



9 PM

Compilation

25th to 30th September, 2023

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General Studies Paper – 1

General Studies - 1

1. Santiniketan chronicles: Unesco tag adorns the idyllic haven

Source: The post is based on the article “Santiniketan chronicles: Unesco tag adorns the idyllic haven” published in **Business Standard** on **25th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 1 – Art and Culture – Indian Heritage Site

Relevance: About Santiniketan receiving UNESCO’s World Heritage site status

News: Santiniketan was recently granted UNESCO World Heritage site status. It’s now the 41st site in India and the third in West Bengal to receive this prestigious recognition.

The other two World Heritage sites in West Bengal are Sundarbans National Park and the Darjeeling Himalayan Railway as part of Mountain Railways of India.

What is Santiniketan?

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Visva-Bharati was declared an institution of national importance in 1951 and evolved into a central university through an Act of Parliament.

After the inclusion of Santiniketan in the UNESCO World Heritage site List, Visva-Bharati became the only living institution to receive this prestigious tag.

How did Santiniketan achieve the UNESCO World Heritage site status?

Santiniketan’s UNESCO World Heritage nomination initially in 2009 faced rejection by **International Council of Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS)**. In 2021, a revised nomination was prepared with simplifications.

Moreover, in order to achieve UNESCO recognition, sites must have outstanding universal value (OUV) and meet at least one of the 10 selection criteria.

Hence, to meet UNESCO criteria, the focus shifted from “gurukul” and “tapoban” traditions to highlighting ensemble art, architecture, and Pan-Asian culture, making it more tangible for recognition.

The revised proposal positioned Santiniketan as a symbol of India’s new modernity.

Further, during the period of independence struggle and revivalism, Santiniketan shifted away from Western influences, embracing Indian crafts, local materials, and folk and classical Indian art.

This fusion created a harmonious blend of Balinese, Burmese, Chinese, and Japanese traditions in this living heritage site.

What challenges does Santiniketan face now after it has attained UNESCO World Heritage site status?

The challenge now is preserving this status. For this, strict conditions must be upheld, and haphazard construction should be avoided to prevent a situation like Dresden.

Dresden lost its UNESCO status in 2009 when it built a four-lane bridge within its cultural landscape.

Further, ICOMOS conducted an onsite visit to Santiniketan two years ago, resulting in strict regulations against construction within the ashram area.

However, the presence of physical barriers has sparked debates, as it appears to contradict Tagore’s concept of openness.

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Therefore, **preserving the serene atmosphere of Patha-Bhavana**, where classes take place under the shade of mango trees, remains a priority.

Must Read: Tagore's home Santiniketan added to UNESCO World Heritage List and For Santiniketan, Unesco World Heritage status has been a decade-long wait

What lies ahead?

Balancing tourism and preserving its educational mission is a challenge for Santiniketan. Therefore, to manage this, it's considering phasing visitor entry and preparing to welcome tourists with new signage while also maintaining its educational vibrancy and rich heritage.

2. Bhagat Singh's Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam

Source– The post is based on the article “**Bhagat Singh's Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**” published in “**The Indian Express**” on **29th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS1- Modern Indian history and personalities

News– The article explains the Bhagat Singh ideas about the principle of vasudhaiva kutumbakam

What are Bhagat Singh's ideas about the ideal of vasudhaiva kutumbakam?

Early in his life, Bhagat Singh was influenced by the ideal of **vasudhaiva kutumbakam**.

Bhagat Singh talks about **social and political challenges** in the realisation of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam in ‘**Vishwa Prem**.’ He was suspicious that under the current circumstances, achieving this ideal is very difficult.

In numerous articles, he talked about the issues such as **communalism, hatred, violence, oppression, poverty, untouchability, and casteism**.

According to him, the reality was that simply belonging to a particular religion is now considered sufficient reason to be viewed as an enemy by another religion.

He advocated for the **elimination of divisions** like those between the touchable and untouchable.

He rightly suspected that several **self-proclaimed social reformers** took a **superficial stance** on political matters.

What are challenges for India in adherence to the principle of Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam?

Indian society is deeply fractured by **communal and caste-based animosities, fear, and violence**. The **corporate capitalist economic development** has exacerbated existing inequalities.

The **divisions within our nation** run deep. A Tamil leader launched a venomous and incendiary attack on **Sanatan Dharma (not Hindus)**.

The references made by influential leaders to “tukde tukde gangs” and calls like “desh ke gaddaron ko” contribute to an environment of division. India is witnessing an **unrestrained demonization** of the “other.”

The use of terms like “termites” for migrants, the incendiary messages conveyed during the Dharam Sansad saints, and the impunity enjoyed by them raise doubts about the commitment to the principle of **vasudhaiva kutumbakam (the world is one family)**.

What is the way forward?

To win the hearts and minds of people having **diverse and conflicting interests**, Indians must adopt a **Gandhian commitment to love, compassion, and non-violence**.

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The **G20 declaration** deplored all acts of religious hatred and stressed that it was time to bridge the **trust deficit** and usher in an **era of cooperation**. It is now imperative to align our noble aspirations with concrete actions on the ground.

3. A milestone in Hindu marriage reform in India

Source: The post is based on the article “A milestone in Hindu marriage reform in India” published in “The Hindu” on 29th September 2023.

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

News: The author is discussing the long struggle in Tamil Nadu, India, for legal recognition of Suyamariyathai (self-respect) marriages, which are non-ritualistic and often inter-caste. Despite the 1967 amendment legalizing such marriages, they still face resistance and lack full acceptance by the Union government and some parts of the judiciary. The debate involves issues of caste, women’s rights, and traditional versus reformed marriage practices within Hindu law.

What is Suyamariyathai (self-respect) marriages?

Definition: These are non-ritualistic, consensual marriages in Tamil Nadu, India.

Characteristics: They are typically inter-caste and do not follow the traditional Hindu marriage rituals, aiming to uphold women’s rights and oppose caste supremacy and patriarchal rights within traditional Hindu marriages.

Legal Struggles: Initially, such marriages were declared invalid. For example, Rajathi was denied conjugal rights because her self-respect marriage to Chelliah was not recognized under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

Legislation: After several attempts, The Hindu Marriage (Tamil Nadu Amendment) Act 1967, introduced by the DMK, validated Suyamariyathai marriages.

Continued Resistance: Despite legal recognition, such marriages still face opposition. In 2017, the Union Ministry rejected applications from inter-caste couples in Tamil Nadu.

What are the judicial and executive views on Suyamariyathai (self-respect) marriages?

Judicial Views on Suyamariyathai Marriages:

Initial Rejection (1950s): Courts like the Madras High Court declared these marriages invalid due to the lack of traditional Hindu rituals.

Post 1967 Amendment: The Madras High Court and other judiciary bodies have had to affirm the validity of these marriages following the Tamil Nadu Amendment in 1967.

Supreme Court Reminder: Recently, the Supreme Court of India had to remind the Madras High Court about the validity of Suyamariyathai marriages in Tamil Nadu, emphasizing their lawful status even without public ceremonies.

Executive Views on Suyamariyathai Marriages:

Union Ministry’s Rejection (2017): This body rejected the recognition of these marriages under the Section 7 Act, emphasizing registration under the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

Legislative Progress: Various efforts, led by the DMK, resulted in the legal recognition of self-respect marriages with the 1967 Amendment Act in Tamil Nadu.

What are the impacts of the legalization of self-respect marriage?

Legal Recognition: Post-1967, Suyamariyathai marriages gained legal validity in Tamil Nadu, ensuring recognition for couples in these unions.

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Women's Rights: The legalization allowed women like Rajathi to claim conjugal rights, seek divorce, and redress in cases of bigamy, enhancing women's legal standings in marriages.

Property Rights: The Act enabled couples to secure their rights over property and entitlements within the marriage contract.

Challenges to Norms: The validation of non-ritualistic, consensual inter-caste marriages posed a direct challenge to Brahminic interpretations of Hindu marriage, promoting egalitarian values.

Civil Registrations: The movement propelled the advocacy for civil registration of all marriages, aiming for clear, dissoluble contracts between spouses.

4. A dictionary to prevent a language from vanishing

Source: The post is based on the article "A dictionary to prevent a language from vanishing" published in "The Hindu" on 29th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- Art and culture

News: The article is about a rare language, Toto, spoken by 1,600 people near West Bengal and Bhutan. A professor from the University of Calcutta is making a dictionary for Toto to help preserve it. The dictionary will translate Toto words into Bengali and English, using Bengali script, as the Toto community is more familiar with it. The project aims to keep the language from disappearing and integrate marginal languages into the academic curriculum.

What is Toto Shabda Sangraha?

Toto Shabda Sangraha: It's a forthcoming dictionary focused on the Toto language.

Purpose: It aims to preserve the Toto language, primarily oral until now, by documenting its vocabulary.

Languages Included: Will feature Toto words translated into Bengali and English.

Script Used: Utilizes the Bengali script, as it is more familiar to the Toto community.

Compilers: The dictionary has been compiled by Bhakta Toto, and professor Mrinmoy Pramanick is closely associated with the project.

Release & Publication: It will be released in Kolkata on October 7, and is published by the trust and Bhasha Samsad.

What is the significance of Toto Shabda Sangraha?

Significance for Preservation: Toto Shabda Sangraha is crucial as it aids in preserving the Toto language which is mainly alive orally among 1,600 speakers.

Dictionary for a Rare Language: It's significant as it is possibly the first attempt to compile a dictionary for this language.

Enhanced Accessibility: By translating Toto words into Bengali and English using Bengali script, it makes the language more accessible to its native speakers and learners.

Community Benefit: It supports the Toto community members in staying connected with their native language, even if they are studying in English and Bengali.

Historical Importance: It is described as "historic" by Mrinmoy Pramanick as the Toto community does not have any collection of words or a published primer.

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General Studies Paper –2

General Studies - 2

1. Covert action is a troublesome but often useful tool of statecraft

Source: The post is based on the article “Covert action is a troublesome but often useful tool of statecraft” published in “Live mint” on 25th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- International relation- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India’s interests, Indian diaspora.

News: This article discusses accusations that India was involved in a targeted killing in Canada, highlighting that many countries use covert actions like this. It suggests that whether such actions are acceptable depends on their effectiveness and management of consequences. The article urges India and Canada to resolve their differences diplomatically for mutual benefit.

Was India involved in a targeted killing in Canada?

The article discusses allegations against India, suspecting its involvement in the targeted killing of Hardeep Singh Nijar in Canada.

However, there’s not sufficient public information to conclusively confirm India’s role in this incident.

The situation has led to tensions between India and Canada, with Canada raising concerns and India denying involvement.

A.S. Dulat, a former Indian intelligence chief, has clearly stated that Indian intelligence officers are opposed to such actions and do not engage in assassinations.

Are covert actions acceptable?

State Practices: Many sovereign states, including democracies, use covert actions to safeguard their interests.

Historical Data:

Israel has carried out over 1800 covert operations.

The U.S. executed 48 targeted killings under George W. Bush and 353 during Obama’s tenure.

Morality vs Effectiveness: The realist perspective values the effectiveness of covert actions over their moral implications. The actions are risky and require careful management to avoid unintended consequences.

Indian Intelligence Stance: India, as represented by former R&AW chief A.S. Dulat, claims a strong opposition to targeted killings and asserts that they do not engage in assassinations.

Global Perspective: Many states, including those not labeled as ‘rogue’, have been involved in covert actions to protect their interests, indicating a broader acceptance or practice of such actions globally.

What should be done?

Diplomatic Engagement: The article explicitly suggests that India and Canada need to engage diplomatically to reconcile their differences and rebuild trust.

2. Gap between law and justice

Source: The post is based on the article “Gap between law and justice” published in “Indian express” on 25th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity- functioning of Parliament

News: This article is talking about new criminal law Bills in India. The government says these will strengthen law and order by reducing crime. But the article argues that the law focuses too

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much on individuals and ignores social reasons for crime. It claims real change needs broader reforms in the whole criminal justice system, not just laws.

Why is the new bill not the solution to crime?

Overemphasis on Individual Responsibility: The new bill focuses predominantly on blaming and punishing individual offenders, overlooking the socially rooted nature of crimes.

Ignorance of Societal and Environmental Factors: The legislation doesn't consider the significant influence of socio-economic status, social upbringing, education, and environmental factors on a person's decision-making process and risk-taking behavior.

Lack of Broader Institutional Reform: The article suggests that the bills fail to address the need for a comprehensive overhaul of the entire criminal justice system, including police, investigation mechanisms, criminal courts, and support services.

Reproduction of Existing Provisions: Many provisions in the new bills are just reproductions of existing laws, indicating a lack of genuine innovation or a real overhaul in the approach to criminal law or criminal justice.

Political Motivation: The article implies that the bills are more of a populist move, with the actual motivation being deeply political in nature, offering an illusion of strict action from the state without addressing the real problems that plague the criminal justice system.

3. Not Just Oil- New momentum in ties between India and Saudi Arabia could be a game changer

Source: The post is based on the article "Not Just Oil- New momentum in ties between India and Saudi Arabia could be a game changer" published in "Indian express" on 25th September 2023.

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

News: The article discusses growing friendly relations between India and Saudi Arabia. It mentions a recent visit by the Saudi Crown Prince to India, leading to many agreements between the two countries. Saudi Arabia is investing in India's energy and technology sectors. This improved relationship benefits both nations.

What are the new developments in India-Saudi relations?

Enhanced Bilateral Ties: The Saudi Crown Prince, Muhammad bin Salman, recently visited India, marking his second state visit in four years, highlighting strengthened relations.

Economic Collaboration: The nations have seen trade soar to \$52.75 billion in 2022-23, with Saudi Arabia investing \$50 billion in energy projects in India, including a Maharashtra refinery.

Strategic Initiatives: India and Saudi Arabia have proposed the IMEC (India-Middle East-European Corridor) to rival China's Belt-Road-Initiative, aiming to enhance port-railroad connectivity between India, the Gulf countries, and the European Union.

Agreements Concluded: Eight major MoUs were signed in diverse areas like finance, technology, and desalination during the bilateral meet.

Investment in Technology: Saudi Arabia is diversifying its investments, pledging another \$50 billion, and plans to open a Saudi Sovereign Wealth Fund office in Gujarat International Fin-Tech City.

How does this relationship benefit both countries?

Benefits to India:

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Stable Trade Partner: With trade at \$52.75 billion in 2022-23, Saudi Arabia is a significant partner for India.

Enhanced Energy Security: Saudi Arabia has been a reliable source of crude oil for India, addressing its energy needs.

Foreign Capital Influx: Saudi Arabia's commitment to investing \$50 billion in energy projects and another \$50 billion in different sectors bolsters India's economy.

Benefits to Saudi Arabia:

Economic Diversification: Collaborating with India supports Saudi Arabia's 2030 vision to develop a post-oil economy.

Enhanced Global Reach: The proposed IMEC project and BRICS induction would increase Saudi Arabia's global influence and connectivity.

Access to Skilled Workforce: Saudi Arabia values the role of Indian expatriates in its development.

4. Fukushima N-wastewater controversy

Source- The post is based on the article "**Fukushima N-wastewater controversy**" published in "**The Hindu**" on **25th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- International relations. GS3- Science and Technology

News- Recently, the Japanese government revealed its intentions to gradually release over one million tonnes of contaminated water from the Fukushima nuclear plant into the ocean. It has raised a concern among the public, both domestically and internationally.

What are the concerns of the public?

Various methods have been employed to treat the contaminated water. One of them is the **Advanced Liquid Processing System (ALPS)**, which eliminates **62 types of radioactive materials**. However, **tritium** is not removed during the treatment process.

As per the Japanese government, the **concentration of tritium** in the treated water does not exceed **international standards set by the IAEA**. The concentration of tritium in the treated water is six times lower than the **World Health Organization's limit**.

The **chemical extraction of tritium** from wastewater is virtually impossible because tritium is **chemically identical to hydrogen**.

There is evidence suggesting that even exposure to low levels of radiation can have **adverse effects** on both human health and the environment.

Tritium is **readily absorbed** by living organisms and **rapidly distributed** throughout their bodies via the bloodstream. Moreover, it can **cross the placenta**. It can lead to **developmental issues** in babies if ingested by pregnant women.

Releasing the water appears to be the **only viable option** due to **limited space** around the Fukushima plant and the potential for leaks. Storing the water elsewhere throughout the country would significantly increase both **costs and the risk of leaks**.

How is this affecting regional politics?

The Japanese Prime Minister and South Korean President publicly consumed seafood after the wastewater discharge began. This public act aimed to **bolster public trust** in the water treatment process.

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Transparency concerning the treatment and release process has been crucial, especially in Japan's relations with South Korea.

For both Mr. Kishida and Mr. Yoon, the water discharge presents more of a **geopolitical challenge** than a **health issue**. **Historical tensions** still strain their relations today. However, both leaders have been working to **improve relations**.

Japanese authorities have engaged with **regional counterparts**, such as South Korea, China, and Russia, to discuss the wastewater treatment and release plan since 2021.

Why has China adopted a hardline stance?

China's response to the wastewater issue should be viewed within a **broader geopolitical context**.

Recent Japan-China relations have been impacted due to China expanding its **military presence in the South China Sea**. This has fueled **nationalist sentiments** on both sides, making the wastewater issue significant.

China is also monitoring the **deepening relationship** between South Korea and Japan. China is uncomfortable with the **growing closeness** between South Korea and Japan. It aims to exploit the **strategic divisions** between the two.

5. An economic corridor, the Israel link and the geopolitics

Source– The post is based on the article “An economic corridor, the Israel link and the geopolitics” published in “The Hindu” on 25th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Global groupings

News– The 2023 summit of the G-20 under India's presidency went exceptionally well given the group's limited economic approach to the complex issues that the world faces

How India achieved significant success at this year's G20 summit in early September?

Incorporation of the African Union into the G-20.,

A concrete proposal for clean **energy cooperation through a biofuel alliance**.

A substantial increase in aid for **Asia-Africa initiatives**.

the development of an economic corridor called “**India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor**.” It will link India, West Asia, and Europe through an ambitious **rail and shipping network**.

An **unprecedented presence from the Middle East**.

Issuance of the Delhi Declaration- India was able to develop consensus for declaration despite the current **fragmented international order and power dynamics**.

It refrains from explicitly naming Russia for its actions in Ukraine. However, it provides reference to the **principles outlined in the United Nations charter** and emphasises **territorial sovereignty**.

What is the significance of “India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor”?

This has the potential to reshape the **geopolitics of the future**. Its significance goes beyond merely challenging **China's Belt and Road Initiative**.

U.S. President Joe Biden has described it as a “**real big deal**,” acknowledging its **transformative impact** on all parties involved and the global landscape.

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Why did Israel not receive such an invitation during the G20?

It could have been challenging to arrange a meeting between Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and Mr. Netanyahu without **diplomatic normalisation**.

President Biden might have preferred an event without Mr. Netanyahu due to domestic political considerations, as he had avoided meeting him for the past eight months.

6. Politicising exchanges

Source– The post is based on the article “**Politicising exchanges**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **25th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance- India and China bilateral relationship

News– Recently, Union Sports Minister Anurag Thakur cancelled his visit to China to protest the last-minute denial of entry to three Indian Wushu players from Arunachal Pradesh.

Why is denial of entry to athletes a cause of concern?

The three athletes were granted the **necessary accreditation** to travel along with the rest of the Indian team to the Games.

The decision to prevent the athletes from travelling is punitive because **digital accreditations**, not visas, were required for their travel.

What are other examples of China using the sporting event as a tool of foreign policy to counter India?

China has issued **stapled visas** to Indian citizens from Arunachal Pradesh. In July, three wushu players from Arunachal Pradesh who were supposed to participate in the World University Games in Chengdu received stapled visas.

In February of the previous year, Beijing selected the commander of the People's Liberation Army involved in the Galwan Valley clash as one of the **torchbearers for the Winter Olympics**.

Why is China indulging in such types of practices?

The recent action by China highlights the ongoing lack of **trust in bilateral relations** and the absence of **effective communication channels** to address long-standing issues.

As per Indian stand, normalizing relations will not be possible until the **disengagement process** along the Line of Actual Control is completed and peace is restored in border areas.

7. Taking India back to the drawing board

Source– The post is based on the article “**India and the great power contest in West Asia**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **25th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity

Relevance- **Issues related to delimitation process**

News– The Constitution (One Hundred and Twenty-Eighth Amendment) Bill, 2023, which promises 33% reservation for women in the Lok Sabha, and in the Legislative Assemblies of States sheds the spotlight on the delimitation of electoral constituencies.

What are past delimitation exercises taken by the government?

Since the 1970s, the number of Lok Sabha seats has remained unchanged. The **Constitution (Forty-Second Amendment) Act of 1976** froze the delimitation of Lok Sabha constituencies based on the 1971 Census, up until the **Census 2001**.

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In 2001, this deadline was extended to 2026 through an amendment to **Article 82 by the Constitution (Eighty-Fourth Amendment) Act**. Boundaries of electoral constituencies were redrawn in 2002. But, the total number of Lok Sabha seats remained the same.

What are issues in conducting a fresh delimitation?

The freeze on delimitation- It was imposed in 1976 to address the **concerns of states** actively involved in **population control**. They were facing the possibility of a reduction in their Lok Sabha seats.

The allocation based on the 1971 Census remains unchanged despite **India's significant population growth** since then.

Using 1971 figures to represent the present population contradicts the **principles of the Constitution and distorts the essence of representative democracy**.

Issues related to federalism and the representation of states- The northern states have experienced **faster population growth** compared to the southern states.

This means that Members of Parliament (MPs) from northern states represent more voters than their counterparts in the south.

The delimitation has **significant implications** for both individual voters and states. Southern states may potentially lose some of their parliamentary seats once the **delimitation exercise** is completed based on **current population figures**.

Population data for the delimitation- The 2021 Census was postponed due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Union Home Minister has indicated that the **next Census and subsequent delimitation** will take place after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

Recent examples- The recent delimitation process in Assam highlighted widespread concerns about **altering district boundaries and renaming constituencies**, potentially impacting the representation of specific communities.

For more reading- [Delimitation](#)

8. G-20 diplomacy and a shifting world order

Source- The post is based on the article **"G-20 diplomacy and a shifting world order"** published in **"The Hindu"** on **26th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Global groupings

News- Recently, India successfully conducted the G-20 meeting in Delhi.

What are some facts about the Delhi declaration agreed during the G20 summit in Delhi?

The **New Delhi Declaration** appears to encompass a **wide range of topics** that cater to various interests.

It covers issues such as **condemning terrorism**, addressing **climate concerns**, tripling **renewable energy capacity**, promoting **sustainable development lifestyles**, and **reforming multilateral development banks**.

It highlights India's contributions, such as **digital public infrastructure and the Unified Payments Interface**.

The Declaration aligns with the prevailing sentiment within the G-20. It endorses Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision of **"One Earth, One Family, One Future."**

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Regarding the **Ukraine conflict**, the declaration does not explicitly blame Russia. It seeks a resolution to the conflict. This sets the New Delhi Declaration apart from the **Bali Declaration** of November 2022, where Russia was condemned for its **aggression in Ukraine**.

Why should India not be over-optimistic about G-20 outcomes?

China's reception of the Delhi Declaration is mixed. It underscores that the G-20's primary purpose is economic cooperation. It is not a platform for addressing **geopolitical and security issues**.

China acknowledges the establishment of the **India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor Plan**. But it cautions against its potential use as a **geopolitical tool**.

Some world leaders have not fully embraced the Delhi G-20. The South Korean President cautioned about the current state of global affairs marked by **geopolitical competition**, rising inflation, and the ongoing **conflict in Ukraine**.

China remains a **dominant force** in Asia, and India is a **prominent target**. India's growing **economic strength and its membership in the Quad** demand careful handling.

How has the nature of the G-20 undergone a transformation in recent years?

Earlier during the 2008-09 economic crisis, G20 preferred to focus on **global economic issues**. It collaborated to prevent a **global economic downturn**. Now, it has shifted towards addressing **global political conflicts** with less emphasis on the global economic landscape.

A covert struggle is unfolding between two opposing blocs aiming to reshape the **global balance of power**. One is led by Western nations and the other by China and Russia,

The world is grappling with an **"emerging world disorder,"** marked by the resurgence of two **antagonistic blocs**.

The stalemate in the Ukraine conflict has prompted the U.S. to bolster and **expand NATO** under its leadership. This development raises the prospect of a **U.S.-equipped "territorial force"** emerging in Ukraine.

Beyond Europe, several **non-NATO allies** are being courted to join the **U.S.-led alliance** aimed at **countering "authoritarianism,"** represented by Russia and China.

Japan and South Korea have already aligned with the **Western alliance**, and Australia has become a significant partner in the U.S.-led alliance in the Southern Hemisphere.

Russia and China are deepening their **"strategic alignment."** Countries like North Korea are strengthening their ties with this bloc.

China is leveraging its presence in the **Pacific Ocean** to openly challenge **U.S. naval dominance** in the region.

Russia and Turkey have also strengthened their relationship. Russia is once again seeking to expand its **influence in Africa**.

How is the emerging world order impacting international politics?

The increasing number of new alliances will undermine the **concept of non-alignment significantly**. It is becoming challenging for nations to maintain **true non-alignment**. Even groupings like BRICS are finding it difficult to sustain their neutral stance.

The **proliferation of relationships and the complex web of security agreements** have severely restricted the scope for non-alignment.

As rival blocs with **conflicting visions of the international order** grow stronger, the world faces an uncertain and gloomy future.

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9. Prachanda & Himalayan Xiopolitics

Source– The post is based on the article “Prachanda & Himalayan Xiopolitics” published in “The Times of India” on 26th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Bilateral and regional groupings

Relevance- India and Nepal bilateral relationship in context of China

News– Nepal PM Prachanda’s visit to China from September 23 has resulted in numerous commitments and bilateral agreements.

How has the Chinese approach regarding India and Nepal relationship has undergone transformation?

Earlier approach- Until a decade ago, China was amenable to Nepal’s growing **ties with India**. China could not provide Nepal with the same level of support and assistance as India could deliver.

Current approach- China does not want a **closer relationship** between India and Nepal. The new Chinese ambassador in Kathmandu criticised **India-Nepal relations**. He has urged the Nepalese to strengthen their ties with China.

A representative from the Communist Party of China’s politburo attempted to convince the Nepalese government in July 2023 to consider **recruiting Gorkhas** for the People’s Liberation Army. The Nepalese government firmly rejected this proposal.

What is the Chinese foreign policy approach towards Nepal?

China’s earlier objective was **primarily security oriented**. It aimed to prevent Tibetans from fleeing to Nepal and exert strict control over the Tibetan community in Nepal.

When Tibetans are apprehended by the Nepalese Armed Police, they are often returned to China and placed in re-education or detention camps. Those reaching the **UNHCR office** in Kathmandu receive **exit permits** from Nepal’s immigration department.

Over 40,000 Tibetans transited through Nepal under a **1990 Gentlemen’s Agreement**. China’s demand for the repatriation of Tibetan refugees raises concerns about **Nepalese sovereignty**.

China has been active in its efforts to unite **various communist parties and factions** in Nepal. It has financially supported favoured politicians, established Confucius Institutes throughout Nepal, and provided Chinese language teachers to Nepalese schools.

What are the issues in project implementation by China in Nepal?

The concerning aspects of projects carried out by Chinese firms in Nepal include **escalating costs**, projects **awarded through nomination** rather than **international and transparent bidding processes**, the supply of **substandard materials**, and the employment of Chinese workers.

For instance, the **Pokhara Airport** project ended up costing 85% more than the original estimates. **Six Chinese aircraft, including two Xian MA60s and four Harbin Y12s**, remain grounded, and Nepal Airlines has been unsuccessful in leasing or selling them.

Nepal signed the **Belt and Road Initiative Framework Agreement** with China six years ago. But many projects have not advanced significantly. Notably, the proposed rail link, initially suggested by King Birendra in 1973, has faced delays.

What is the difference between the Indian and Chinese approach towards Nepal?

Nature of assistance- China provides Nepal with **modest grant assistance**. The nature of this assistance differs from India’s support. In the fiscal year 2020-21, China provided a grant of \$14 million, while India committed grant assistance of \$6.32 million during the same period.

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Connectivity- The 2016 Sino-Nepalese **transit and transport agreement protocol** granted Kathmandu access to seven Chinese sea and land ports for third-country trade.

However, most of the Nepal's trade still passes through India. Kolkata and Visakhapatnam ports are significantly closer than Chinese ports.

In contrast to the open border between India and Nepal and India hosting Nepalese nationals, China maintains a **closed northern border** with Nepal.

Project implementation- In 2015, during a disruption in supplies to the Kathmandu Valley, China had promised to step in. However, currently, **China's petroleum supply** to Nepal is nonexistent.

India has implemented a **dedicated pipeline system** to ensure uninterrupted and timely delivery, and further pipeline construction is underway.

10. War in the Caucasus – Azerbaijan should respect the autonomy of the Armenian population

Source: The post is based on the article “War in the Caucasus – Azerbaijan should respect the autonomy of the Armenian population” published in *The Hindu* on 26th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations

Relevance: About Azerbaijan recapturing Nagorno-Karabakh

News: Azerbaijan has recaptured Nagorno-Karabakh, an Armenian-populated enclave, with the help of Turkey. This shows the changing power dynamics in the Caucasus region where American, Russian, and Turkish interests collide.

What is conflict about?

The conflict originated during the final stages of the Soviet Union, when the majority Armenian-Christian population conducted a referendum to declare independence from Azerbaijan, which had a Shia majority.

Until recently, Nagorno-Karabakh was under the administration of Armenian separatists with support from the Republic of Armenia.

However, in 2020, Azerbaijan, with backing from Turkey, engaged in a conflict with Armenia, which is a Russian treaty partner.

This conflict resulted in the capture of a significant portion of Nagorno-Karabakh by Azerbaijan. Despite Russia's role in brokering a ceasefire, it provided limited assistance to Armenia, and the ceasefire short-lived.

Further, **Azerbaijan blockaded the Lachin Corridor**, the only road connecting Nagorno-Karabakh to Armenia, causing severe economic hardship for the enclave's 120,000 residents.

Despite international criticism, Azerbaijan maintained control over the corridor and restricted the flow of goods and medicines.

Recently, Azerbaijan attacked Stepanakert, the capital of Nagorno-Karabakh, forcing the separatists to cede full control of the enclave.

Must Read: [Why does the Azerbaijan-Armenia conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh remain unresolved?](#)

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What caused Azerbaijan to recapture Nagorno-Karabakh?

First, Turkey supported Azerbaijan both politically and militarily, seeking a greater role in the Caucasus region.

Second, Russia's engagement in Ukraine weakened its influence in the Caucasus, leaving Armenia dissatisfied with Moscow's lack of action during the conflict.

Hence, recognizing this geopolitical advantage, Azerbaijan took control of the enclave.

What can be the way ahead?

Azerbaijan's recent takeover has caused a significant refugee movement into Armenia, accompanied by allegations of genocidal crimes.

Hence, to peacefully integrate Nagorno-Karabakh, **Azerbaijan must guarantee equal rights and respect autonomy for the Armenian population.**

Failure to do so may result in resistance from the Armenians, posing challenges for Azerbaijan's control over the region.

11. What are the findings of the Parliament panel on NEP?

Source: The post is based on the article "What are the findings of the Parliament panel on NEP?" published in *The Hindu* on 26th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues Related with Education

Relevance: concerns associated with the implementation of NEP 2020 and measures needed to address them.

News: In the special session of Parliament, a report titled "Implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020 in Higher Education" was presented by the Parliament Standing Committee on Education.

What are the key findings of the report?

The report evaluated NEP 2020 implementation in higher education, emphasizing that 70% of the country's 1,043 universities function under the State Act.

Moreover, it pointed out that 94% of students attend State or private institutions, with only 6% in Central higher education institutions. This emphasizes the important role that States play in providing higher education.

What were the issues highlighted by the Committee in the report?

The panel addressed several critical issues, including the rigid separation of academic disciplines, limited access to higher education in socio-economically disadvantaged regions, the scarcity of higher education institutions (HEIs) teaching in local languages, insufficient faculty numbers, etc.

What were the recommendations given by the Committee to address the issues?

First, the committee recommended that by 2030, every district in the country should have at least one multidisciplinary HEI. **The Gross Enrolment Ratio in higher education**, which includes vocational education, should be increased from 26.3% in 2018 to 50% by 2035.

Second, it recommended increased funding, higher enrolment targets, gender balance, and more financial support and scholarships for Socially and Economically Disadvantaged Groups (SEDGs) in public and private HEIs.

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Third, the government should promote inclusivity in admission procedures and curriculum, enhance the employability prospects of higher education programs, and develop more degree courses taught in regional languages and bilingually.

Fourth, the government should provide specific infrastructural support for physically challenged students and enforce all no-discrimination and anti-harassment rules.

The Committee cited Jammu and Kashmir as an example of NEP implementation in 2022 which resulted in substantial changes in teaching methods and improved lifelong learning opportunities for students.

Fifth, the Committee proposed improving **Higher Education Financing Agency** (HEFA's) funding effectiveness by diversifying its sources to include partnerships with private sector, philanthropic foundations, and international institutions.

It also suggested reviewing and adjusting loan interest rates to make them more competitive and affordable for HEIs.

Sixth, the committee raised concerns about the feasibility of implementing the **multiple entry and multiple exit** (MEME) system in Indian institutions.

They highlighted that while MEME works well in Western institutions, it may disrupt the pupil-teacher ratio in Indian institutions due to uncertainties in student enrollment and exit.

12. WHO report flags deficits in BP care — facilitating diagnosis is first step

Source: The post is based on the article “**WHO report flags deficits in BP care — facilitating diagnosis is first step**” published in “Indian express” on 26th September 2023.

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

News: [This](#) article discusses the concerning lack of awareness and treatment for hypertension in India, affecting over 180 million people, and highlights the urgent need for improved healthcare services and education to manage and control this condition effectively.

Why is high blood pressure a concern for India?

Widespread Issue: Over 180 million people are affected.

Awareness Gap: 63% of them aren't even aware they have it.

Severe Health Risks: It can cause heart attacks, strokes, and damage kidneys and eyes.

Major Cause of Death: Identified as a leading cause of mortality in India.

Treatment Challenges:

Regular BP checks for those above 30 aren't frequently done, especially in rural areas.

Only 15% effectively control it after diagnosis.

Discontinuation of Medication: People often stop treatment when symptoms improve, against medical advice, risking their health.

What can be done to improve the situation?

Increase Awareness: Educate people on the importance of diagnosing and treating high blood pressure.

Promote Regular Screening: Ensure people over 30 regularly check their blood pressure, especially in rural areas.

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Enhance Healthcare Provision: Improve quality of hypertension care in rural areas, where only a third of providers in places like Bihar could offer quality care.

Community Health Workers: Educate community health workers in villages and districts to diagnose and create awareness.

Policy Implementation: Policymakers should focus on enhancing existing policies, following the recommendations in the WHO report.

13. With climate change, tackling new disease scenarios

Source– The post is based on the article “**With climate change, tackling new disease scenarios**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **27th September 2023**.

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

News– As per the latest report released this March by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), climate change heightens the global risk of infectious diseases.

Why is there a strong connection between climate and disease?

It becomes increasingly evident each year. The regular occurrence of disease outbreaks caused by mosquitoes no longer follows **anticipated patterns**. **Dengue fever** now exhibits two to three peaks annually.

Fluctuations in temperature, rainfall, and humidity disrupt the **cycles of disease transmission**. These fluctuations also impact the **distribution of the carriers** and the animal hosts.

High temperatures can alter the genetic **makeup of pathogens**. It can affect their **ability to infect and their virulence**.

Habitat destruction compels disease-carrying animals to encroach upon human habitats. It increases the likelihood of **human-animal interactions** and the transfer of pathogens from wildlife to humans.

Climate change is **altering ecosystems** themselves. This dynamic leads to the introduction of **invasive species** and the expansion of the ranges of existing species. Both of these factors trigger disruptions in ecosystems.

Human-induced climate change is giving rise to an **unprecedented vulnerability to health crises**. India has experienced **early summers and erratic monsoons** causing water shortages in the Gangetic plains and Kerala.

These climate-related shifts are contributing to severe health challenges. It includes a dengue epidemic in Dhaka and Kolkata, and the Nipah outbreak in Kerala.

How infectious diseases are becoming a challenge for human health?

An analysis published in Nature Climate Change in 2022 warns that humans now face a broader range of infectious agents than ever before. Over half of all known infectious diseases that threaten humans are exacerbated by changing climate patterns.

Diseases often discover new transmission pathways, including environmental sources, medical tourism, and contaminated food and water from previously reliable sources.

What are steps taken by India in reporting outbreaks over the last two decades?

The **Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (IDSP)** was introduced in a few States in 2007, reporting 553 outbreaks in 2008 and increasing to 1,714 in 2017.

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IDSP was replaced by the **Integrated Health Information Platform (IHIP)**. It is a **web-enabled, near-real-time electronic information system** launched in seven States in 2018. IHIP expanded the scope by including 20 additional disease conditions.

How is one health approach beneficial in protecting humans from infectious diseases?

To combat the spread of these diseases, it is essential to **protect ecosystems, reduce greenhouse gas emissions**, and establish **active pathogen surveillance**.

A holistic approach, known as One Health, **integrates monitoring of human, animal, plant, and environmental health**.

This approach plays a crucial role in **preventing outbreaks**, especially those originating from animals.

What is the way forward?

India should initiate **One Health and infectious disease control programs** by fostering **stronger collaboration** between the central and state governments and their specialised agencies.

Departments responsible for animal husbandry, forest and wildlife, municipal corporations, and public health must converge efforts and establish **robust surveillance systems**.

Building trust and confidence, sharing data, and defining clear lines of responsibility while working with a coordinating agency are essential.

14. The need for quiet diplomacy to clear the air

Source– The post is based on the article **“The need for quiet diplomacy to clear the air”** published in **“The Hindu”** on **27th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- Bilateral groupings and agreements

Relevance- India and Canada bilateral relationship

News– Recently, PM Justin Trudeau said in the nation’s Parliament that his government was probing “credible allegations” that Indian agents were responsible for the killing in June this year.

How differing perspectives of India and Canada regarding Khalistan issues are responsible for the current state of relationship?

Canada perspective- Canada believes that India displays little **regard to its laws and governance system**, which prevents it from taking actions that India wants.

During his speech at the UN headquarters on September 21, Mr. Trudeau emphasised Canada’s commitment to the **rule of law** and the importance of the global community upholding a rules-based world order.

Canada’s approach has asserted that regardless of any grievances a country may have against Canada, causing harm to any of its nationals is unacceptable.

India’s perspective- national laws cannot serve as a shield for **advocating secession and organising protests** that glorify murder. If such laws are absent, it becomes necessary for a country to enact them.

Currently, Canada is condemning Khalistani propagandists involved in hate speech but is not taking **legal action** against them. There is also a deeper issue at play here.

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What is the history of the Khalistan movement in Canada?

India's long-standing frustrations with Canada regarding the Khalistan issue can be traced back over four decades.

The establishment of the **Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS)** in 1984 marked a significant development. Many CSIS officers had knowledge of Khalistani activities.

These activities began in 1969 when the **Khalistan Commando Movement**, led by Jagjit Singh Chauhan, unilaterally declared independence for Punjab and established "consulates" in Vancouver, Winnipeg, and Toronto. The tragic **Air India Kanishka bombing** in June 1985 did not lead Canada to recognize terrorism as a universal threat.

What is the best approach to resolve such kinds of issues?

Mr. Trudeau should have advocated for "**constructive engagement**" in the Nijjar case during his remarks to the Canadian Parliament rather than using harsh language. Mr. Trudeau could have also refrained from expelling a senior Indian diplomat.

Mutual accusations are rarely helpful, especially in resolving issues within important bilateral relationships. A **quiet and mature diplomatic approach** is needed to address the Nijjar case and longstanding, ongoing issues.

15. Diplomatic standoff – Indo-Canada row may have unintended costs

Source: The post is based on the article "**Diplomatic standoff – Indo-Canada row may have unintended costs**" published in **Business Standard** on **27th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations – Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests

Relevance: Issues with India and Canada relations

News: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's accusations that India played a role in the assassination of Khalistani separatist Hardeep Singh Nijjar have damaged relations between the two countries.

What led Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau to make such an allegation against India?

The US reportedly provided intelligence to Canada supporting Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's claims that India was involved in the assassination of Hardeep Singh Nijjar.

Intercepted communications of Indian diplomats also allegedly point to India's role in the plot.

The issue was reportedly raised with Prime Minister Narendra Modi by members of the **Five Eyes intelligence-sharing network** at the G20 leaders' summit in New Delhi.

Must Read: [India Canada Relations – Explained](#), [Canada needs to see India – not just the diaspora](#) and [Just What Is Justin Up To? – On India Canada Relations](#)

What significance do these reports hold?

These reports are significant because they suggest that the US and other Western countries are concerned about India's alleged role in the assassination.

The fact that two prominent Western media were chosen for select intelligence briefings could be seen as an implicit critique of the Indian government by the White House.

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What has been the response of the US on the issue?

Although the US has not publicly taken sides in the dispute between India and Canada, **recent statements by US officials suggest that the US is concerned about India's alleged role in the assassination.**

For example, US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan said that the US is in touch with both the Canadian and Indian governments on the issue, and he disagrees with reports suggesting that the US and Canada are not on the same page.

What can be the way ahead?

Despite the US emerging as India's top trading partner, it's crucial to recognize that Canada holds the same status for the US, strengthened by historic ties and trade agreements such as US-Mexico-Canada Agreement.

The US is also looking for other allies in the region, such as Japan and South Korea. **This suggests that the US may be more likely to side with Canada in the event of a conflict between India and Canada.**

Hence, India may need to find a way to balance its relationship with the US with its own domestic and foreign policy goals.

16. No, data isn't the new oil – Data Protection Bill needs to realise that

Source: The post is based on the article “No, data isn't the new oil – Data Protection Bill needs to realise that” published in “Indian express” on 27th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Polity – Function of Parliament

News: This article discusses concerns about how data is used and perceived. It talks about India's new law, DPDP Act 2023, meant to protect people's digital data, like laws in other countries. It highlights the need for responsible and ethical use, handling, and perception of data to ensure individuals' rights and privacy. The article suggests the law is a positive step but needs more refinement to truly protect people.

What is the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act 2023 about?

Purpose: The DPDP Act 2023 in India is about protecting individuals' digital data and privacy.

Comparison: This law is like the European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) from 2016 and the UK's Data Protection Act from 2018. China also passed a similar law in 2020.

Individual Rights: It gives people more control over their data and includes the right to be forgotten.

Responsibility and Transparency: It mandates greater accountability and transparency from private corporations and government institutions regarding data practices.

Limitations: While a positive step, the act still reinforces some existing perceptions about data and doesn't fully address the ethics of data generation and harvesting.

Aspirational Goals: The act is viewed as an initial draft for establishing data equity and justice, and it needs ongoing refinement and discussion.

What are the concerns with data use?

Ethics of Data Generation: The article mentions a concern about the ethics surrounding how data is created and harvested, emphasizing that data doesn't just describe us but defines and predicts us.

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Commodification of Data: The act doesn't challenge the perception of data as a commodity and its economic value, overshadowing its personal and impactful nature.

Implications on Individuals: The data generated is closely linked to people's lives and experiences, impacting their social, personal, political, and economic well-being.

Provenance and Consent: There's concern about how far data can travel and whether it can be distanced from its subject, affecting the integrity of consent.

What needs to be done?

Refine the DPDP Act 2023: The act is a good start but needs more refinement to fully protect people's data in India.

Enhance Individual Control: More steps should be taken to ensure that individuals have control over their data and understand the implications of data circulation.

Focus on Operational Realities: The principles of the act should be operationalized carefully to ensure the protection of vulnerable individuals from the misuse of data.

17. The G-20's screen over 'mazdoors', their rights

Source: The post is based on the article "The G-20's screen over 'mazdoors', their rights" published in "The Hindu" on 28th September 2023.

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

News: The author expresses concern that during the G-20 Summit, India, under Prime Minister Narendra Modi, prioritized political and diplomatic victories. However, the author feels that India missed the opportunity to address significant worker rights issues and the exploitation and forced labor conditions faced by millions of Indian workers, both domestically and in the Arab Gulf. This, in the author's view, resulted in a neglect of discussions on essential workers' welfare and rights.

Was the G-20 Summit a missed opportunity for worker rights?

Neglected Worker Rights Issues: Major worker rights and welfare concerns, especially pertaining to Indian workers in India and the Arab Gulf, were largely unaddressed.

Politicization of L20: The selection of Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh (BMS) over the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) for leading the L20 meetings resulted in the sidelining of critical worker concerns and a boycott by ITUC.

Forced Labour and Exploitation: There was no discussion on the prevalent forced labour and modern-day slavery affecting millions in India, with the Walk Free Foundation reporting 11 million trapped in such conditions in India alone.

Missed Discussions on Core Worker Issues: The Summit did not focus on essential worker rights and welfare topics like job creation, living wages, and decent working conditions, missing a chance to make impactful changes in workers' lives.

How serious is the problem of forced labor and exploitation?

Problem in India:

Modern-Day Slavery: India has 11 million people, as reported by the Walk Free Foundation, in conditions resembling modern-day slavery.

Vulnerable Sectors: Workers in industries like textiles, brick kilns, shrimp farming, copper manufacturing, stone cutting, and plantations are particularly susceptible to forced labor and exploitation.

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Informal Sector: Out of 530 million workers in India, 430 million are in the informal sector and are prone to different forms of exploitation.

Global Problem:

Exploitation in the Arab Gulf: Approximately nine million Indian workers are facing exploitative working conditions in the Arab Gulf under the kafala system.

Impacted Nations: Saudi Arabia, Oman, and the United Arab Emirates have been particularly highlighted, hosting millions of Indian workers under severe conditions.

Concern for G-20 Countries: The article emphasizes that such exploitative practices and the neglect of worker rights and welfare are global issues, affecting not just India but all G-20 nations, and hampering the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

What are forced laborers?

Definition: Forced labor refers to work taken from a person under threat, without their voluntary consent.

Indicators: Situations like withholding wages, confiscating identity documents, or using threats and intimidation indicate forced labor.

Examples in India: Workers in Andhra Pradesh's shrimp industry faced situations like unpaid overtime under threat, loan-based work obligations, and withholding of identity documents such as Aadhaar cards.

Impact: Such conditions result in workers being trapped, often facing physical, mental, or sexual threats, and working under inhumane conditions.

18. Nearly 69 lakh cancer deaths among Indian women were preventable: What a study says on gender and the disease

Source- The post is based on the article “**Nearly 69 lakh cancer deaths among Indian women were preventable: What a study says on gender and the disease**” published in “**The Hindu**” on **27th September 2023**.

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

Relevance- Cancer among women

News- A new Lancet report highlights the issues of cancer among women.

What are some important revelations about the recent Lancet Commission report on gender disparities in cancer care, titled ‘Women, Power and Cancer,’?

It revealed that approximately **63% of premature cancer-related deaths** in Indian women could have been prevented through **risk reduction, screening, and early diagnosis**. Furthermore, **37% of these deaths** could have been avoided with timely and optimal treatment.

The report estimated that out of the **6.9 million cancer deaths** among women in India, **4.03 million were preventable, and 2.87 million were treatable**.

The report emphasised that despite men being at a higher risk of some cancers, cancer **incidence and mortality** among women in India remain alarmingly high.

Globally, women account for **48% of new cancer cases and 44% of cancer-related deaths**. This disparity persists even for cancers in women, such as breast and cervical cancers, that are highly preventable and treatable.

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What are the reasons behind the poorer outcomes for women?

Lancet report– It highlighted that women encounter difficulties in accessing timely and appropriate healthcare due to their **limited knowledge, decision-making authority, financial resources**, and the availability of services at the primary level near their homes.

women are more prone than men to lack the **necessary knowledge and authority** to make well-informed healthcare decisions.

Women are **underrepresented in leadership roles** face **gender-based discrimination and sexual harassment** and constitute the largest group of **unpaid healthcare providers**.

According to the report's estimates, the **unpaid caregiving services** provided by women in the context of cancer care account for **approximately 3.66% of India's national health expenditure**.

Societal issues- Breast and cervical cancer are the most common cancers in women, but many women hesitate to seek help from male doctors or even female doctors for **genital examinations**.

Logistical issues- The necessity of travelling to district hospitals, state capitals, or larger tertiary hospitals in other states for **cancer screening, diagnostic tests, and treatment** contributes to **treatment delays**.

What is the way forward?

Screening- Breast and cervical cancer are **highly preventable and manageable**. Women often seek medical attention at advanced stages of these diseases, even though both can be identified early through screening.

Monthly self-examinations of the breasts, **annual clinical examinations** by a physician, and **yearly mammograms** for women over 40 to monitor for breast cancer are useful.

There is a need for **immediate consultation** with a doctor if any lumps are detected during **self-examination**.

Women between the ages of 25 and 65 to undergo **regular pap smear tests** to detect **precancerous changes** in the cervix. **HPV test**, which identifies the human papillomavirus responsible for a majority of cervical cancers, can be conducted every five or ten years.

Awareness- It is necessary among the population, especially women, so they actively participate in **cancer screening** and seek **medical attention**.

HPV vaccination program– It will reduce the occurrence of common cancers in women. Vaccines against the **human papillomavirus (HPV)** are already available in the country, and an **indigenous vaccine** has also been developed.

Role of PHCs- Government's screening programs at **primary health centres and sub-centres** can aid in early diagnosis.

For **cervical cancer**, treatment can be provided by nursing staff at **primary health centres**, like the practice in Bangladesh.

19. ASEAN's China dilemma

Source– The post is based on the article **"ASEAN's China dilemma"** published in **"The Indian Express"** on **28th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS2- International Relations – Regional and global groupings

News– During the recent ASEAN meeting, Indonesia successfully introduced new perspectives into often contentious ASEAN positions.

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What was the approach of Indonesia on the Indo-Pacific during the ASEAN meeting?

Indonesia's approach at the meeting involved an initiative to embrace the Indo-Pacific region. They organised the inaugural **ASEAN Indo-Pacific Forum (AIPF)**.

In his AIPF address, President Widodo called for expanding the **sphere of prosperity** within ASEAN, recognizing that **global economic growth** was now primarily centred in the Indo-Pacific region.

Indonesian representatives made it clear that not only did they **completely embrace** the Indo-Pacific concept without excessive concern for China's reaction. But they also adopted a functional approach to the Indo-Pacific.

This approach resembles the **Quad's cooperative stance on the Indo-Pacific**, viewing it more as a **collaborative endeavour** than solely a **strategic concept**.

What is the approach of Indonesia towards Myanmar?

Indonesia incorporated the **Five-Point Consensus (5PC)**. Indonesia didn't appoint an individual as a **special envoy** but established an office for the special envoy, which allowed it to quietly engage with Myanmar.

Indonesia's perspective on the 5PC has shifted from seeing it as a **binding decision** to viewing it as a **facilitating initiative**.

ASEAN collectively decided that Myanmar would not host the 2026 summit. In the past, ASEAN has used the privilege of hosting a summit as a means to **address Myanmar's actions**.

How is China a challenge for ASEAN?

China represents the primary challenge for ASEAN, particularly concerning the **rivalry between major powers** in the region. China's call for **peace and prosperity** implies a desire to prevent the US and China from displaying their rivalry within the region.

Progress on the **code of conduct for the South China Sea (SCS)** has been slow. There are differences over the interpretation of the **United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea**, especially in relation to **China's new standard map**.

What are steps taken by ASEAN to counter these challenges?

ASEAN has embraced the **ASEAN Outlook on Indo-Pacific (AOIP)**, aimed at **enhancing coordination** among coast guards and conducting joint exercises among defence forces.

Under Indonesia's chairmanship, there is a movement toward **coordinated rules** on how ASEAN should act when **consensus** is lacking, potentially leading to decision-making by a coalition of willing members.

20. Devotion Of Teacher X – Individual and national futures depend on math skills

Source: The post is based on the article “Devotion of Teacher X – Individual and national futures depend on math skills, which depend on good teacher training” published in **The Times of India** on 28th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Social Issues – Issues Related with Education

Relevance: concerns with math proficiency in India

News: India should be more worried about poor math skills than the United States because the ASER survey shows that the situation in India is grim.

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What are the key highlights of the Annual Status of Education Report (ASER)?

According to ASER survey, only about 20% of Class III students in both government and private schools can do subtraction, and this percentage has remained consistently low for the past decade.

This is because India has not been participating in the Pisa competition, which makes it difficult to compare math skills globally.

In contrast, the US has participated in Pisa and its students score lower than those in 36 other education systems, with China having the highest score.

What can be done to enhance math skills?

India needs to learn from other countries to improve its math skills. **For instance**, Vietnam's high Pisa scores are attributed to a strong focus on teacher training, which India should also prioritize.

India, like the United States, have risk of falling behind in terms of individual and national prosperity due to a weak math education system.

This is because the ability to adapt to technological advancements and the AI-driven job market relies heavily on one's math skills.

Therefore, **the quality of math education in both the US and India depends on the competence of teachers**, so it is important to address this issue and improve math education at all levels.

21. Parliament to workplace

Source– The post is based on the article “Parliament to workplace” published in “The Indian Express” on 29th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS2 – Social empowerment.

Relevance – Issues related to women empowerment

News– The recent landmark legislation mandating the reservation of a third of parliamentary and assembly seats for women is a game changer for attaining gender equality in political voices in the country.

Why is political and economic empowerment of women still a challenge for India?

Female representation in politics- India ranks among the countries with the **lowest levels of female representation** in politics worldwide. Women comprised a **mere 10.5 percent of all Members of Parliament**.

This figure is lower than that of regions like **sub-Saharan Africa and neighbouring countries** such as Pakistan.

Labour market-participation – The **labour force participation rate** of women is low. It is **approximately 25 percent**. This is in stark contrast to the **global average**, which is **nearly 50 percent**.

What are factors behind low labour participation of women?

1. The **unequal distribution of household responsibilities** places a disproportionately heavy workload on women.
2. **social norms** that prioritise marriage over women's careers.
3. **Concerns about safety** and a perceived high risk of **sexual violence**.
4. Lack of **reliable and secure public transportation infrastructure** that limits women's physical mobility.

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5. **Structural shifts** away from agriculture and changes in agricultural technology have led to women leaving the farming sector. There are few viable opportunities available in **non-farm sectors**. So, these women often exit the labour market.

How enhanced representation of women in politics will impact women's participation in the labour force in India?

Political reservation for women directly contributes to making **political and administrative careers** more viable for women in the long term. More women will enter the political arena.

Evidence from the reservation of positions for women sarpanches in Gram Panchayats suggests that **female political decision-makers** tend to prioritise and address issues that align with the preferences and concerns of the electorate. These issues are **sanitation, education, and healthcare**.

The improvement in **essential public services** has the potential to reduce the time spent by women on domestic work, such as water collection, firewood gathering, and childcare. This can enable them to pursue **productive work opportunities**.

Women leadership will focus on concerns related to **public safety, law and order**. It will advocate for policies that have a **gender perspective** into **urban infrastructure and transportation planning**. It has the potential to enhance **women's physical mobility** and expand their access to **employment opportunities**.

There is limited empirical evidence available to suggest that increased presence of women in politics also impacts the **demand for female labour** in our economy.

It is possible that women in political leadership positions may be more inclined to advocate for legislation that enforces **gender equality in wages and working conditions** within the formal sector. They may prioritise policies aimed at **broadening employment opportunities** for women in the manufacturing sector.

22. Warring Over Water – River fights between states need a single dispute resolution body

Source: The post is based on the article “Warring Over Water – River fights between states need a single dispute resolution body with real enforcement powers” published in **The Times of India** on 29th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Indian Polity – Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure

Relevance: About Cauvery Water Dispute.

News: The Supreme Court has declined to intervene in a dispute between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka over the sharing of Cauvery water. The Cauvery dispute has been ongoing for decades, and has been officially resolved, but tensions still continue to remain.

What are the reasons behind existing inter-state water dispute?

First, the government creates tribunals for each dispute. However, **these tribunals are ineffective because they are** ad hoc, their conflict resolution procedures frequently lead to new issues, and their judgements have little legal basis.

Further, when states challenge their decisions, the conflict is only exacerbated.

Second, Climate change and other factors, such as erratic rainfall, depleting groundwater, and water-intensive cropping patterns, are intensifying river disputes.

Third, the existing Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956, relies on tribunals to resolve disputes.

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In 2017, the Lok Sabha passed the Inter-State River Water Disputes (Amendment) Bill to create a single permanent tribunal and a mediation committee, but the implementation has not yet been done.

Must Read: Cauvery Water Dispute and Interstate River Disputes

What can be the way ahead?

India is predicted to become “water scarce” by 2050. River water disputes are projected to grow in the future, since the Cauvery, like other major rivers, has seen declining water volumes.

Hence, it is important for the Indian government to urgently pass a law that gives tribunals the power to enforce their decisions. This will help to resolve inter-state river water disputes more quickly and effectively.

23. Unhealthy dynamics – Gender bias in cancer care reflects a larger health care crisis

Source: The post is based on articles

“Unhealthy dynamics – Gender bias in cancer care reflects a larger health care crisis”

published in **Business Standard** on 29th September 2023 and

“Lancet report on cancer in women is a wake-up call” published in **The Indian Express** on 29th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Social Issues – Issues Relating to Development and Management of Services related to Health

Relevance: concerns with increasing cancer in women.

News: The Lancet recently published research titled “Women, Power and Cancer” that looked at women and cancer in 185 nations. It discovered a connection between social power dynamics and women’s access to cancer treatment.

What are the key findings of the report?

Read Here: Nearly 69 lakh cancer deaths among Indian women were preventable: What a study says on gender and the disease

What are the reasons behind higher cancer incidence and mortality rate among women?

Lack of knowledge: Many women are not aware of the different types of cancer and their causes.

Lack of Financial and Decision-making power: Women often lack the financial power and decision-making power to go for regular checkups and screening for early diagnosis.

Reluctance to be examined by male doctors: Many women are reluctant to be examined by male doctors.

Lack of women doctors: There is a severe scarcity of competent female doctors, particularly in rural regions. Only approximately 17% of allopathic physicians are women, and only 6% of those are in rural regions.

Travel difficulties: Due to their family responsibilities, rural women find it difficult to travel to large cities or towns for screening and treatment.

Lack of Women Empowerment: Maternal and reproductive health are the only focuses of women’s health. Additionally, they are less likely and empowered to be checked for cancer early due to a lack of decision-making power, education, work, and access to healthcare facilities.

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Another study also found that only 37% of women had access to healthcare compared to 67% of men. **This highlights the lack of healthcare facilities that women have in their own healthcare.**

What can be done to improve women's access to healthcare?

First, India's public healthcare system needs to improve women's access to cancer care.

Government health schemes for women in India are mostly focused on expectant and new mothers, and other important aspects of women's healthcare, such as cancer screening and regular checkups, are often overlooked.

However, the **Ayushman Bharat health insurance scheme** offers a potential solution, **as women account for 49% of all beneficiaries**. Hence, empowering women with greater agency in healthcare can lead to a significant benefit.

Second, there is also a need to collect and update sociodemographic data in cancer, do more research on the risks that women face, and be more sensitive and responsive to the challenges that women face due to their gender, social status, and other factors.

24. Reform can address India's kidney transplant deficit

Source: The post is based on the article "**Reform can address India's kidney transplant deficit**" published in "The Hindu" on 29th September 2023.

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

News: This article talks about the severe kidney shortage in India, where laws make kidney swaps and chains hard, leading to few transplants. It explains that swaps and chains could increase transplants, but strict rules and lack of coordinating authority limit them. The article suggests India should adapt successful international practices to help its citizens and reduce illegal kidney sales.

What are the ways a patient can obtain a kidney?

Deceased Donor: A patient can receive a kidney from someone who has died, but limitations like the scarcity of donations and suitable infrastructure make this challenging.

Relative/Friend Donation: A patient can receive a kidney from a compatible relative or friend, but finding a compatible donor is often problematic.

Kidney Swaps: Swaps occur when two incompatible donor-recipient pairs exchange kidneys. For example, Sunita and Zoya, incompatible with their respective spouses, can swap donors if compatibility is found, allowing transplants to occur.

Kidney Chains: A kidney chain begins with an altruistic donor. This donor gives a kidney to a compatible recipient, whose incompatible donor gives to another compatible recipient, creating a chain of donations. The constraints in the current system, however, prevent the formation of such chains in most parts of India.

What are the reasons for kidneys shortage in India?

High Demand: In 2022, over two lakh people in India needed a kidney, but only about 7,500 transplants were done, showing a stark shortage.

Prevalence of Chronic Diseases: Chronic Kidney Disease (CKD) affects about 17% of India's population, mainly due to widespread diabetes, malnourishment, and poor living conditions, raising the demand for kidneys.

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Stringent Regulations: Strict laws in India limit kidney swaps to near-relatives in most states and prohibit kidney chains, except in Kerala, restricting the availability of kidneys for transplants.

Lack of Donations: There is a scarcity of kidney donations from deceased donors due to specific conditions on the nature of death and the lack of infrastructure needed to collect and store kidneys.

Limited Compatibility: Even when willing donors are available, like friends or relatives, often they are not a match in terms of blood type and tissue type, limiting the successful transplants.

Absence of Coordinating Authority: The lack of a national authority for managing and coordinating swaps restricts the potential to find compatible matches and facilitate more transplants.

What should be done?

Reform Regulations: Laws limiting kidney swaps and prohibiting kidney chains need to be relaxed to enhance kidney availability.

Promote Swaps and Chains: Encourage the implementation of kidney swaps and chains to maximize the utilization of available donors.

Altruistic Donations: Permit altruistic kidney donations to initiate kidney chains, providing more patients access to compatible kidneys.

Enhance Infrastructure: Improve the infrastructure to collect and store kidneys, making donations from deceased individuals more feasible.

National Coordinating Authority: Establish a central authority for coordinating swaps and chains, allowing a more extensive and diverse pool for compatible matches.

Adopt International Practices: Learn and incorporate successful regulations and practices from countries like Spain and the U.S. to facilitate more kidney exchanges and transplants.

25. Global dispute settlement, India and appellate review

Source: This post is created based on the article 'Global dispute settlement, India and appellate review' published in **The Hindu** on 30th Sep, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, International Relations

News: The G-20 Declaration emphasized the need for reforms in the World Trade Organization (WTO). It was aimed to enhance its functions and ensure a comprehensive dispute settlement system available to all members by 2024.

Significance of WTO's dispute settlement system

Firstly, the WTO's Dispute Settlement System (DSS) operates as a two-tier panel and appellate body. It has been non-functional since 2019 because U.S. blocked the appointment of appellate body members.

Second, WTO's DSS has been hailed as the crown jewel of the WTO.

Third, it has been more successful compared to the International Court of Justice (ICJ). ICJ has solved just around 190 cases since 1947 compared to 493 rulings by DSS since its establishment in 1995.

Fourth, it has the scope of appellate review and mechanisms to enforce rulings.

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Fifth, it ensures uniformity in the application of law globally, through the appellate review process at the international level.

What is the significance of Investor-State-Dispute Settlement (ISDS)?

With the U.S. leaning towards **dejudicialisation of international trade law**, **Investor-State-Dispute Settlement (ISDS)** has become a principle means to solve the international disputes.

ISDS mechanism is a key component of Bilateral Investment Treaties (BITs), which has seen 1,257 cases initiated as of January 1, 2023.

It offers a more comprehensive solution than existing mechanisms like annulment proceedings.

What are the challenges faced by ISDS?

The ISDS mechanism, primarily used to settle international investment law disputes, **lacks an appellate review**. The ISDS mechanism, without an appellate review, has resulted in **inconsistent and different decisions** of the same provision, creating instability for states and investors.

What should be done?

Introducing an appellate review in ISDS can rectify legal errors, harmonize varying interpretations, and bring coherence to the system.

Article 29 of the Indian model BIT also indicates that India seems to favor an appellate review in ISDS.

The United Nations Commission on International Trade Law or UNCITRAL's working group III, is focusing on ISDS reforms. It will be important to decide the form and mechanism that this appellate review system should follow.

26. Push for more women, this time in the police

Source: This post is created based on the article **'Push for more women, this time in the police'** published in **The Hindu** on 30th Sep, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 – Social Issues –

News: Recently, One Hundred and Twenty-Eighth Amendment Bill, 2023 has been passed. The bill reserves one-third of total seats in various legislative bodies for women for 15 years. The article proposes a similar reservation in the police force.

Read for more details of this section – [Women Reservation Bill-Explained Pointwise](#)

What is the present status of women in the police force?

Most states have policies to fill 30% or 33% of vacant police posts with women through horizontal reservation.

However, the actual representation of women in the State police force is around 10.47% as of January 1, 2021. As per Minister of State of the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) statement in the Rajya Sabha, the representation of women in the police force (as of January 1, 2022) remained at 11.7% of the total State police force.

The Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has urged states to increase this representation to 33%.

Facts that support the reservation for women in the police force

First, with changes in the criminal laws, certain procedures, like recording statements or conducting searches, mandate the involvement of a woman police officer.

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Second, National Crime Records Bureau data indicates that about 10% of total crimes were against women in 2021.

Third, The Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act has further increased the demand for women in the police force.

Fourth, Women have proven their capability in various police duties.

What steps have been taken by the government to promote gender equality in police force?

The MHA has **been incentivizing states** to implement police reforms, including merging women police with regular police and establishing recruitment boards.

women police have been merged with the regular police.

The MHA also provided **a special grant to encourage States** to establish a 'women desk' in every police station.

Most States have a policy to fill up 30% or 33% of the vacant posts (of direct recruitment) with women in their police forces through horizontal reservation.

What are the challenges in ensuring gender equality in police force?

Police' being a 'State' subject in the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution, the implementation of 'police reforms' remains primarily a concern of the States.

The actual percentage of women in the police force is not as per the state policy. **For example**, Bihar provides for 35% reservation for women and 3% for backward caste women, but the actual number of women in the force is about 17.4%. Whereas, in Himachal, there no such reservation policy, but 20% vacancies of constables are filled up by women.

Many states have not been enthusiastic in implementation of the reforms pushed by central government. The establishment of the Police Recruitment Board is one such reform.

To truly encourage more women to join the police force, states need to provide a conducive environment and essential infrastructure.

27. Taming Big Tech

Source: This post is created based on the article 'Taming Big Tech' published in **Business Standard** on 30th Sep, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 – Liberalization of Industrial Policies

News: Big Tech companies, often referred to as MAMAA (Meta, Amazon, Microsoft, Alphabet, and Apple), are facing increased scrutiny and legal challenges.

Recently, significant cases began in the US against Alphabet (Google) and Amazon.

Europe has already imposed massive fines on these tech giants and introduced new laws to increase competition and protect consumer rights.

In India, Google has been fined in two cases, with another still under review.

What are the concerns against these tech giants?

In the past, the internet was seen as a free space for businesses to grow. But now, concerns have risen about how **these companies use personal data, show paid content, and avoid taxes.**

The financial power of these companies is also huge. Their profitability rates double the S&P 500 average. Therefore, they can easily remove competition.

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They are criticized for **practices like pre-installing software, limiting interoperability**, and acquiring potential competitors.

These companies have become so powerful that they challenge governments.

Some of their actions, like **buying competitors or controlling too much of a market**, are being questioned. For example, Australia made a law to help news publishers get fair treatment.

What is the way forward for big techs?

These companies are defending themselves and making some changes. For example, Meta has stopped certain ads for teenagers, and Google is sharing more data.

However, it is not sufficient. They might have to make even bigger changes in the future.

General Studies Paper –3

General Studies - 3

1. Managing flows – Govt's dependence on foreign funds should be limited

Source: The post is based on the article “Managing flows – Govt's dependence on foreign funds should be limited” published in **Business Standard** on 25th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Capital Market

Relevance: About JP Morgan's decision to include Government of India (GoI) bonds.

News: JP Morgan's recent announcement about including Government of India (GoI) bonds in its emerging market government bond index has generated significant excitement in financial markets and the government.

What does this mean for Indian bonds?

JP Morgan's decision to include Government of India (GoI) bonds in its emerging market government bond index is expected to result in \$24 billion being deployed in GoI bonds, as India will have a weighting of 10% in the index.

As more assets track this index over time, the inflow of funds is likely to grow, and other indices may also consider inclusion GoI bonds over time, encouraging even active fund managers to increase allocation to GoI bonds.

What implications does this hold for the Indian economy?

The increase in demand for GoI bonds **will reduce the borrowing cost for the government**. Lower yields on GoI bonds could also benefit states and corporations by reducing their borrowing costs.

Additionally, **the influx of foreign capital can help finance the current account deficit**. These inclusions in international indices, which attract passive investment flows, are considered stable.

Moreover, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) began issuing GoI bonds to non-resident investors via the fully accessible route after a reference in the Union Budget 2020-21 indicated that certain bond categories would be fully open to foreign investors.

What are the risks associated?

There are risks associated with tapping foreign savings to finance the fiscal deficit, even if the debt is denominated in the domestic currency:

Increased volatility in bond and currency markets: Even passive flows can exhibit significant volatility at times of macroeconomic instability. This could lead to heightened volatility in both bond and currency markets.

Upward pressure on the currency: An increased level of debt flows could also put upward pressure on the currency, affecting the competitiveness of India's tradable sector.

As a result, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) may need to be more vigilant and intervene in the market to manage volatility.

What can be the way ahead?

First, if the idea is to lower the cost of money, it can be achieved by reducing the general government budget deficit, which will reduce the demand on domestic savings and bring down the cost of money and inflation.

Second, the fiscal deficit is usually higher in India than in its peers, which can crowd out the private sector. Increased foreign investment should not be seen as a way to run higher deficits. Instead, the government should be more disciplined.

Third, India needs to import capital for investment, but it has favored direct equity investment due to its advantages. Any shift from this stance should be carefully considered.

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2. Swift death of the 'Green Consensus'

Source: The post is based on the article “**Swift death of the 'Green Consensus'**– Countries across the world are scaling back their climate ambitions from the high points of the past few years” published in “Business standard” on 25th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment- climate change

News: This article discusses how, between 2020-2023, global leaders aimed for “green growth” in economic recovery plans to combat climate change. However, by late 2023, this consensus seems fragile and potentially reversible due to various challenges and shifting political priorities in several countries.

How does the green growth consensus build after the pandemic?

Global Leaders' Agreement: After the pandemic, leaders worldwide leaned into greener recovery packages. For instance, Joe Biden's Inflation Reduction Act in the U.S. allocated almost \$370 billion for clean energy.

China's Green Push: President Xi Jinping targeted newer, less carbon-intensive sectors. By 2023, China stood responsible for nearly half of the world's low-carbon spending. The nation's ambition was for carbon emissions to peak before 2030.

European Union's Roadmap: The EU quickly approved a \$1.2 trillion roadmap for green investments over the next decade, funded by new carbon tariffs on imports and member states' contributions.

Developing Countries' Initiatives: Countries like India, South Africa, Indonesia, and Vietnam initiated reforms. Notably, India aimed to triple its renewable energy by 2030 and targeted carbon neutrality by 2070.

Private Sector's Participation: Businesses worldwide focused on decarbonisation. Investments favored projects with high environmental, social, and governance (ESG) scores.

What are the challenges to the green growth consensus?

U.S. Political Turmoil: The United States faces the risk of having a climate-sceptic leader by 2025, which could reverse current green policies. The Inflation Reduction Act is also potentially weakened by compromises and lacks a carbon tax.

European Implementation Issues: Europe faces difficulties in green policy execution. Germany is reopening coalfields due to the Russian invasion, and there's a delay in the implementation of many provisions of the Green Deal due to objections from various sectors.

UK Policy Reversals: The United Kingdom, after a narrow election victory, has reversed many green policies, prioritizing voter appeasement over environmental considerations.

China's Re-evaluation: China is revisiting coal power due to power shortages and geopolitical conditions, approving new coal plants rapidly.

Depth of Global Commitment: The global commitment to green growth is questioned, as it seems the focus is more on economic growth and job creation, revealing a hesitancy to make genuine sacrifices for climate action.

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3. The Job Question – on unemployment data

Source: The post is based on the article “**The Job Question**– An extensive study finds troubling facts hidden in good headline employment numbers” published in “Times of India” on 25th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy- Employment

News: This article says India’s economy recovered well after the pandemic with a 9.1% rise in GDP. But, jobs, especially for women and young graduates, didn’t see the same recovery. Many women are in unpaid, self-employment roles. Youth unemployment is high, especially for educated people, suggesting many jobs are not quality. The article suggests this issue needs attention for India’s future development.

How has India’s economy recovered?

Economic Recovery

India’s GDP rose 9.1% in 2021-22, marking a sharp recovery and surpassing pre-Covid levels to ₹149.25 lakh crore.

Employment Trends

The unemployment rate fell to 6.6% in 2021-22, over two percentage points lower than 2019-20, showing increased employment post-Covid.

Employment data showed an increase in both men and women working post-Covid.

Women’s Employment

While more women are working, many are in self-employment and unpaid roles, indicating a structural deterioration in job quality for women.

Youth Unemployment

The unemployment rate for educated youth is over 20% until the age of 29, highlighting the lingering issue of job scarcity and quality for the young population.

Why addressing employment issues crucial for India’s development?

Importance of Women’s Employment: Addressing women’s employment is crucial as many are relegated to self-employment and unpaid work, reflecting structural deterioration in women’s job quality.

Youth Unemployment Concerns: Addressing this issue is vital to harness the potential of the young population.

Economic Stress: The 2% lower inflation-adjusted monthly earnings in 2021-22 compared to 2017-18 signal underlying economic stress, necessitating attention to job quality and opportunities.

Contribution to Development: Addressing these employment concerns is indispensable for leveraging the contribution of women and the youth, critical components for propelling India towards becoming a developed economy.

4. Our institutes of higher learning can produce a green generation

Source– The post is based on the article “**Our institutes of higher learning can produce a green generation**” published in the “**mint**” on **26th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment

Relevance- Issues related to green and sustainable economy

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News-

How could the Indian higher education sector play a key role in achieving sustainability by using emerging technologies?

Optimise sustainability through technology: Utilising modern technologies has the potential to make **sustainability a mainstream focus** on university and college campuses.

A global survey reveals that **87% of climate leaders** consider artificial intelligence as a valuable tool in addressing climate change.

Campuses can employ **Internet of Things, sensors** to collect **real-time data** on energy and water consumption. It will lead to **identification of inefficiencies and data-informed decision-making**. **Machine learning algorithms** can analyse this data to optimise system operations

ML can identify suitable locations for electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, optimise bike-sharing routes, and facilitate **data-driven sustainable architecture**.

The **combination of IoT sensors and big data analytics** can optimise energy and water usage while monitoring emissions across campuses through an **interconnected digital network**.

Implementing such solutions on a larger scale across Indian campuses can lead to **efficiency improvements** and uncover areas for enhancement. Furthermore, **digital twin technology** can create models of entire campuses for **sustainability scenario testing**.

Role of behavioural change: The adoption of technology should be accompanied by initiatives that **incentivize sustainable behaviours** among the 40 million students and 1.5 million teachers in our higher education institutions.

Techniques like **gamification and social comparisons** can motivate individuals to conserve electricity, water, and paper, as well as increase the use of public transit.

India's 1,200 universities and 40,000 colleges should prioritise programs that engage students in **environmentally friendly habits**. The collective impact of **sustainable individual choices** can complement **institutional efforts**.

HEIs should make **sustainability a way of life**, aligning with the vision of **Mission LiFE**. Sustainability should be **integrated into curricula and campus culture**.

Green habits can be fostered through **experiential learning opportunities** like campus gardens, recycling drives, and student-led green projects.

Colleges and universities can enlist **notable alumni and public figures** as role models to advocate for **low-carbon lifestyles**. Conferences and competitions can encourage **environmental awareness** and generate innovative ideas.

Simple changes, such as placing visible recycling bins, can prompt **eco-friendly behaviours**. Public commitments through **green pledges and social media campaigns** can inspire youth to align their actions with their values.

India's HEIs should instil **green values, attitudes, and habits** to empower students to lead in **sustainability efforts** long after graduation.

What is the potential for achieving sustainability in the current Indian scenario?

Indian youth are already increasingly advocating for action on **climate change**. A study shows that **78% of them** feel capable of addressing climate-related challenges. This commitment is reflected in the efforts of young environmentalists and climate activists.

The adoption of **sustainable practices** within India's higher education sector is of paramount importance. By 2035, this sector is expected to encompass 80 million students and 3 million teachers.

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5. Our chip-making game shows welcome realism

Source– The post is based on the article “Our chip-making game shows welcome realism” published in the “mint” on 26th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance- Semiconductor manufacturing

News– Recently, India’s electronics and infotech minister Ashwini Vaishnaw talked about focus on the emerging segment that remains largely unexploited in semiconductor manufacturing

What are some facts about ‘compound semiconductors’?

It is the next major innovation. These chips are claimed to be more **energy-efficient** and offer **superior thermal conductivity**. It enables **faster processing speeds**.

However, their high production cost has limited their usage to **specialized applications** in fields such as **telecommunications, power equipment, and automotive technology**.

This segment holds **significant sales potential**, but its **growth trajectory** will depend on factors such as the availability of raw materials and the enhancement of **chip performance**.

Why does a strategic approach, focusing on a specific niche rather than competing with major chip manufacturers appear more realistic?

In **emerging fields** where all participants are still developing their capabilities, local chip producers in India have a better chance of **attaining global competitiveness**.

In contrast, the silicon industry is already **highly competitive**. **Substantial investments** are being made in fabrication facilities in the EU, US, and China, primarily aimed at reducing reliance on imports from Taiwan.

What are the challenges in achieving global leadership in a specific niche?

The semiconductor industry is influenced by **geopolitics**. China has restricted the **exports of gallium** in response to tech restrictions imposed by the US.

Gallium is a **key component** used in **chip production** and is found in bauxite and zinc ores. Other players like the Vedanta Group could potentially secure a supply source for gallium compound chips. However, the actual progress of **locally produced niche chips** in the chip-making process remains uncertain.

6. Unseal And Pause- NDMA finding that Joshimath has overshot carrying capacity was expected

Source: The post is based on the article “Unseal And Pause- NDMA finding that Joshimath has overshot carrying capacity was expected. There’s a huge lesson here” published in “Times of India” on 26th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- disaster management

News: This article discusses the overdevelopment in Joshimath, a town in Uttarakhand, raising concerns about land stability and disaster risk, due to the area’s high seismic activity and landslide occurrence.

What is the main concern in Joshimath?

Overdevelopment Issue: Joshimath in Uttarakhand is undergoing excessive development.

Carrying Capacity: The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has confirmed that the town’s development has surpassed its acceptable limits.

Risk Factors:

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The region is in seismic activity zone V, indicating the highest level of seismic activity.

The state disaster management authority's map marks it as an area with a high incidence of landslides.

Historical Concerns: About 50 years ago, a committee raised concerns about land subsidence in Joshimath. They recommended linking construction to the soil's load-bearing capacity.

Recent Data: In 2023, over 1,100 landslides were reported in Uttarakhand till mid-September, a significant increase from 354 in 2021 and 245 in 2022. This suggests possible overburdening of the land.

What did the High Court say?

Questioned Secrecy: The High Court inquired why the information from NDMA was kept secret and submitted in a sealed envelope.

Importance of Transparency: It emphasized the need for governments to share critical information with the public openly.

Advocated for Open Collaboration: The court highlighted the value of open scientific collaboration to address and find solutions to such developmental and environmental concerns effectively.

What should be done?

Assess Carrying Capacity: Governments should conduct assessments to understand the carrying capacity of each region, especially in environmentally sensitive areas like the Himalayan states, to avoid overdevelopment.

Transparent Risk Assessment: There needs to be transparent risk assessments of infrastructure projects, considering the high seismic activity and incidence of landslides in regions like Joshimath.

Public Awareness and Transparency: Governments need to share crucial information openly with the public and avoid secrecy, as emphasized by the High Court, to ensure the residents are aware of the environmental risks and developmental challenges.

7. ExplainSpeaking: What's the link between GDP growth and employment in India

Source: The post is based on the article "ExplainSpeaking: What's the link between GDP growth and employment in India" published in "Indian express" on 26th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy- growth, development and employment.

News: The article discusses the concern that India's focus on growing GDP isn't leading to enough job creation, particularly quality jobs. It mentions the SWI 2023 report, showing that high GDP growth hasn't equated to substantial employment growth, especially for women, and quality jobs are lacking. Policymakers are advised to prioritize employment-focused strategies, including potentially exploring green manufacturing, to ensure more Indians secure stable, well-paying jobs.

About the State of Working India (SWI 2023) report:

Conducted by: Azim Premji University's Centre for Sustainable Employment.

Data Utilized: Uses official employment and unemployment data, including Periodic Labour Force Surveys (PLFS), National Family Health Surveys (NFHS), Census 2011, and Economic Census 2013, among others.

Focus: Analyses the long-run relationship between GDP growth and employment in India, assessing impacts on different social identities: caste, gender, and religion.

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What does the State of Working India (SWI 2023) report say?

Weak Relationship Between Growth and Employment: The SWI 2023 report indicates that the connection between GDP growth and employment in India is weak. Growth in GDP doesn't assure proportional job creation.

Employment Elasticity Declined: The report shows employment elasticity has consistently decreased between 1983 and 2017, meaning a 1% rise in GDP results in less than a 1% increase in employment.

Shift to Self-Employment (2017-2021): This period witnessed a surge in self-employment, often a result of inadequate hiring opportunities. In 2020-21, regular wage employment reduced by 2.2 million, while formal employment grew by 3 million and informal employment dropped by 5.2 million.

Impact on Different Groups: The employment benefits of growth aren't equally shared among genders, castes, or religions. Notably, women have been majorly disadvantaged in recent times.

How can job creation in India be improved?

Enhance Labour-Intensive Manufacturing: Some argue that India should intensify efforts in labour-intensive manufacturing to spur job creation, even if initially just for domestic consumption.

Pursue Diverse Growth Strategies: The report suggests that India needs diversified growth strategies that focus not just on GDP growth but also on creating quality jobs and addressing employment elasticity.

National Employment Policy: The development of a National Employment Policy, as outlined in the previous SWI report, can address both the demand and supply of labour and improve the quantity and quality of employment in India.

Explore "Green" Manufacturing: There's a discussion about exploring opportunities in green manufacturing, allowing India to redo its industrial evolution.

Address Structural Issues: Addressing structural issues in the economy related to caste, gender, and religion is crucial for equitable distribution of growth benefits.

8. There is a better way to capture the growth picture

Source: The post is based on the article "There is a better way to capture the growth picture" published in "Indian express" on 26th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy- Indian economy

News: The author discusses India's goal to become a \$5 trillion economy and the need for accurate GDP measurement. The article emphasizes updating the base year for national accounts statistics, which is overdue, to accurately reflect new economic activities and investments.

Is India's GDP measurement accurate?

The author talks about the need for accurate GDP measurement in India. Currently, India's GDP base year is 2011-12, making it outdated. An outdated base year might not capture new economic activities and investments made in recent years.

How can GDP measurement be improved?

Update Base Year: The GDP's base year needs updating from 2011-12 to accurately capture new economic activities.

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Use New Data Sets: Leveraging newly created databases from GST and digital payments will help in obtaining more accurate and current economic data.

Implement Supply Use Tables: These are critical for the validation of national accounts statistics, aiding in reconciling discrepancies in income and expenditure estimates.

Initiate Revision Process: Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation (MoSPI) and National Statistical Commission need to initiate the base year revision process immediately to avoid further delays and reflect the economy's true status.

Form Advisory Committees: MoSPI should form committees with experts from various fields to guide the revision of the national accounts statistics efficiently and accurately.

Publish Relevant Surveys: Results of surveys like the consumer expenditure survey need to be published to assist in the base revision exercise.

Why is accurate measurement of GDP important for India's economic goals?

Reflects True Growth: It provides a true representation of India's economic growth and development, considering the substantial investments made in the last decade.

Captures New Activities: A precise GDP measurement ensures that new economic activities and private initiatives are adequately included, providing a realistic economic picture.

Informs Policy: Accurate data is pivotal for effective policymaking and strategic planning, helping in the realization of India's goal to become a \$5 trillion economy.

Attracts Investments: Reflecting the true economic status can enhance India's global image and potentially attract more foreign investments.

Citizen Participation: It enables more informed and active participation from citizens in economic activities and discussions, fostering cooperation towards national economic goals.

9. Tackling the various myths within the field of microbiome research

Source- The post is based on the article "**Tackling the various myths within the field of microbiome research**" published in **The Hindu** on **27th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Science and Technology

News- A recent evaluation published in Nature Microbiology challenges the popular beliefs about microbes.

What are popular beliefs challenged by the evaluation published in Nature Microbiology?

The age of the field- The notion about microbiome research is that it is a recent development. But scientists had already documented the advantages of bacteria like Escherichia coli and Bifidobacteria as far back as the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The question of origin- Joshua Lederberg, a Nobel laureate in medicine, is often credited for coining the term in 2001. But the researchers had employed the term in its current context over a decade earlier. Researchers Whipps J.M., Lewis K., and Cooke R.C. had utilised the term in 1988 to describe a microbial community.

The number of microbes- There were widespread misconceptions pertaining to the scale of the microbiome. Number of microbial cells in a single gram of human faeces has been significantly overstated. According to the authors, the genuine figure falls within the range of 10^{10} to 10^{12} cells.

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The mass of the microbiome- Numerous research articles claimed that the human microbiota weighs between 1 to 2 kilograms. But its actual weight is approximately half a kilogram or even less.

From mother to child- Contrary to certain beliefs, mothers do not transmit their microbiomes to their children during birth. While a few microorganisms are directly transferred during childbirth, they make up only a small portion of the human microbiota.

Danger associated with microbes- Some researchers have proposed that diseases arise from unfavourable interactions between microbial communities and our cells.

However, the evaluation suggests that the beneficial or harmful nature of microbes and its byproducts depends on the specific circumstances.

The authors acknowledged that diseases have been linked to alterations in the microbiome's composition, and such changes could potentially exacerbate certain conditions such as inflammatory bowel disease.

Therefore, attributing a particular microbial profile or modifications in it to a specific disease is "extremely challenging."

Standardised methods- There is a prevailing belief that standardised methods are necessary for facilitating comparisons between various studies. However, as per evaluation there is no flawless methodology. Opting for a single universal approach would mean overlooking the inherent limitations associated with that chosen method.

The culturable microbiome- Many believe that cultivating microbes from the human microbiome in a laboratory setting is challenging.

However, the authors say that scientists were able to culture a variety of microbiome species from the gut during the 1970s. They noted that the existing gaps in culture collections can be attributed to a historical lack of effort rather than inability to culture these microbes.

10. Experts weigh in on criticism of GDP methodology

Source: The post is based on the article "**Experts weigh in on criticism of GDP methodology**" published in **Business Standard** on **27th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development

Relevance: Flaws in India's GDP calculation method.

News: Critics have pointed out flaws in India's GDP calculation method since the 2011-12 base year revision from 2004-05. This article examines three experts' views to understand the methodology amid these criticisms.

Why are critics highlighting GDP methodology issues after the shift to the 2011-12 base year, even though discrepancies on the expenditure side and deflator issues existed in the 2004-05 series?

First, the old GDP method employed physical indices, capturing real GDP effectively, while the new approach relies on price indices, better suited for nominal GDP.

In the past, numbers were inflated for nominal GDP, while the new method deflates them for real GDP. However, categorizing GDP for multiproduct firms is challenging in the new method.

Second, In India, production side GDP estimates are seen as the most comprehensive, while discrepancies are noted on the expenditure side. Hence, to mitigate discrepancies, supply-use tables (SUTs) can be employed.

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Third, critics' concerns seem unusual since the current GDP series is over 12 years old. The main issue should be updating the base year with recent indicators.

Should India consider Ashoka Mody's suggestion to average GDP growth rates from both production and expenditure sides without discrepancies, even though it hasn't done this previously?

First, unlike advanced countries like the US, India doesn't measure both sides of GDP independently, so averaging both sides isn't relevant for India.

Second, averaging across production and expenditure estimates is not a viable option and proper reference should be given from the UN System of National Accounts that permit such calculations.

Third, India has adopted the new system of national accounts, valuing GVA at basic prices and GDP at market prices.

Most sectors in India use the production approach for GDP calculation, but some rely on the income approach due to data challenges. Hence, balancing these methods can reveal discrepancies.

Did India's switch from factor cost to market prices as the GDP calculation methodology in the 2011-12 series represent a more suitable approach?

First, GDP was previously calculated at market prices, and GDP at factor cost is essentially GVA at basic prices, with minor differences related to taxes.

Second, India has always reported GDP at market prices. In the 2011-12 series, it introduced GVA at basic prices, aligning with international standards, by separating production taxes and subsidies from other taxes and subsidies.

Further, GVA at factor cost includes taxes and subsidies not directly related to production.

Third, it is difficult to say which measure of GDP is better as India adopted the new system of using GVA at market prices to conform to international standards.

Does the government claim that it first calculates real GDP in quarterly figures, suggesting that deflators' impact may be reduced?

First, the government calculates GDP using a mix of nominal prices and real prices, because the data that is available for different sectors is not always consistent.

Second, quarterly GDP is difficult to calculate because not all data is available for every quarter. The government uses a method called the Benchmark Indicator Method to project the missing data.

This is primarily done for estimates at constant prices, which are then deflated to get current price estimates.

Third, India has faced difficulties calculating GDP accurately due to problems with deflators. In the past, India used the WPI to measure inflation, but the rural and urban CPI is a better measure of inflation for households.

However, the WPI is still used most for measuring GDP, which means some of the problems with deflators will remain.

Should the Centre fix the gaps in GDP calculation when it revises the base year from 2011-12?

First, the UN-prescribed method for GDP calculation uses SUTs, which are time-consuming to produce and cannot be updated quarterly. To mitigate classification issues, SUTs should be generated annually.

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Second, the government is enhancing GDP estimates with better data by shifting from the 2011-12 Employment and Unemployment Survey, conducted every five years, to utilizing the annual and quarterly Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) starting from April 2017.

Third, CPI and GDP base year revision is overdue. However, the existing methodology should be retained, but better databases like GST and MCA data should be used at national and state levels.

11. The Data Maze- An overhaul of the statistical system is urgent

Source: The post is based on the article “**The Data Maze- It undermines economic policymaking**. An overhaul of the statistical system is urgent” published in **The Times of India** on 27th September 2023.

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

News: The article discusses concerns about unreliable agricultural data in India. Inaccurate farm output estimates affect decisions on imports, exports, and policy. Improvements are needed for informed policymaking, and technology like digital surveys and satellites may help in acquiring more accurate data.

What problems are caused by unreliable agricultural data in India?

Import Scrambles and Decision Making: Inaccurate agricultural data leads to urgent, last-minute decisions, like unexpected import needs due to underestimated domestic production, as noted by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

Mismatched Output Estimates: The GOI's wheat output estimate is about 10 million tonnes more than the market's for 2022-23, illustrating the discrepancies in agricultural data.

Export Bans and Domestic Prices: Unreliable data has led to the imposition of export barriers on rice and wheat despite an increase in production, affecting domestic prices.

Impact on Farmers and Reputation: Export bans due to unreliable data have negative consequences for farmers and undermine India's reputation as a reliable supplier.

Interest Rate Adjustments and Inflation: Inaccurate agricultural data complicates RBI's job of adjusting interest rates to control inflation, leading to potential economic instability.

What steps are being taken to improve data reliability?

Pilot Digital Crop Survey: GOI has initiated a pilot digital crop survey in 12 states, focusing on enhancing the reliability of data on crop acreage.

Advancements in Satellite Technology: ISRO's advances with satellites are being leveraged to possibly deliver more accurate and reliable agricultural data soon.

Emphasis on Real-Time Assessment: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman has emphasized the importance of real-time assessment of likely yields of crops to avoid last-minute scrambles and make informed decisions on imports.

Why is there a need for updated statistical systems?

Accurate Policy Implementation: The delay in updating the census has impacted multiple data sets that rely on it for building samples, affecting the relevance of guidelines in schemes, like the allocation for women farmers.

Changing Business Models: With the consequential change over the last decade from traditional to digital models, there's a pressing need to ensure that the statistical system and GDP base year are current and reflective of modern transitions.

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Accurate Data for Decision-Making: Updated and reliable statistical systems are crucial for making informed decisions on imports, exports, and domestic policies.

12. Green Hydrogen push will need to counter challenges

Source: The post is based on the article “Green Hydrogen push will need to counter challenges” published in “Indian express” on 27th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy- Infrastructure (renewable energy)

News: The article discusses India’s efforts to use green hydrogen, a clean fuel, for buses. The government aims to make India a hub for this fuel, reducing reliance on imported fossil fuels and cutting emissions. However, producing green hydrogen needs a lot of water and electricity from renewable sources, which are challenges.

What is India’s Green Hydrogen Mission?

Objective: To make India a hub for green hydrogen, a clean fuel.

Initial Steps: Tested two buses running on green hydrogen with plans to introduce 15 more by year’s end.

Ambitious Target: Aims to produce 5 million tones green hydrogen annually by 2030.

Benefits:

Reducing dependence on imported fossil fuels, saving Rs 1 lakh crore.

Averting 50 million metric tonnes of greenhouse gas emissions.

What are the challenges in the production of green hydrogen?

Renewable Energy Needs: India needs to add about 100 GW of renewable energy capacity every year to achieve its green hydrogen goals.

Water Scarcity: The production process requires 8-9 litres of water per kg of hydrogen, posing challenges in water-stressed areas.

Limited Electrolyser Capacity: The current global manufacturing capacity of electrolysers is around 10 GW, but India may need six to 10 times the world’s current capacity to meet its 2030 target.

Safety Concerns: Green hydrogen is highly flammable, creating significant safety and transport challenges.

How is India planning to overcome these challenges?

Development and Investment: India is investing in the development of electrolyser technology to enhance green hydrogen production capacity.

Collaboration with Indian Oil Corporation: The government is collaborating with Indian Oil Corporation to leverage its proven capacities for the green hydrogen vehicle project.

Addressing Safety Concerns: Initial hydrogen-powered buses will not be carrying passengers to tackle the safety concerns due to hydrogen’s highly inflammable nature.

International Partnerships: The government is seeking to forge partnerships with other nations to gain more expertise and access to markets.

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13. OSIRIS-REx's success, and Bennu's gift of knowledge from the heavens

Source: The post is based on the article “OSIRIS-REx's success, and Bennu's gift of knowledge from the heavens” published in “Indian express” on 27th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and technology- Awareness in the fields of Space

News: This article is about NASA's OSIRIS-REx mission, which collected rock samples from the asteroid Bennu and returned them to Earth, helping scientists learn about the solar system's history and how life may have started on Earth.

What is the OSIRIS-REx mission?

OSIRIS-REx Mission Overview:

NASA's project to study asteroid Bennu.

Aimed to collect and return rock samples to Earth.

Launched in 2018 and successfully collected samples from Bennu.

The mission faced many challenges, including initial project approval issues.

It's the “first American asteroid sample return in history.”

Significance of Bennu:

Discovered in 1999.

Believed to have formed between Mars and Jupiter.

Thought to hold clues about the solar system's history and Earth's life origins.

Comparative Note:

Unlike past Japanese missions, OSIRIS-REx brought back a considerable amount of material, offering more extensive insights.

Mission Outcomes:

Samples safely landed in Utah.

Detailed study results will be available in October, promising new understanding of our universe.

14. Why are tigers dying in Nilgiris district?

Source: The post is based on the article “Why are tigers dying in Nilgiris district?” published in “The Hindu” on 28th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment – Ecology and environment

News: This article discusses the concerning deaths of ten tigers, including cubs, in the Nilgiris since August. The reasons include factors like fighting, possible poisoning, and starvation. Officials are intensifying protection efforts, and conservationists express concern about rising tiger populations leading to increased human-animal conflicts. They also emphasize the need to restore degraded habitats.

What are the possible reasons for tiger deaths?

Starvation or Infection: Six cubs, believed to be two weeks old, possibly died due to starvation or umbilical infection.

Injuries from Fights: Several adult tigers were found dead with injury marks, suggesting deaths due to fights with other animals.

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Poisoning: One larger male tiger is suspected to have been poisoned after consuming a poisoned carcass of a cow.

High Density of Tigers: The high density of tigers in the Mudumalai-Bandipur-Nagarhole complex is leading to more tigers moving to surrounding habitats, causing increased competition and more deaths.

Why are conservationists worried?

Concern for Missing Tigresses: Conservationists are worried about the inability to locate the mothers of the six dead cubs, raising concerns over their well-being.

Poaching Incidents: The arrest of four poachers from Rajasthan earlier in the year has heightened concerns over the safety of the tigers in the region.

Increased Human-Tiger Conflicts: The rise in tiger population in the Nilgiris Division raises fears of more negative human-animal interactions in the future.

Degraded Habitats: There's a pressing need to regenerate degraded habitats for the tigers' prey, as emphasized by conservationists, to ensure the well-being of the animals.

How are officials responding?

Establishing Anti-Poaching Camps: To combat potential poaching, officials are establishing anti-poaching camps in six forest ranges surrounding Mukurthi National Park.

Annual Monitoring: The forest department is initiating annual monitoring of tiger populations in the Nilgiris Forest Division, focusing on various parameters to facilitate better management.

Enhanced Patrolling: Officials have increased patrolling around key tiger habitats in Mukurthi and Mudumalai to safeguard the tigers and address concerns related to their well-being.

15. What does a drop in household financial savings imply for India?

Source- The post is based on the article "What does a drop in household financial savings imply for India?" published in "The Hindu" on 28th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3 – Economy

Relevance- Issues related to savings and investment in the economy

News- The household financial savings data recently published in the latest issue of the RBI bulletin indicated that India's net household financial savings rate had declined to only 5.1% of GDP in 2022-23, the lowest in decades.

What are the factors behind the decline in financial savings rate?

It can largely be attributed to an increase of around **2% of GDP in financial liabilities** in 2022-23 compared to both 2021-22 and 2019-20.

The largest component of these liabilities by a considerable margin is **bank loans**. **Borrowing from NBFCs** comes in a distant second, followed by **housing finance and insurance**.

Between the years 2020-21 and 2022-23, there has been a substantial decrease in the proportion of **household borrowing from banks**. The share of **borrowing for housing finance** has also decreased during this period.

However, there has been a significant increase in the share of **borrowing from NBFCs**. It has surged from 2.4% in 2021-22 to 15.2% in 2022-23.

What can be inferred from decline in the financial savings rate?

The decrease in **net household financial savings** primarily reflects an increase in the **financial obligations** of the household sector.

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This shift is a consequence of households moving away from borrowing from **traditional banks**, and seeking loans from **non-banking financial companies (NBFCs)**.

Bank credit has experienced significant growth, a substantial portion of this expanded **credit flow** has been directed towards NBFCs, real estate, and personal loans rather than industrial purposes.

Furthermore, the **non-performing asset ratios** of both private and public sector commercial banks have notably improved.

It appears that there has been a substantial surge in the **demand for loans from households**. However, banks have adhered to **strict lending criteria**. These borrowers, who may not meet the **stringent creditworthiness requirements**, have turned to NBFCs.

As a result, banks have managed to **clean up their balance sheets** while transferring the **associated risk** to NBFCs.

However, it's crucial to recognize that the **overall risk exposure of the financial sector** has not decreased. In fact, it has increased due to the **rising indebtedness** of the household sector.

Is there a substantial decrease in household savings rate?

The reduction in India's **net household financial savings rate** does not signify an **abrupt decline** in either the **household savings rate** or the **domestic savings rate**.

In 2021-22, both rates stood at **19.7% and 30.2% of GDP**, respectively. It is slightly higher than in 2019-20.

A **savings rate of 30.2%** also surpasses that of many other emerging market and developing economies. However, it falls short when compared to the rates achieved during most of the past two decades

16. Timeless quest- Benu sample can help human understanding beyond the immediate

Source: The post is based on the article "**Timeless quest- Benu sample can help human understanding beyond the immediate**" published in "**The Hindu**" on 28th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and technology- Awareness in the fields of Space

News: This article discusses NASA's OSIRIS-REx mission, which collected rock samples from the ancient asteroid Benu. The mission's goals include studying the solar system's history, understanding the origins of life, and learning how to prevent future asteroid collisions with Earth.

Why is Benu significant?

Ancient Origins: Benu settled into its present form and composition soon after the solar system's formation, offering insight into our cosmic history.

Potential Earth Impact: Benu could collide with Earth between 2178 and 2290, making it vital to study and devise prevention strategies.

Proximity to Earth: Benu's orbit brings it relatively close to Earth every six years, making it accessible for study

Carbonaceous Composition: It is a carbon-rich asteroid, offering insights into the solar system's ingredients.

How does this mission contribute to science and safety?

Life's Origin Exploration: The mission participates in the timeless quest to find out where life came from, by examining asteroids believed to have delivered life-forming compounds to Earth.

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Impact Mitigation Technologies: Studying Benu is pivotal for developing technologies and strategies to avoid its potential collision with Earth between 2178 and 2290.

Complementary Research: Working alongside Japan's Hayabusa missions, it enriches global scientific understandings of asteroids, building a comprehensive view of our cosmic neighborhood.

Read more: [OSIRIS-REx's success, and Benu's gift of knowledge from the heavens](#)

17. Drawing the line- Information aids public safety, and is not a trigger for panic

Source: The post is based on the article "Drawing the line- Information aids public safety, and is not a trigger for panic" published in "The Hindu" on 28th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- disaster management

News: Article discusses land-subsidence in Joshimath, Uttarakhand due to infrastructure projects, causing safety concerns. Reports reveal non-compliance to building codes and highlight need for sustainable development, public risk information, and informed policymaking.

What do the technical reports say about the sinking of Joshimath?

Non-Compliance to Building Codes: The Central Building Research Institute revealed that 99% of construction in the region isn't compliant with mandatory building codes, raising safety concerns.

Sensitive Geological Conditions: The reports emphasize the fragile geology of Uttarakhand, making it risky for city-like infrastructure projects.

Need for Monitoring: The National Institute of Hydrology highlighted the importance of monitoring springs, drainage systems, and areas of subsidence to understand their influence on land subsidence.

What are the recommendations for the future?

Adherence to Building Codes: The technical reports stress adherence to mandatory building codes to ensure structural safety in the unstable geology of the region.

Monitoring of Geological Aspects: Monitoring springs, drainage systems, and areas of subsidence is crucial to understand their influence on land subsidence.

Public Awareness and Information Dissemination: Information on risks should be widely disseminated, and the public should be made aware of the risks involved in the region.

Independent Scientific Counsel in Policymaking: The incorporation of advice from independent scientific counsel is essential to form policies that respect the geological limitations of the region.

Read more: [Unseal And Pause- NDMA finding that Joshimath has overshot carrying capacity was expected](#)

18. GDP doesn't mean much for economy

Source- The post is based on the article "GDP doesn't mean much for economy" published in "The Hindu" on 28th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Indian Economy – Indian economy and growth

News- The article explains the issues of overemphasis on growth for measuring the economic well-being of the population.

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What are issues related to overemphasis on GPP for measuring the economic well-being of the population?

Just last month, nearly 20 million families sought minimum wage employment through the MGNREGA.

This high **MGNREGA demand** reflects the **economic hardship** faced by Indian households.

Some segments perceive **economic prosperity**. It's primarily a small, vocal segment of the population. This view is supported by factors like **continuous stock market growth**, the emergence of **billion-dollar startup unicorns**.

However, it's crucial to recognize that this celebration is **not representative** of the vast majority of the population.

The concern isn't just about the GDP data. It's about the concept of GDP being treated as the **ultimate measure of overall economic health**.

The economic well-being of millions of Indians cannot be accurately captured by GDP metrics. For instance, a fully automated semiconductor manufacturing plant may boost GDP but won't create **substantial employment opportunities** for low-skilled individuals.

Contrary to the conventional belief that high incomes for a few will benefit many, this **trickle-down effect** doesn't happen.

What is the way forward?

There's an urgent need for a fundamental shift in our **economic discourse and narrative**. This transformation must begin with political parties and their leaders, and it should be a bipartisan effort in the nation's interest.

The focus should shift from **headline GDP figures to labour market information**. This should be the primary concern for the political leadership, rather than **comparing GDP growth** during different tenures.

19. Let us not resurrect the ghost of retro taxation

Source: The post is based on the article "Let us not resurrect the ghost of retro taxation" published in **Live Mint** on **28th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development, Taxation

Relevance: concerns with high GST on online casinos and gaming platforms.

News: The government's decision to impose 28% GST on online casinos and gaming platforms is having a devastating impact on the industry.

What are the issues involved?

Many companies are facing tax bills that are much higher than their revenue, and some are facing closure. It is also estimated that the industry could eventually owe around ₹1.5 trillion, including penalties.

The Indian government is demanding a huge amount of GST from online gaming companies, claiming that they have underpaid in the past. However, the companies argue that the government is applying the tax retrospectively, which is unfair.

Further, the government and online gaming industry are in a dispute over GST revenue definitions. **Companies claim only their service fees are revenue, while the government insists the total customer wagers count as revenue.**

Must Read: [Online gaming and its regulations in India – Explained](#)

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What lies ahead?

Betting companies may have been interpreting tax rules in their favor. Since they were not licensed to hold public money, they should not have treated all inflows as revenues.

Further, their attempt to distance themselves from gambling and talk about gaming skills was also pointless, since their services are not essential.

However, the companies may have a case if the tax they are being asked to pay is found to be based on the new law passed this year. This is because it is not clear what the original law was, and they are being asked to settle past taxes.

Therefore, the government should be cautious in its arguments, as past incidents like the Vodafone case have shown that prioritizing revenue over principles can harm India's business-friendly image.

20. KEEPING Small Finance Bank (SFBs) AFLOAT

Source– The post is based on the article “KEEPING SFBs AFLOAT” published in “The Business Standard” on 29th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance- Issues related to banking sector

News– The article explains the issues related to Small finance banks (SFBs).

What are some facts about Small Finance Banks (SFBs)?

They are designed to promote **financial inclusion**, serve as **avenues for savings**, and provide credit to small businesses, marginalized farmers, and the informal sector through **technologically advanced, cost-effective operations**.

What are the challenges faced by Small finance banks (SFBs)?

Priority sector lending targets- SFBs have a **priority sector lending target** set at **75 percent** of their loan book, with a significant portion of it being **unsecured loans**. Meeting this target is challenging.

Alternative methods to bridge the gap, such as **securitization or co-lending** with non-banking financial companies, are not available to them.

In contrast, universal banks have a **priority sector lending target of 42 percent** of their loan book.

Higher cost of deposits- Another concern is the **higher cost of deposits for SFBs** compared to universal banks. This higher interest expense increases their overall funding costs.

Banking license requirements- Many initially saw SFBs as a stepping stone towards obtaining a **universal banking license**. The SFB operating guidelines mentioned their eligibility for transitioning to a universal bank after five years of operation. However, there is now a demand for a **detailed roadmap for the application and conversion**.

Raising of capital- Several prominent private equity firms have invested in the small finance bank sector. However, considering the **stock performance of SFBs**, raising additional capital may not be straightforward.

Structural issues- The structural issues had plagued the sector even before the pandemic. On the **liability side**, SFBs had **limited savings and current accounts** and heavily relied on bulk deposits and term deposits from cooperative banks.

On the asset side, a disproportionately large portion of their loans consisted of **unsecured microfinance loans**.

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What is the way forward?

A paper titled “Performance of SFBs — An Early Reflection” in the RBI’s August 2021 bulletin suggested that factors such as **efficiency, leverage, liquidity, and banking business** are crucial for SFBs’ profitability.

SFBs should also have a **42 percent target priority sector lending target**. This change would help reduce the risk of concentration.

As per **Reserve Bank of India’s Internal Working Group (IWG)**, SFBs should be listed “within six years from the date of reaching a net worth equivalent to prevalent entry capital requirement prescribed for universal banks,” or “ten years from the date of commencement of operations,” whichever comes first.

21. We should join the WTO’s investment facilitation talks

Source– The post is based on the article “We should join the WTO’s investment facilitation talks” published in the “mint” on **28th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy

Relevance- Issues related to WTO

News– On 6 July 2023, over 110 of the WTO 164 members concluded text-based negotiations on the Agreement on Investment Facilitation for Development (IFA).

What are some facts about IFA (Investment Facilitation Agreement)?

The primary goal of the IFA is to create a business environment that is favourable to investors.

The IFA primarily focuses on **FDI**.

It achieves this by implementing **transparent and predictable investment measures, streamlining administrative procedures** related to investment, and establishing **mechanisms for international cooperation**.

IFA does not cover areas like **market access, investment protection, government procurement, specific subsidies, or investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS)**. It contains safeguards to shield it from **international investment agreements (IIAs)**.

In essence, the IFA is not aimed at liberalising investment policies. Its objective is to simplify investment procedures.

IFA incorporates provisions for **special and differential treatment**, which adjust the **scope and timeline** of the agreement’s implementation for developing and least developed countries based on their respective capacities.

The IFA also includes provisions for providing **technical assistance and capacity building** to these countries.

What is the difference between investment facilitation and investment promotion?

UNCTAD’s Global Action Menu for Investment Facilitation draws a distinction between the two approaches.

While both aim to attract foreign investment, promotion places emphasis on showcasing a particular location as an **attractive investment destination**.

In contrast, facilitation concentrates on **simplifying the process** for foreign investors to establish or expand their businesses. **Investment facilitation** seeks to address practical challenges encountered by foreign investors.

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What are issues faced by international investment agreements (IIAs)?

High-standard investment protection provisions have been included within international investment agreements.

Their **inconsistent interpretation** by various arbitration panels has constrained the **policy flexibility** available to host countries to regulate in alignment with their developmental priorities.

For instance, India has terminated its **older bilateral investment treaties (BITs)** and is in the process of negotiating new agreements based on its 2016 Model BIT text.

What is India's approach towards investment facilitation?

India does not fundamentally oppose the **concept of investment facilitation**. Recent **India-UAE agreement** in 2022 and the **India-Brazil BIT** in 2020, include provisions related to investment facilitation.

India is also a participant in the **BRICS Understanding on Investment Facilitation** and signed a similar mechanism with the EU in 2017.

Why has India decided to not participate in the IFA (Investment Facilitation Agreement) talks?

- India is against utilising the WTO as a platform for **investment facilitation**, as it holds the misconception that **investment matters** fall outside the WTO's mandate. Instead, India prefers **bilateral negotiations** for investment provisions.
- India perceives the IFA as part of a strategy by developed nations to initiate **investment facilitation** within the WTO, possibly followed by the introduction of **contentious investment protection rules** at a later stage.
- India opposes **plurilateral agreements** within the WTO, as they bypass the **consensus decision-making process**.
- India is against the inclusion of '**Most Favoured Nation**' (MFN) provisions in the IFA due to past negative experiences, such as the repercussions faced after including an MFN provision in its Australia BIT.

How WTO's investment facilitation framework is a potential opportunity for India?

New Delhi has opened up foreign investment in most sectors, and participation in the IFA could advance the goal of attracting foreign direct investment (FDI). India is also a **capital-exporting country**, and involvement in the IFA could facilitate its overseas investments.

India has ambitious aspirations for achieving a **\$5 trillion economy by 2025-26**. Therefore, it is essential for the country to move beyond a mindset shaped by **historical experiences**, and actively engage in shaping the **global economic framework**.

22. Swaminathan walked ahead of his time: scientific community

Source: The post is based on the article "**Swaminathan walked ahead of his time: scientific community**" published in "The Hindu" on 29th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Science and technology- Achievements of Indians in science & technology.

News: The article is honoring M.S. Swaminathan, a respected agricultural scientist from India who recently passed away. It discusses his significant contributions to agriculture, including developing high-yield crops and promoting innovative farming methods.

Who was M.S. Swaminathan?

M.S. Swaminathan was a respected figure in Indian agriculture, known for his roles as a scientist, researcher, academic, and administrator.

He was a professor at the Indian Agricultural Research Institute, inspiring students like Trilochan Mohapatra with his encouragement and passion for agricultural research and findings.

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His dedication to agriculture and his impactful work left a lasting imprint on various national agricultural science institutions like ICAR and IARI.

He maintained a lifelong commitment to discussing and contributing insights to agricultural research and developments.

What are his significant contributions to agriculture?

Developed High-Yielding Basmati Rice Varieties: This was a crucial contribution to food security.

Innovative Application of Mutation and Genetics: Used for improving various crops and increasing agricultural production.

Launched “Lab to Land” Programmes: These programmes were intended to bring research directly to the farmers.

Focused on Nutritional Quality: Through mutation of crops and bio-fortification, he aimed at enhancing the nutritional value of agricultural produce.

Supported States in Promoting Agriculture: He provided funding and support to various states to promote agricultural development and precision farming.

Advocacy through National Academy of Agricultural Sciences: Worked to promote agriculture and supported the establishment of a Central Institute for Women in Agriculture.

Research on C4 Carbon Fixation in Rice: His leadership at the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) focused on cultivating rice with improved photosynthesis and water utilization capabilities.

Championed Farmers’ Cause: Advocated for fair prices, access to technology, and social justice within the agricultural landscape.

23. Narco Taliban – Why Afghan meth is India’s big headache

Source: This post is created based on the article ‘Narco Taliban’ published in **The Times of India** on 30th Sep, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 – Internal Security

News: Methamphetamine, a strong illegal drug, is becoming more popular worldwide, with Afghanistan as a key source. This drug is replacing heroin.

Afghanistan has now become a hub for methamphetamine.

The UN office on drugs and crime (UNODC) has emphasized the increase in meth trafficking from Afghanistan.

What are the efforts taken by government to fight drug menace from Afghanistan?

Government has launched **Operation Samudragupt** to combat maritime drug trafficking from Afghanistan.

The amount of seized meth in India has seen a significant rise from 4.2 kg in 2018 to 357 kg in 2022.

What are the challenges in front of India?

According to the European Foundation for South Asian Studies, Afghanistan is transforming into a **narco-state**. Illegal drug has now become the **dominant economic sector**.

The **natural presence of ephedra plants in Afghanistan**, a key ingredient for meth, makes the situation even more challenging.

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The **drug's affordability** and India's growing youth unemployment create a high-risk environment. There's a risk unemployed youth might start using the affordable drugs.

24. 40th...Now What? India's Innovation Index 2023

Source: This post is created based on the article '40th...Now What?' published in **The Times of India** on 30th Sep, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 – Indian Economy – India's Industrial Policies

News: India's innovation rank in 2023 index is still too low.

India's rise to 40th position in the World Intellectual Property Organisation's global innovation index.

India has jumped 26 places over the last ten years. It is an appreciable rise. However, India is still low, when compared to other countries.

What are the challenges?

First, Countries like Turkey, Vietnam, the Philippines, and Iran have seen even more significant progress.

Second, India's modest R&D expenditure poses challenges for its future competitiveness. The index points out that adhering to Moore's Law is becoming costlier. It anticipated the doubling of computer chip speed and capability every 18-24 months. Establishing factories for advanced chips requires investments exceeding \$20 billion.

Third, India has only 4 science and technology clusters in the top 100 globally, compared to China's 24 and the US's 21. While Japan, Canada, and South Korea also have 4 clusters, their populations are much smaller than India's.

Concentration of innovation and capital in cities like Bengaluru, Delhi, Chennai, and Mumbai indicates that a significant portion of India's potential remains untapped.

25. India's wildlife, decimated by hunting and forest exploitation, found succour in national parks

Source: This post is created based on the article 'India's wildlife, decimated by hunting and forest exploitation, found succour in national parks' published in **The Times of India** on 30th Sep, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 – Biodiversity Conservation

News: Article discusses the evolution of forest and wildlife conservation efforts in India.

Evolution of the forest and wildlife conservation in India

Evolution of forest conservation

In the late 19th century, India witnessed massive deforestation, leading to discussions about setting aside land for ecological reasons.

The colonial government reserved about a quarter of India for forests, primarily in timber-rich regions like the Western Ghats and Central Provinces. It later became the foundation for national parks.

This was in response to concerns about sustaining the colonial military and railways, which relied heavily on forest resources.

Evolution of wildlife conservation

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Concerns about wildlife conservation emerged in the 1920s, against the backdrop of rampant hunting. The first national park was established in 1936, but the destruction of forests and hunting persisted.

Wildlife Protection Act was introduced in 1972, which banned commercial forestry and hunting in protected areas. In 1976, wildlife conservation became a shared responsibility between the central and state governments.

What were the challenges faced by conservation efforts?

The forest department's dual role in logging and conservation posed conflicts.

Officers faced threats from the hunting lobby and sometimes their colleagues.

What is the present state of conservation efforts?

Challenges: 1) Reduced Forest area and minimal growth in protected regions.

2) Poaching remains a concern in many areas.

3) Indian national parks differ from those worldwide due to land constraints and high population density.

4) to balance wildlife conservation with the needs of communities living around national parks

Significance: Species like rhinoceros, lions, tigers, elephants, and the brow-antlered deer have benefited from national parks.

The focus now should be on expanding protected areas and ensuring the robustness of wildlife protection laws.

26. Extended exclusion – on AFSPA

Source: This post is created based on the article 'Extended exclusion – on AFSPA' published in **The Hindu** on 30th Sep, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 – Internal Security

News: The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA) will remain in effect in the hill areas of Manipur for another six months from October.

This decision comes amidst the ongoing violent ethnic conflict between the Meitei and the Kuki communities since May.

Why is the decision to extend AFSPA in the hill area criticized?

The decision to exclude the Imphal valley from AFSPA imposition has been criticised by many sections in the state. The army feels that absence of the law is hampering its operations against insurgent groups in the area. These groups may be using the unrest to gain a foothold in the State.

On the other hand, it is also being seen as another instance of the government's partisan conduct.

What is the rationale provided by the government for its decision?

The decision to maintain the status quo on 'disturbed areas' might be due to the challenges in assessing the ground situation amidst ongoing law and order maintenance.

What should be done?

Given the tensions between the community and the Assam Rifles, there's a risk of escalating conflicts. The Centre needs to prioritize reconciliation efforts between the two communities to prevent further deterioration.

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27. On semiconductors, jugaad won't do

Source: The post is based on the article “On semiconductors, jugaad won't do” published in **The Indian Express** on **30th September 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indigenization of Technology, Growth & Development

Relevance: Benefits and challenges associated with setting up semiconductor fabrication unit in India.

News: India is finally building its first semiconductor fabrication unit, which is a significant advancement for the country, promising both economic and geopolitical advantages.

How has India's industrial policy evolved from the 1970s to the present day?

Unlike the 1970s when people had a negative view of a protected or tariff-controlled economy, today, there is more acceptance of industrial policies that support specific sectors, and protectionism is no longer seen negatively.

Further, India's economy has grown a lot in recent years. **It is now the third-largest economy in the world in purchasing power parity terms**, and people in India are consuming more goods and services.

What potential benefits can the new semiconductor fabrication unit bring to the country?

India is a leader in the design of semiconductors, and many Indians and people of Indian origin work for top tech companies around the world. However, India's manufacturing sector is still not very strong.

Therefore, India's new semiconductor fab has the potential to help the country make more parts and components, and to create more jobs for skilled workers.

What challenges are associated with establishing a semiconductor fabrication unit in India?

India needs a culture of excellence for semiconductor success. **Indian products often fall short in last-mile aspects like** packaging, after-sales service, and finishing touches due to “jugaad” instead of innovative solutions.

Further, **a lack of international standards has encouraged subpar products and boosted the repair industry's growth**. Additionally, irregular power supply issues have resulted in expensive captive power plant construction.

However, jugaad won't work for semiconductors as they can't handle power fluctuations, even the slightest interruption can lead to million-dollar losses.

Hence, **semiconductor manufacturing process must be perfect, packaging must meet high standards, and transportation impeccable**.

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

What can be the way ahead?

China spent decades moving up the value chain, while India is just beginning. Hence, to succeed, **India must link areas of excellence with the broader economy**.

Until this integration occurs, **new semiconductor fabs will need safeguards from market and government failures**, similar to the way ISRO was protected to achieve excellence, including lunar missions.

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28. As illicit trade booms, seizure mount

Source: The post is based on the article “As illicit trade booms, seizure mount: 3.5 tonnes of gold, 18 crore cigarette sticks and 90 tonnes of heroin caught in FY23” published in **The Indian Express** on 30th September 2023.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Internal Security – Linkages of Organized Crime with Terrorism

Relevance: Findings of the report related to organized crimes in India

News: A report titled ‘Hidden Streams: Linkages Between Illicit Markets, Financial Flows, Organised Crime and Terrorism’ has been released recently by FICCI CASCADE.

What are the key findings of the report?

Illicit Financial Flows – Value Gap India (2009-2018): India has faced significant financial losses from misinvoiced imports and exports, with import misinvoicing alone causing a \$9 billion loss in government tax revenue.

Additional losses come from uncollected value-added tax (VAT), customs charges, and corporate income tax.

Between 2009 and 2018, misinvoicing caused a total value gap of over \$674.9 billion, leading to significant revenue losses to the government.

Terror and Crime in India: Economic Impact of Violence for India: India spends a lot of money on fighting terrorism and crime because the country is facing a growing number of security threats. In 2021, it spent \$1170 billion at PPP, **equivalent to 6% of its GDP.**

Approximately 80% of these expenditures are dedicated to security measures. The report predicts that as India’s economy expands, the expenses associated with addressing terrorism and crime will also rise.

Organised Crime and Illegal Economy in India: As per data from the Global Organized Crime Index (2021), **India’s organized crime actors have a relatively low aggregate score** of 4.3, compared to the global benchmark of 5.2 among 122 countries.

However, **India’s criminal networks score is higher at 6, exceeding the 5.8 average** due to their widespread involvement in illegal activities, including drug and human trafficking, as well as the illegal wildlife trade.

Further, **India’s overall illegal economy** scores is at 6.3, surpassing the 5-country average among 122 surveyed. **(Chart 1)**

This implies that India has fewer criminal actors but a wider involvement in illegal activities like drug and human trafficking, as well as the illegal wildlife trade.

Drug Economy in India: India’s proximity to major drug-producing regions like the Golden Triangle and Golden Crescent has led the transportation and distribution of controlled substances.

In recent years, drug trafficking in India has surged, with over twice as many drug seizures in 2014-2022 compared to 2006-2013. **The report identified cannabis as the prevalent drug in India** along with synthetic drugs and heroin surpassing the global average.

What lies ahead?

Central Board of Indirect Taxes and Customs Chairman Sanjay Kumar Agarwal stressed that combating illicit trade, including counterfeiting, smuggling, and tax evasion, is vital for preserving India’s economic stability.

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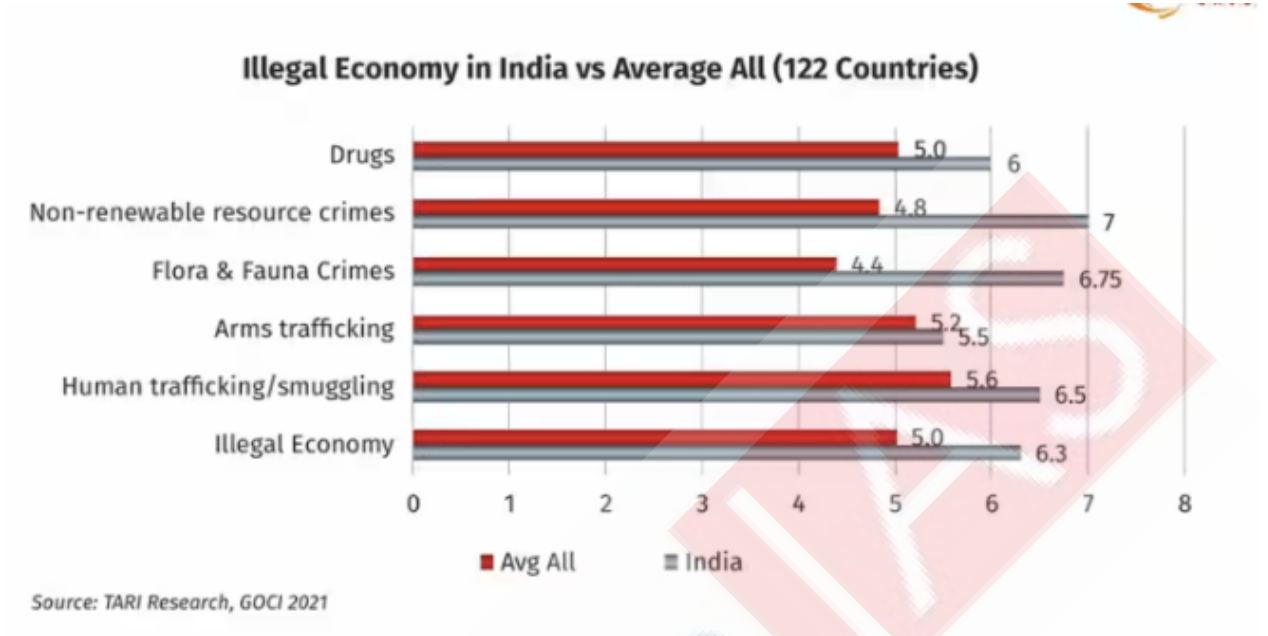


Chart 1

Source: The Indian Express