials and less on non-essentials. However, many people still remain hopeful about the future.

Employment: Employment has improved mainly due to more self-employed people, as the number of salaried jobs has dropped.

This indicates that those who can't find regular or even part-time jobs are forced to become self-employed. If this is the case, then the improvement in employment numbers may be misleading.

Banking Sector: Bank lending has increased, with the most significant growth in retail and personal loans.

This may be because businesses have enough cash and don't require loans, while consumers are confident about their future income and are borrowing to buy things like cars and houses.

However, the RBI has warned that this skewed lending pattern could be risky, as household debt is rising.

What is the way ahead?

The economy is moving forward at a steady growth rate of over 6%, which is positive when considering the global situation. However, there are no signs of rapid growth in the near future.

General

Studies

Paper – 4

General Studies - 4

1. We must inculcate sound values for education to be meaningful

Source: The post is based on the article “We must inculcate sound values for education to be meaningful” published in “Live mint” on 12th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS4: Ethics- Human values (role of family, society and educational institutions in inculcating values)

News: The article discusses the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for School Education 2023 in India, emphasizing the development of various values and dispositions in students through ethical, democratic, and epistemic values, and highlights the importance of implementing these principles across all school stages and subjects.

What are the aims of education in the NCF 2023?

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2023 in India has five aims of education. These include independent thinking, health, democratic participation, economic participation, and cultural involvement.

How are values categorized in the framework?

The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2023 categorizes values into three main types:

Ethical and Moral Values: This includes attributes like empathy and courage. For example, a school’s behavior towards parents and students should embody these values, demonstrating integrity and sensitivity in real-life situations.

Democratic Values: These involve a commitment to principles like liberty and equality, and embracing diversity. A fraternal spirit and social responsibility are highlighted, with practices like classroom discussions to foster democratic and communal participation, ensuring that students understand and appreciate the significance of equal rights and duties.

Epistemic Values: Pertaining to knowledge and truth, it includes aspects like scientific temper and recognizing valid sources of knowledge across various domains. Curricula in subjects like science and social science often emphasize these values, teaching students to value truth and approach knowledge with a scientific mindset.

How can the values be developed?

Embedding in School Culture: Values should not only be taught but also visibly practiced in schools. Examples include the manner in which school administrations treat parents and how teachers interact with students and amongst themselves.

Incorporating into Curriculum: Different school subjects and activities are designed to enhance specific values. For instance, regular classroom discussions might be utilized to nurture democratic values and rational thinking. Additionally, sports activities can promote values such as honesty and endurance.

Concrete Examples in Content: The content, including stories or historical episodes that highlight pluralism, equality, and justice, implicitly and explicitly influences values.

Addressing Value Conflicts: Schools need to manage conflicts in values, like disparities between school-taught values and those practiced in communities, by deploying dialogue and empathetic actions, rather than looking for simplistic solutions.

Community and School Responsibility: The onus of fostering values in students is squarely placed on schools and communities, utilizing non-judgmental assessments of the development of values in students.

9 PM Compilation for the Month of October [Second Week] 2023

What are the challenges in developing the values?

Conflict of Values: Sometimes, the values promoted in schools, such as equality, may contrast with practices in students' communities, which might exhibit discrimination based on gender or caste.

Implementation in Schools: The practical embedding of values into school culture and practices, ensuring that interactions among school staff and with students consistently demonstrate the preached values.

Training for Educators: Teachers might need training and resources to effectively impart lessons on values, which might be tricky, considering the non-pedantic and engaging materials required.

Real-Life Application: Enabling students to understand and apply complex moral and ethical reasoning in real-world scenarios poses a substantial challenge.