9 PM Compilation

October, 2023

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General Studies - 4

1. **We must inculcate sound values for education to be meaningful**

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General

Studies

Paper –1

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General Studies - 1

1. **Capturing the rains – on unpredictable weather events**

Source: This post is created based on the article **'Capturing the rains',** published in **The Hindu** on 3rd October, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 1, changes in critical geographical features and effect of such changes

News: India recorded its first monsoon deficit since 2018. The mains reason is said to be El Nino effect this year.

From 2019-2022, the Indian monsoon was primarily influenced by La Niña, a cooling phase, which often correlates with above-average rainfall.

This year, monsoon was also irregular. North India faced unexpectedly heavy rainfall, while Cloudbursts in Himachal Pradesh made life difficult. Whereas, Chhattisgarh, Bihar, and Karnataka reported extreme water stress.

What should be done?

First, the unpredictable nature of the monsoon underscores the need for more resilient infrastructure. It would help in tackling erratic global climate patterns.

Second, forecast models should be improved to predict significant weather changes more accurately.

2. **Circular migration: looking at both sides of the debate**

Source: The post is based on the article "**Circular migration: looking at both sides of the debate**" published in **"The Hindu"** on 4th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- population and associated issues; urbanisation, their problems and their remedies.

News: The author discusses "circular migration," where people move between countries for work and return home periodically, contrasting it with other migration types. They explore its impact, benefits, and challenges in countries and specifically within India, emphasizing its effects on economies, societies, and individuals, and suggest it as a potentially balanced migration policy.

What is circular migration?

Circular migration is defined by temporary residence, potential for multiple entries, and freedom of movement between origin and destination.

A circular migrant completes at least two loops between the origin and destination.

India experiences substantial internal circular migration, notably from rural to urban areas, often for jobs in sectors like construction.

What are the impacts of circular migration on India?

Economic Impact

Circular migration, especially from rural areas to cities like in India, has both advantages and disadvantages.

The construction sector in India notably employed a large number of rural males between 2004-2005 and 2011-2012 due to internal migration.

Social Impact

The migration influences family dynamics, sometimes increasing women's decision-making power in the absence of men.

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However, migrants can face exploitation and poor working conditions, especially when language barriers are present, like moving to southern states in India.

Infrastructural Impact

Urban areas may experience infrastructural strain due to the influx of migrants, like housing challenges, while rural areas may see economic dwindling.

The pandemic in 2020 highlighted the precarious nature of migrant jobs, as many had to return home during lockdowns, revealing a need for better migrant worker support and policies.

What are the challenges of circular migration?
Worker Exploitation

In India, circular migrants, particularly to southern states, can face exploitation and unsafe working conditions.

They sometimes work in unsanitary conditions, with limited protective equipment, and might deal with middlemen or brokers who may take advantage of them.

Economic Strain

Migrants often engage in low-skill jobs, earning just enough to support themselves and their families, with little room for savings or asset creation.

Although they may access higher-paying jobs in the destination, the work is often seasonal and irregular, leading to financial instability.

Social and Infrastructural Pressure

Both rural and urban areas can experience different kinds of strain: rural areas might see economic and demographic declines, while urban areas might face infrastructural breakdown due to the influx of migrants.

Migrants sometimes face resentment from indigenous wage groups in destination locations, as they're seen as taking away jobs by working for lower wages.

What should be done?
Policy Formulation

Governments need to formulate policies that accurately comprehend and manage the scope of circular migration.

Ensuring thorough documentation and understanding of migrant patterns is crucial for effective policy-making.

Protecting Migrant Rights

Efforts must be intensified to safeguard the rights of migrants, particularly those moving to areas with language barriers like southern Indian states.

Ensuring that workers are not exploited and have access to fair wages and safe working conditions is pivotal.

Infrastructural Development

Addressing the infrastructural pressures in urban areas due to migrant influx and preventing economic dwindling in rural areas is essential.

Enhancing the capability of urban spaces to accommodate incoming populations without collapsing infrastructures is vital.

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Health and Safety Provisions

States should introduce health provisions like Kerala's health insurance scheme for migrant workers, ensuring their well-being and safety during employment periods in the destination regions.

The precarity and vulnerabilities of workers, as witnessed during the pandemic, should be particularly addressed in policy considerations.

3. **How Gandhi crafted his own public image**
Source: The post is based on the article **"How Gandhi crafted his own public image"**
published in The Indian Express on **5th October 2023**.
Syllabus: GS 1 – Modern Indian History – Famous Personalities
Relevance: About Mahatma Gandhi
News: The article explores Gandhi's willingness to be photographed.

What are some of the details of Gandhi's fondness for being photographed?
Gandhi was one of the most photographed people of the 20th century. He understood the power of images and used them to his advantage in the fight for Indian independence.

Gandhi was willing to make his private life as accessible as his public actions if it served the purpose.

For instance, he deliberately created a photo opportunity by collecting salt granules three days after making salt at Dandi in 1930, which became an iconic image associated with the salt march.

When did the documentation of Gandhi's life through photographs start?
Gandhi's life began to be documented in photographs while he was still in South Africa.

Initially, he was photographed as a practicing lawyer, and later, as an advocate for Satyagraha, fighting against the Black Act that restricted Indian entry into Transvaal.

When he returned to India in 1915, the camera continued to capture his journey, starting from his arrival with his wife Kasturba at Apollo Bunder in Bombay.

Gandhi allowed his life and work to be documented in pictures throughout his life. **In his later years, he started charging Rs 5 for autographs,** to raise money for the underprivileged.

Gandhi's interaction with the camera evolved from a formal relationship to a more intimate one by the 1930s.

Swiss photojournalist Walter Bosshard noted in his book "Indien kämpft!" (1931) that Gandhi had sworn not to pose for photographers anymore. However, he was lucky to take some pictures by just being around Gandhi.

This resulted in a collection of photographs showing a relaxed and unguarded Gandhi engaged in various activities like shaving, reading, spinning the charkha, etc.

Which photographer had a closer relationship with Gandhi?
Gandhi's grandnephew, Kanu, was one of the most privileged photographers to document his life. Kanu closely followed Gandhi until his death. However, he was absent from Birla House on the day of Gandhi's assassination.

Kanu began working at Gandhi's ashram in Sevagram in the mid-1930s, when he was still a teenager. He had the unique privilege of being able to take pictures of his grand-uncle at any time.

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The only rules were no flash photography, no posing of Gandhi, and no funding from the ashram for his photography.

Kanu became Gandhi's photo-biographer, documenting both everyday moments and significant events, such as Gandhi's 1940 meeting with Rabindranath Tagore in Santiniketan.

Moreover, **Margaret Bourke-White was one of the last journalists to interview Gandhi before he was assassinated.**

4. **No country for old women**
Source: The post is based on the article "**No country for old women**" published in "The Hindu" on 6th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS1- Society- population and associated issues
News: The graphically illustrates the challenges faced by India's growing elderly population, particularly women, in areas such as health, daily activities, and financial stability. It also highlights their lack of awareness about government support schemes.

What is the current status of India's elderly population?

Chart 1: Greying India

The number of senior citizens (aged 60+) in India has markedly increased since 2010, while there has been a drop in the population aged under 15. By the year 2100, seniors are projected to constitute 36% of India's total population

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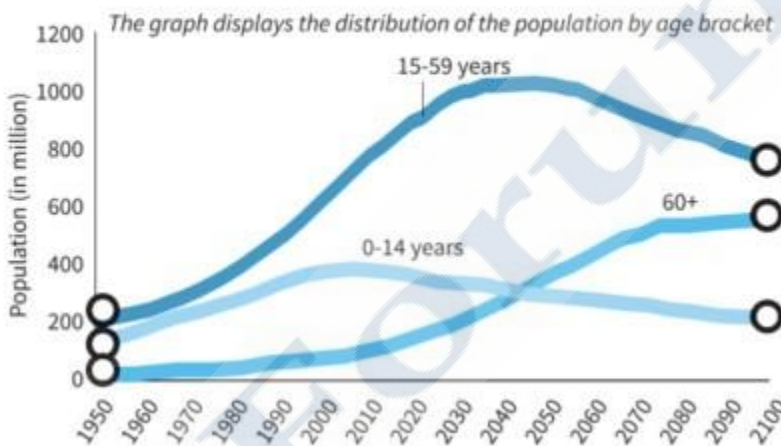
Chart 2A: Dependency by region

The graph displays the old-age dependency ratio, which represents the number of individuals aged 60 and above for every 100 people in the 15-59 age bracket. A heightened ratio indicates a significant demand for care within families

Dependency is highest in the southern region followed by the west

Region	Value
Others	12.6
North-East	12.8
Central	13.3
East	15.1
North	15.2
Overall	15.7
West	16.9
South	19.4

Number of elderly (60+ years) per 100 in working age
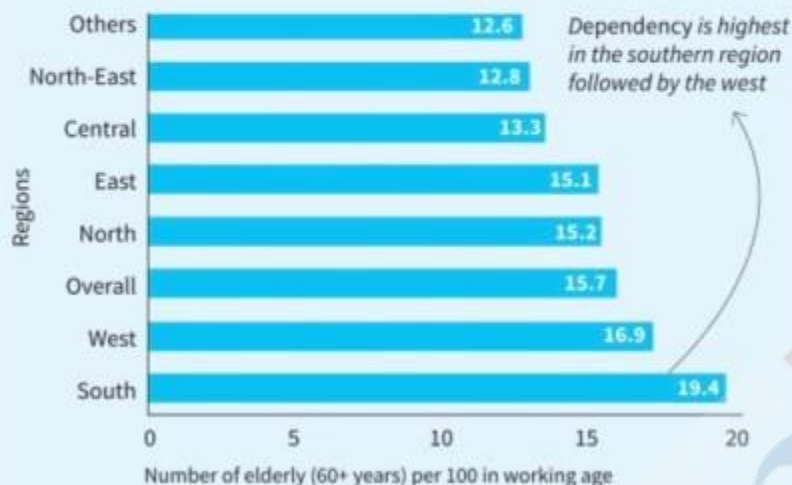
Chart 2B: Elderly and young

The graph presents the ageing index, which signifies the number of seniors (60 years and above) for every 100 children (under 15 years of age). A rise in the ageing index points to reduced fertility rates

Both southern and western India exhibit elevated scores on this index

Region	Value
Central	27.8
North-East	32.8
East	34.5
Others	34.9
North	38.9
India	39.3
West	49.0
South	61.7

Number of elderly (60+) per 100 children
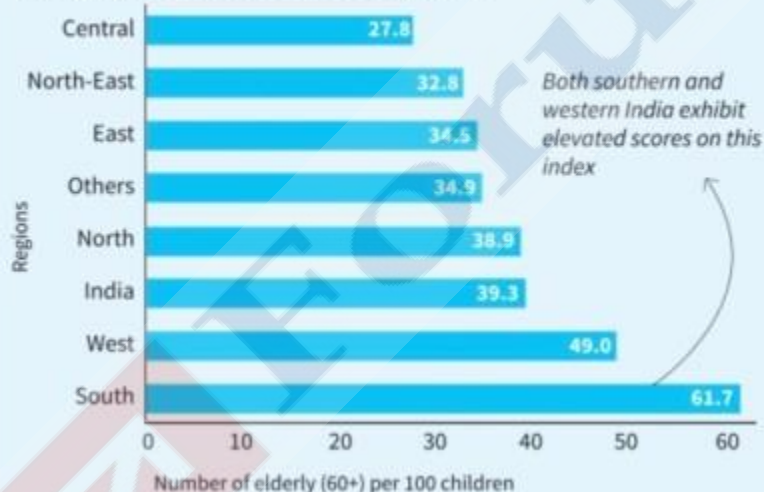
Greying India: Since 2010, the population of senior citizens (60 and over) in India has significantly risen, while the under-15 population has decreased. By 2100, it's anticipated that seniors will make up 36% of the total population.

Dependency by Region: India's overall dependency ratio is 15.7, with the highest ratio in the southern region (19.4), followed by the west (16.9).

Sex Ratio Among Elderly: In 2021, for every 1000 elderly men in India, there are 1061 elderly women. The south region has 1136 women per 1000 men, while the west has 1120.

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Ageing Index: India's ageing index is 39.3, with the highest in the south at 61.7, followed by the west at 49.

What challenges do elderly women face?

Chart 8: Utilisation of security schemes

The chart shows the share of elderly who benefit from various social security schemes. Only 24% of widowed women in BPL households receive benefits through the IGNWPS^
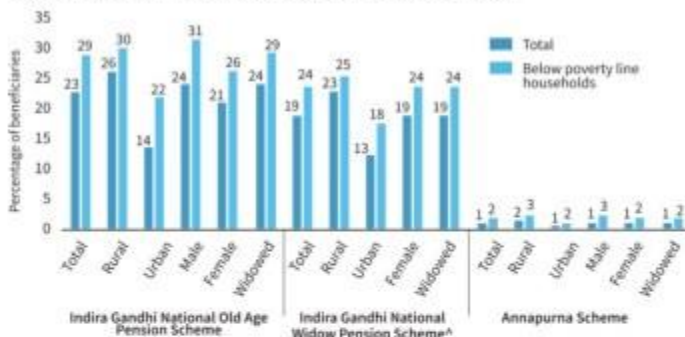
Chart 9: Hindrances in receiving benefits

The table shows the share of elderly in BPL households not utilising social security schemes. Over 47% of elderly widows believe that they are not eligible to get benefits under IGNWPS*

Reasons	Indira Gandhi National Old Age Pension Scheme		Indira Gandhi National Widow Pension Scheme*	Annapurna Scheme	
	Men	Women	Women	Men	Women
No need	7.2	5.9	10.3	12.1	8.7
Not eligible	19.9	22.5	47.4	38.4	46.3
Not having documents	8.3	6.9	5.2	10.5	8.6
Not yet applied	25.6	24.5	14.9	19.9	17.3
Process is cumbersome	35.1	36.5	20	18.4	18.3
Other reasons	3.8	3.7	2.2	0.6	0.8

Health Challenges: 30% of women over 60 have one morbidity and nearly 25% suffer from two morbidities, showing significant health concerns.

Daily Activities: Difficulty in basic self-care is evident since 30% struggle to get out of bed and 25% find it tough to eat and bathe without help, indicating a demand for assistance in daily living.

Financial Issues: With just 22% of elderly women employed, there is a distinct issue related to financial stability and self-sufficiency in this demographic.

Awareness and Access: Less than 25% of elderly women are informed about government concession schemes, suggesting a barrier in awareness and potentially accessing support services available to them.

Mental Health: The incidence of depression is higher among elderly women across different age groups, pointing towards additional mental health challenges.

5. **Equality and identity- Equitable distribution of resources must not be by accentuating caste identity**

Source: The post is based on the article "**Equality and identity- Equitable distribution of resources must not be by accentuating caste identity**" published in "The Hindu" on 6th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- Society- population and associated issues & GS2- polity- caste survey

News: The article discusses a detailed caste survey in Bihar, India, revealing that 63% of its population belongs to certain backward classes. This may influence national politics and policies

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on reservations, potentially promoting demands for a nationwide caste census and impacting political party strategies and legal debates on caste-based reservations in education and employment.

What does the caste survey in Bihar show?

The caste survey in Bihar reveals that 63% of the state's population, which is 13 crores, belongs to the Extremely Backward Classes (EBC) and Other Backward Classes (OBC) categories.

Methodically, Bihar assigned a code to each of 214 identified castes, ensuring clarity and manageability of the data.

The comprehensive survey involved a two-stage process: initially listing houses, then gathering detailed information from each household.

What is the significance of this caste survey?
Impact on Reservation Policies

The caste survey shows that a significant 63% of Bihar's 13 crore population belongs to EBC and OBC categories.

It might influence legal and political discourses at a national level, particularly regarding the 50% reservation cap in educational institutions and government services.

Potential for a Nationwide Caste Census

The thorough and organized methodology used in Bihar's survey might give a boost to demands for a caste census across India.

Having detailed caste data for the whole country might influence socio-economic and political policies more broadly.

Influence on Political Strategy

This detailed caste information may shape the strategies of political parties, particularly those who focus on consolidating Hindu voters or those targeting different OBC sections for support.

For instance, it may create opportunities for social groups to leverage their size and influence political agendas and policies.

Legal Implications and Social Harmony

By providing exact numbers, the data might be used to present 'quantifiable data' that the judiciary seeks to justify reservation levels in various states.

The article emphasizes that while caste data is useful, maintaining a balance that doesn't amplify caste identity is crucial to uphold the constitutional vision of a casteless society.

6. **A census for a new deal**
Source: The post is based on the article "**A census for a new deal**" published in **"The Hindu"** on 9th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS1 – Salient features of Indian Society

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is Mandal 2.0, and how is it different?

Mandal 2.0:

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

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

Address Class Issues:

It aims to help the "precariat," a group stuck between poverty and middle-class status.

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

Mandal 2.0 Different from Old Politics:

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

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

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

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

How are political alignments shifting along caste lines?

Shift Towards Larger Caste Platforms:

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

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

Leaders Supporting New Alliances:

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

Lower OBCs Reassessing Affiliations:

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

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

Impact on Political Strategy:

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

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

7. **Women MPs' contribution has increased in Parliament**

Source: The post is based on the article "**Women MPs' contribution has increased in Parliament**. Data proves it" published in "Indian express" on 11th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS1- Society- Social empowerment

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

How have Indian government policies impacted women?

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

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

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

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

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

What role do women leaders play in Parliament?

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

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

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

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

8. **IIT-B's 'vegetarian tables' policy**

Source: The post is based on the article "**IIT-B's 'vegetarian tables' policy**: Vegetarianism of purity promotes segregation, hierarchy and even violence" published in **Indian Express** on **11th October 2023**.
UPSC Syllabus: GS1- Society- Salient features of Indian Society.

News: The article discusses the ongoing tension and changes in India regarding vegetarianism, particularly rooted in caste and religious beliefs. It talks about how traditional strict segregation

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in dining and living based on vegetarianism is slowly changing, especially in urban areas. However, there's still a visible divide and instances of discrimination based on food choices, even resulting in social and institutional incidents.

How is vegetarianism evolving in India?

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

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

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

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

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

What are the issues associated with Indian dietary choices?

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

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

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

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

9. Closing the gender pay gap in the workforce

Source: The post is based on the article "**Closing the gender pay gap in the workforce**" published in **"The Hindu"** on 16th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS1- Society- Woman empowerment & GS3- Economy- Employment

News: The article discusses the work of Claudia Goldin on gender inequality in the job market. Goldin argues that women's lower pay is due to demanding job hours that clash with parental duties. She suggests work environments need changes for better work-life balance. The goal is equal labor market outcomes for all genders.

Who is Claudia Goldin?

Claudia Goldin is the 2023 Nobel Prize winner in Economics. She has spent over half a century researching and voicing the issues faced by women in the American job market. Standing as the President of the American Economic Association in 2013-14, she challenged prevailing beliefs about women's roles in the economy.

What did Claudia Goldin discover about women in the workplace?

Economic Shifts and Women's Jobs: As the U.S. economy moved from agriculture to services, women began finding jobs in offices, schools, and hospitals.

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Education vs. Earnings: Even when women surpassed men in education and didn't settle for typical "female jobs", they consistently earned less.

Job Structures: The predominant job market favored roles that required long, unpredictable hours, making it difficult for women balancing work and parental duties.

The "Greedy Work" Concept: Goldin introduced the term to describe jobs demanding extreme efforts in return for high salaries and promotions. Such roles were often incompatible with the responsibilities women commonly undertook at home.

Gender and Household Roles: Traditional gender roles often meant women took on more family responsibilities, limiting their ability to pursue high-profile careers.

What challenges do women face in jobs?

The "Mommy Track": Women sometimes have to choose the slower career path, known as the "mommy track", which prioritizes family over high-profile careers, resulting in missed opportunities.

Gendered Expectations: Traditional gender roles often assign more family responsibilities to women, making it tough for them to fully concentrate on their careers.

Income Inequality: Rising income disparity can lead families to prioritize overall family income over gender balance, pushing women into roles with fewer demands and consequently lesser pay.

How can India benefit from reshaping the job environment?

Shared Household Duties: Encouraging both genders to participate equally in household and childcare can free up women to contribute more to the workforce.

Improved Work Structures: By ensuring workplaces respect workers' time and don't push for unnecessarily long hours, both men and women can achieve a better work-life balance.

Increased Productivity: Research, like that from Stanford economist John Pencavel, indicates that longer hours don't always mean more productivity. Better work schedules can lead to enhanced efficiency and fewer errors.

Closer Work-Life Integration: Reducing distances between homes and workplaces, and adjusting school demands, can save commuting time and improve overall well-being.

Gender Equal Outcomes: Such changes can help India move closer to the gender convergence in labor market outcomes that Claudia Goldin advocates.

What should be done?

Redefine Work Structures: Workplaces should be restructured to respect workers' time, emphasizing moderate and predictable hours rather than long, erratic schedules.

Encourage Shared Responsibilities: Men should be encouraged to participate equally in household chores and childcare, balancing the load often borne by women.

Limit "Greedy Work" Culture: Reduce the prevalence of jobs demanding extreme hours and efforts. This can help balance gender roles in the workforce.

Rethink Educational Demands: Schools should limit reliance on parents for homework supervision, allowing parents more flexibility in managing work and family life.

Urban Planning: Develop urban areas to reduce the distance between homes and workplaces, cutting down commuting time.

Promote Supportive Institutions: Establish institutions that foster a balanced work-life environment, paving the way for equal gender representation in the job market.

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10. **Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's 125th birth anniversary: His record on women's rights**
Source: The post is based on the article "**Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's 125th birth anniversary: His record on women's rights**" published in **"Indian Express"** on 17th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS1- History- Modern Indian history from about the middle of the eighteenth century until the present- significant events, personalities.

News: The article discusses Sir Syed Ahmed Khan's views on women's education. While he promoted modern education for Muslims and opposed some harmful social practices, he had conservative beliefs about educating women. His experiences in Europe slightly changed his perspective, but he still favored home-tutoring for women.

What were the contributions of Sir Syed Ahmed Khan to women's upliftment?

Promotion of Education: While Sir Syed had conservative views about women's formal education, he did believe in their learning, albeit through home-tutoring.

Campaign Against Harmful Practices: Through the Aligarh Institute Gazette, Sir Syed campaigned against female infanticide, polygamy, child marriage, sati, the segregation of widows, and the forced marriages of young girls to older men.

Support for Women Activists: He appreciated the work of Mary Carpenter, a British proponent of female education, highlighting her dedication to bringing Indian women into public life.

Recognition of Women's Role: After visiting Europe, Sir Syed acknowledged the importance of women in the societal fabric of a country, noting the significant roles European women played.

In essence, Sir Syed's efforts for women's upliftment combined both traditional and evolving perspectives.

11. **On gay rights, Indian society has outpaced judiciary and legislature**
Source: The post is based on the article "**On gay rights, Indian society has outpaced judiciary and legislature**" published in **Indian express** on 19th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS1- Society

News: The article discusses societal acceptance of queer relationships in India. Manisha and Dimple's wedding shows changing views. Movies and shows support LGBTQI+ stories.

How has society's view on queer relationships changed in India?

Wedding Example: Manisha and Dimple, two women, celebrated their wedding in Bathinda with the support of family and friends.

Parental Viewpoint: Manisha's mother voiced that people should respect individual choices, reflecting a broader sentiment.

Spread of Acceptance: This positive sentiment is not limited to cities but is echoed in towns, villages, and small neighborhoods across India.

Next Generation's View: Aditi Anand and Susan Dias, who petitioned for marriage equality, shared that their son and his peers are growing up devoid of homophobia.

Media Influence: Movies and TV shows like "Made in Heaven" and "Badhaai Do" highlight LGBTQI+ stories, influencing societal perspectives.

Supportive Data: A Pew Research Centre survey found that 53% of Indians now favor marriage equality.

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What does the Supreme Court say about marriage equality?

Discussion on Marriage Equality: The Supreme Court deliberated on the topic of marriage equality on October 17.

Decision Deferred: Instead of making a definitive ruling, the Supreme Court passed the responsibility of deciding on marriage equality to Parliament.

Reflecting Society's Stance: The court's discussion on marriage equality comes at a time when societal views are evolving. For instance, Manisha and Dimple's wedding, supported by family and friends, showcases this shift.

How have big social changes historically happened?

Two-Way Flow: Big social changes can stem from both institutions to society and vice versa.

Institutional Influence: Laws, judicial interventions, and decisions from bodies like the Supreme Court have historically guided societal norms, such as temple entry rights and the abolition of untouchability.

Societal Influence: Society's evolving customs and traditions can lead institutions to change or create new laws.

Example: The decriminalization of non-heterosexual relationships in India was influenced by changing societal views.

12. Why are earthquakes frequent in Afghanistan?
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Why are earthquakes frequent in Afghanistan?"** published in **The Hindu** on **20th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 1 Geography — Important Geophysical phenomena such as earthquakes, tsunami, volcanic activity, cyclones etc.

News: This article discusses the reasons behind the phenomenon of frequent earthquakes in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan has had a history of frequent destructive earthquakes. An earthquake of magnitude 6.3 struck western Afghanistan recently, barely a few days after multiple earthquakes killed at least a 1,000 people in the Herat province.

How do earthquakes occur?

Stage I: Movement of tectonic plates: The earth is made up of chunks of solid rocks called tectonic plates. Tectonic plates are slow moving but are always in motion, mostly due to the heat energy generated inside the earth.

Stage II: Creation of Faults: Discontinuities in these plate rock masses, along which they have moved, are called fault lines. This is where most earthquakes occur.

Stage III: Release of Energy: The tectonic forces and stress that builds up in the earth's lithosphere causes the rocks to break and slip. This releases energy and sends seismic waves through the ground.

Why do frequent earthquakes occur in Afghanistan?

1) Afghanistan is located over multiple fault lines in the region where the **Indian, Arabian and the Eurasian tectonic plates** meet. These plates collide often, leading to significant tectonic activity.

1. a) Towards **western Afghanistan**, the **Arabian plate subducts northward under Eurasia**.

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2. b) Towards **eastern Afghanistan**, the **Indian plate subducts northward under Eurasia**.
3. c) In **southern Afghanistan**, the Arabian and Indian plates adjoin and both subduct northward under the Eurasian plate.

2) **Geological complexity:** The **Hindu Kush Mountain range and the Pamir Knot** are geologically complex regions where tectonic plates meet.

3) **Forces of Compression:** The ongoing northward movement of the Indian Plate towards the Eurasian Plate also **results in compression**, leading to the transmission of tectonic stress across the entire region. The compression creates faults and fractures that can slip and generate earthquakes.

4) **Presence of Faults:** like the Chaman Fault and the Main Pamir Thrust.

13. **On India's linguistic diversity – Multilingualism can be magical if it's error-free**
Source: This post on **India's linguistic diversity** is based on the article "**Multilingualism can be magical if it's error-free**" published in **"Live mint"** on 27th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS Paper 1 Indian Society – Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India.

News: The article discusses the importance and benefits of multilingualism in India, highlighting the rich linguistic diversity in the country. The author also emphasizes the role of multilingualism in enhancing cognitive skills, problem-solving, and creativity.

What are the various constitutional provisions related to language in India?

Protection of Linguistic Minorities: Article 29 ensures that any section of citizens with a distinct language, script, or culture can conserve it.

Educational Rights: Article 30 grants minorities the right to establish and administer educational institutions. State aid to these institutions cannot be discriminatory.

Language in Parliament: Article 120 stipulates that business in Parliament is transacted in Hindi or English. However, a member can address the House in his mother-tongue with permission.

Official Language: Article 343 designates Hindi in Devanagari script as the Union's official language. English usage is allowed for 15 years from the Constitution's commencement.

Language Commission: Article 344 mandates the constitution of a Commission to recommend the progressive use of Hindi for official purposes.

State Official Languages: Article 345 allows states to adopt any language in use in the State or Hindi for official purposes.

Communication Between States: Article 346 specifies the languages for communication between states and between states and the Union.

Language in Judiciary: Article 348 states that the Supreme Court and High Courts use English for proceedings, but with certain exceptions.

Linguistic Development: Articles 350, 350A, 350B, and 351 provide directives for redressal of grievances, primary education in mother-tongue, appointment of a Special Officer for linguistic minorities, and promotion and development of the Hindi language, respectively.

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How linguistically diverse is India?

Language Landscape: India boasts an impressive linguistic diversity, with **over 19,500 languages** spoken throughout the nation.

Local Linguistic Varieties: Even within small regions, the linguistic richness is evident.

Daily Multilingual Exposure: People are frequently exposed to different languages, either audibly or visually, aside from the one or more used at home. For instance, New Delhi reflects this linguistic diversity in its street signage. The city employs four scripts – English, Devanagri, Gurmukhi, and Urdu – on its street signs.

What are the benefits of being multilingual?

1) **Enhanced Cognitive Skills:** Multilingual individuals often display improved cognitive abilities, allowing them to process and adapt to information more efficiently.

2) **Research Findings:** A study had demonstrated that bilingual children could adapt and process information better than their monolingual counterparts.

3) **Delay in Cognitive Decline:** Elderly people who are multilingual tend to experience a slower onset of cognitive decline, safeguarding their mental faculties for longer.

4) **Boost Creativity:** Being multilingual can foster creativity. The mental juggling between languages enhances the mind's ability to think divergently and convergently.

5) **Subconscious Processing:** For those fluent in multiple languages, shifting between them occurs subconsciously, further refining their mental agility.

6) **Open-mindedness:** Multilingual individuals often develop an open-mindedness to different sociocultural constructs, expanding their horizons and making them more receptive to varied perspectives.

Question for practice:

How does India's rich linguistic diversity, as reflected in street signs and the broader cultural landscape, impact cognitive abilities and foster creativity among its multilingual population?

14. **On India's role in the Arctic – Breaking the ice: How India can help save the Arctic**

Source: This post on **India's role in the Arctic** has been created based on the article **"Breaking the ice: How India can help save the Arctic"** published in **The Indian Express Hindu** on **27th October 2023.**

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 1 Geography — Changes in critical geographical features (including water bodies and ice-caps) and in flora and fauna and the effects of such changes.

GS Paper 2 International Relations — Important International institutions, agencies and fora- their structure, mandate.

News: This article discusses the impact of climate change on the Arctic and how multiple challenges are worsening its impact. It also highlights India's upcoming role in tackling these challenges in global fora related to the Arctic.

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What are the growing challenges in the Arctic due to climate change?

1) The Arctic is **warming at a rate 4 times faster than the global average.**

2) It is leading to an unprecedented **loss of sea ice**, as well as the **thawing of permafrost**.

3) This might lead to **the escaping of vast quantities of stored carbon** into the atmosphere. This can trigger multiple catastrophic and **irreversible climate tipping points**.

5) **Impact on Global South and India:** For instance, research shows an intricate correlation between the melting of Arctic sea-ice and extreme rainfall events during the Indian summer monsoon.

For more on **Arctic Amplification**, read: **https://forumias.com/blog/arctic-amplification-what-is-causing-arctic-warming/**

What are the reasons for the worsening of the impact of climate change on the Arctic?

1) **Rapid pace of development:** For instance, **Russia is commercialising and expanding trade channels** along the Northern Sea Route.

2) **Geopolitical interests and conflicts:** Other Arctic countries are also planning oil and gas development endeavours.

3) **Failure of global governance mechanisms:** The Arctic Council stands suspended due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. This has made it difficult to hold countries accountable and to monitor activities.

4) **Non-representative forums:** The Arctic Council does not have any member from the Global South, though some, including India, have observer status.

What is the Arctic Council?

Formally established in 1996 by The **Ottawa Declaration**, the Arctic Council is an intergovernmental forum for promoting cooperation, coordination and interaction between the Arctic States.

Members include eight countries – **Canada, Denmark (Greenland), Norway, Russia, United States, Iceland, Finland, and Sweden**.

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Arctic Council Member Countries. **Source: Britannica.**

In addition to the member states, observer status is granted to non-Arctic states. **India, China were given observer status** in 2013.

Originally, the council's focus was to address environmental issues and the concerns of the indigenous people in the region. Global warming, shorter sea route, hydrocarbons prospects have added on to the stakes in the region. The approach adopted by the Arctic Council is to **regulate the shipping lanes, hydrocarbons prospecting and the exploitation of marine resources**.

For a detailed account of Arctic governance, read:
https://forumias.com/blog/governance-of-the-arctic-explained-pointwise/

What is India's role?

1) **Establishing consensus:** India has shown it can balance the competing interests of the Global North and the Global South.
This capacity to generate consensus will be needed to reform Arctic governance and protect the climate.

2) **Voice of the Global South:** The active involvement of India as a member of the Arctic Council to voice the concerns of the Global South could help push for an end to further exploitation.

This is essential to protecting our global climate, including critically important ecosystems such as the Arctic.

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Question for practice:

'India can steer the global agenda on the Arctic'. Discuss in light of the suspension of the Arctic Council and threats to the Arctic due to climate change.

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General

Studies

Paper –2

General Studies - 2

1. **Canada's entrenched culture of self-righteousness is to blame for current crisis**

Source: The post is based on the article "C Raja Mohan writes: **Canada's entrenched culture of self-righteousness is to blame for current crisis**" published in **"Indian express"** on 3rd October 2023.

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

News: The article discusses the strained relationship between India and Canada due to historical nuclear issues and current concerns about Khalistan militant groups in Canada. It highlights Canada's moralpolitik and suggests a fresh approach based on realpolitik to resolve the bilateral crises.

How has the relationship between India and Canada evolved?

Historically, India and Canada shared idealism, advocating for a normative global order up until the mid-1970s.

In the Cold War era, both nations collaborated on global issues, such as the Korean War and the Suez Crisis.

Canada played a pivotal role in India's nuclear development, assisting with the CIRUS research reactor and CANDU power reactor projects.

Relations took a downturn after India's 1974 nuclear test, which Canada criticized, viewing it as betrayal.

Canada's domestic politics, particularly its association with Khalistani groups since the 1980s, added more strain.

The Conservative rule under Stephen Harper (2006-15) hinted at improved bilateral ties.

However, under Justin Trudeau's leadership, India voiced concerns over Canada's perceived soft stance on Khalistani extremists.

What are the current concerns in the India-Canada relationship?
Khalistan Extremist Groups

Canada has Khalistani militants operating on its soil, which is a significant concern for India. Ottawa has shown reluctance to address India's worries about the criminal actions of these groups.

Political Stances and Moralpolitik

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's approach, involving "vote bank politics" and supporting Khalistani groups, troubles India. Trudeau's administration does not seem to fully grasp or acknowledge India's concerns, adhering instead to a kind of moral high ground in international affairs.

What should be done?
Address Khalistani Concerns: Canada should take a political look at the Khalistani militants' activities, acknowledging India's concerns about their operations on Canadian soil.

Reassess Political Strategies: Trudeau's administration might need to rethink its "vote bank politics" and its soft stance on Khalistani groups to ensure a stronger India-Canada relationship.

Promote Collaboration: India suggests a path of cooperation, offering to work with Ottawa based on credible intelligence-sharing. This can serve as a foundation for enhanced bilateral ties.

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Act Against Extremists: India's expectation is clear; Canada should curb the empowerment of Khalistani extremists, address their political impunity, and put a stop to their violent activities.

Rebuild Trust: Both countries should work on rebuilding trust, moving past previous tensions, and focusing on shared interests and mutual benefits.

2. **Criminal law Bills and a hollow decolonisation**
Source: The post is based on the article **"Criminal law Bills and a hollow decolonisation"** **published in The Hindu** on **3rd October 2023**.
Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance – Government Policies & Intervention
Relevance: concerns with new criminal Bills

News: In 2023, three new criminal law **Bills** were introduced in India to replace three existing criminal laws, but they do very little to decolonize Indian criminal law.

Instead, they indicate the continuation and intensification of colonial-style powers.

What are the differences between a colonial law and a post-colonial law?
Colonial Law: Colonial laws favor the colonial state over the colonized people, emphasizing state control. Colonial states fear being overthrown, so they create laws that give themselves more power and control.

For instance, the Indian Penal Code was created to maintain law and order, but it also serves to legitimize the colonial state's fear of the Indian people.

Post-Colonial Law: Post-Colonial law should reflect the shift from citizens serving the state to the state serving its independent citizens. This change should influence the law-making process, its priorities, and its objectives.

However, the introduced Bills fail in this regard, as they seem to view citizens with suspicion and mistrust, leading to a sense of the state being in opposition to its citizens.

What are the concerns with the bill?
First, the Bills introduce significant changes that undermine the rights of the people and strengthen the state's authority such as – **a)** they create new offenses that are overbroad and constitutionally questionable and **b)** they give the police more power to enforce these new offenses.

For instance, the **Bhartiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (BNSS)** replaces the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973, and gives the police more power, including longer detention periods and broader powers in provisions related to terrorist acts.

This expansion of police powers continues colonial practices instead of reversing them.

Second, the Bills do not go far enough in reforming the police and prison systems. These systems are still based on the colonial model.

For instance, the **Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)** increases punishment durations and expands police powers, reflecting the logic of colonial criminal law. This is concerning as it is unclear how the police will use these new powers and India has already overcrowded prisons.

What lies ahead?
The narrative of decolonization in the Bills should be seen in the context of other changes to criminal law.

For example, the **Criminal Procedure (Identification) Act, 2022**, allows police to measure convicts, accused, and individuals in preventive detention, which increases surveillance and state control over the population.

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Hence, it is necessary for the government to look into these issues and come up with laws that serve the interest of the citizen rather than the state.

3. Building BRICS for the future

Source: This post is created based on the article **'Building BRICS for the future,** published in **The Hindu** on 3rd October, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, international Relations

News: The article discusses the evolution and significance of the BRICS grouping, emphasizing its potential to challenge the dominance of established economic blocs like the G7.

BRICS has recently expanded. The GDP of BRICS is projected to account for 36% of the global GDP, and by 2050, its member countries will house 47% of the world's population.

Read – BRICS expansion

Why countries have been looking for the alternatives of west dominated institutions?
First, The polarized stance of the U.S., especially against China and Russia.

Second, US and many western countries have been neglecting the World Trade Organization rules.

Third, the treatment of Africans in Europe and the increasing visa restrictions have made African nations lean more towards countries like China and India for trade and investment partnerships. Issues like Strait of Gibraltar crossing, intervention of France in Niger are other issues.

What is the significance of BRICS?
Economic Foundations: BRICS was formed out of economic compulsion and does not engage in military or security support, unlike NATO. Its GDP and population metrics highlight its potential to challenge the dominance of groups like the G7.

Main Players: India and China account for one-third of the global population, are among the fastest-growing economies. Despite political and diplomatic challenges, their trade relations have flourished, emphasizing that economic interests often surpass political differences.

Dollar dominance: The U.S. dollar's dominance might be challenged by digital currencies, with India and China making significant advancements in this field. Both countries aim to promote their currencies as alternatives to the dollar, aligning their long-term interests.

Africa is viewed as the continent promising economic growth in this century.

Unlike west dominated institutions, in BRICS no single country is dominant. China has been counter-balanced by democratic countries such as India, South Africa and Brazil.

4. Counting deaths in India's prisons

Source: This post is created based on the article **'Counting deaths in India's prisons,** published in **The Hindu** on 3rd October, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, Social Issues, Criminal Justice System, prison reforms

News: The Supreme Court Committee on Prison Reforms has highlighted that suicides are the main cause of 'unnatural' deaths among Indian prisoners.

How deaths in the prisons are classified?
National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) publishes the data related to prison deaths annually in Prison Statistics India (PSI) report. In 2021, a total of 2,116 prisoners died in judicial custody, with almost 90% of cases recorded as natural deaths.

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The report classifies the prison deaths into 2 parts: 1) Natural deaths 2) Unnatural deaths

Natural Deaths: Natural deaths are due to ageing and illnesses, including heart conditions, HIV, tuberculosis, and cancer.

Unnatural Deaths: Unnatural deaths encompass a variety of causes, such as suicide, assault, negligence, and accidents.

What are the Challenges in prison system of India?

Ambiguity in classification: The Supreme Court has pointed out that the distinction between natural and unnatural deaths is unclear. For instance, if a prisoner dies due to a lack of timely medical attention, it's uncertain whether it's a natural or unnatural death. This ambiguity, combined with under-reporting and lack of investigation, often results in many deaths being labelled as 'natural'.

Overcrowding: During the pandemic, prisons were overcrowded, with an occupancy rate of 118%.

Insufficient infrastructure and facilities: The sanctioned strength of medical staff was not sufficient, with one staff member catering to 219 inmates. There is a significant shortage of staff, with many positions vacant in several states.

Medical budget: Only 5% of the expenditure was on medical facilities, and funds allocated for inmates were underutilized.

Investigation of Deaths: Since 1993, the NCRB is mandated to report a custodial death within 24 hours. However, the process is often not stringent, with only one disciplinary action taken against an erring official between 2021-22.

As per the Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative (CHRI) report, suicide rate among inmates was found to be more than twice the rate recorded in the general population.

Government initiatives for prison reforms

The Model Prison Manual of 2016 and the Mental Healthcare Act of 2017 emphasize inmates' right to healthcare.

The NHRC has issued advisories highlighting the importance of mental health and suicide prevention.

What should be done to reduce suicide cases in prisons?

First, allowing inmates to communicate with their families.

Second, giving prisoners with access to newspaper.

Third, there should be a strict check on tools that can be used for self-harm.

Fourth, mental health screenings should be done upon entry.

Fifth, CCTV cameras should be installed for monitoring.

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5. **Election of China-friendly Mohamed Muizzu could test Indo-Maldives ties**

Source: The post is based on the article **"Election of China-friendly Mohamed Muizzu could test Indo-Maldives ties"** published in **The Indian Express** on **4th October 2023**.

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

Relevance: India and Maldives Relations

News: Muizzu's victory in the Maldives' presidential election poses a challenge for India and Maldives relations because of his strong ties with China.

How has India and Maldives relations been?

Maldives and India have historically shared a close relationship due to their geographic proximity, aligned security interests, and cultural connections.

However, as China's influence has grown in the Indo-Pacific and Indian Ocean Region, Maldives has become a part of Beijing's economic and strategic plans.

India has invested significantly in Maldives, particularly under the **Neighbourhood First policy and the Security and Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR) initiative**, leading to increased security cooperation between the two nations.

India has also deepened its relationship with Maldives through initiatives like the **Colombo Security Conclave** and financial assistance for projects such as the Greater Male Connectivity.

Must Read: India-Maldives Relationship – Explained

What can be the way ahead for India?

India has a positive and expanding bilateral relationship with the Maldives. Hence, even with Muizzu becoming the President of the Maldives, India should strive to uphold a strong relationship with the new government.

6. **Without a caste count, there can be no honest politics**

Source: The post is based on articles

"Without a caste count, there can be no honest politics" published in **The Indian Express** on **4th October 2023** and

"This Doesn't Count – India's fast-growing economy must generate more social mobility for caste to lose its political appeal" published in **The Times of India** on **4th October 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance – Government Policies & Intervention

Relevance: About caste-based census

News: Bihar's recent release of comprehensive caste survey (CCS) data is historic as it's the first time such results of large-scale exercise have been made public. However, the state is yet to release supplementary socio-economic data.

Why are governments reluctant to conduct caste surveys?

According to Max Weber, the modern state is a human community that successfully claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory.

However, today, states are defined by their control over both legitimate violence and social statistics/data.

This data is used by totalitarian regimes to control the media and to manage public opinion. They use this data to hide their failures in addressing societal disparities.

Therefore, governments are usually hesitant to conduct and disclose caste surveys because it might expose its shortcomings.

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What are the arguments in favor of conducting caste census?
First, caste is a powerful determinant of life chances in India, and it is important to acknowledge and address these differences to achieve true political unity.

Second, caste-based census represents the essential initial step toward addressing the genuine differences and disparities rooted in caste.

What are the arguments against conducting caste census?
First, caste data falls into the category of social statistics and provides insights into the identities and groups that make up the larger national population. Hence, it can reveal social inequalities that may make ruling government accountable.

Second, caste enumeration might surpass the 50% reservation limit. A recent Supreme Court ruling approved a 10% reservation for EWS, raising concerns about the balance between equality and reservation rights.

Consequently, mixing caste with politics and development makes it hard for Indians to be seen as individuals. **Thus, focusing on class instead of caste** for political mobilization in economic development might yield better results.

Third, caste-based reservations may not effectively reduce economic inequalities, as lower-caste individuals haven't seen substantial improvement even during economic growth.

Instead, we should work on larger-scale improvements for everyone, making caste-based census unnecessary.

Fourth, collecting caste data might strengthen caste divisions and slow down progress toward a casteless society.

Must Read: Caste Census Significance and Challenges- Explained

What are the challenges in conducting caste census?
Read Here: Complex count: On caste census

What lies ahead?
Faking unity in politics without addressing real societal differences is not genuine politics as it reduces accountability for politicians. Thus, accountable political representation across social differences is crucial, and the Bihar CCS might be a small first step toward achieving this goal.

7. **At WTO, growing disregard for trade rules shows world is fragmenting**
News: This post is created based on the article '**At WTO, growing disregard for trade rules shows world is fragmenting**', published in **Business Standard** on **4th October 2023**.
Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, International Relations and Organisations
News: The article discusses the trends of unilateralism and reduced functioning of WTO.

Since 2019, the WTO's dispute settlement system has been severely impacted, with 29 cases left unresolved. This occurred after the US blocked the appointment of new judges to the WTO's Appellate Body, citing concerns over judicial overreach. Countries that have submitted cases include China, India, the US, and several others.

What are the recent worrying trends in global trade, that necessitate the WTO's existence?
First, the WTO warned that the rise in unilateral measures could fragment the global economy, potentially leading to a 5% reduction in global income.

Second, while import restrictions have decreased since 2018, export curbs have significantly increased. It was on an average 21 per year between 2016 and 2019, surging to 139 in the last year.

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The rise in export curbs has led to an increase in "trade concerns" at the WTO. Examples include export restrictions on Indian rice and subsidies introduced by various countries, such as the US Inflation Reduction Act and subsidies for electric cars in China.

Third, The US's local content requirements under the Buy American Act and the European Union's subsidies to boost domestic supply of critical minerals indicate a shift in global trade dynamics.

8. The shutdown of the Afghan embassy

Source: The post is based on the article "**The shutdown of the Afghan embassy**" published in "The Hindu" on 4th October 2023.

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

News: The Afghanistan embassy in Delhi is closing, citing issues like lack of support from India. Although the embassy represented the now-overthrown Afghan government, it was still aiding Afghans in India. Meanwhile, consulates remain open, and unofficial ties between India and Afghanistan persist despite the closure.

What are the reasons for the closing of the Afghan embassy in Delhi?

Lack of Cooperation from India

The embassy pointed to a lack of cooperation from the Indian government as a major reason for the closure. The official statement expressed dissatisfaction, emphasizing an absence of needed support.

Insufficient Resources

Operating further has become untenable for the embassy due to a lack of resources. This constraint has impeded its functioning and ultimately is a key factor in its closure.

Representation of a Deposed Government

Since the Taliban took over in August 2021, the embassy has symbolically represented the previous Afghan government, not the current rulers. The ambassador of the old regime, Farid Mamundzay, left India and hasn't returned, leaving a leadership void.

Request to Maintain Afghan Flag

Despite the closure, the embassy asked India to keep flying the flag of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and eventually hand the mission to a "legitimate" Afghan government in the future.

How does this impact Afghan-Indian relations?

Closure of the Symbolic Embassy

The embassy in Delhi, representing the ousted Afghan government, has announced its closure. It's symbolically significant as it represented the previous Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, not the Taliban, which now controls Afghanistan since August 2021.

Ambiguous Diplomatic Relations

India does not recognize the Taliban, causing diplomatic relations to be complex and challenging. The embassy had been acting as a "stateless mission," aiding Afghan citizens and travelers in India without representing the current rulers of Kabul.

Consulates' Continuation

Despite the embassy's closure, consulates in Hyderabad and Mumbai will stay open, and Zakia Wardak, the Consul General, has committed to continuing services to help Afghan students,

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refugees, and traders in India. This helps maintain some level of connection and support between the two nations.

Technical Team in Kabul

India sustains a unique connection through a "technical team" in Kabul that provides visas to Afghan traders and travelers to India, indicating that, despite the closure, ties in some form continue, albeit informally.

9. **Using AI for audit techniques**

Source: The post is based on the article "**Using AI for audit techniques**" published in **"The Hindu"** on 4th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- Governance- e-governance

News: The article discusses the challenges faced by India's Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) in auditing AI systems, emphasizes ethical use of AI in audits, and highlights the need for AI regulations and standardized data for accurate and fair auditing. It also briefly discusses global AI regulations and frameworks.

What challenges does AI present to auditing?

Ensuring Ethical AI Use: The CAG, Girish Chandra Murmu, emphasized that utilizing AI for auditing must be done ethically and responsibly to avoid inaccurate findings.

Data Integrity and Bias: It is crucial that AI uses data that are complete, timely, and relevant, and auditors must be cautious of inherent data bias, especially when data are obtained from unauthorized sources like social media.

AI Regulation and Standardization: The challenge for the CAG involves not only regulating AI use but also ensuring standardized data across varied government entity platforms.

International Audit Framework: The Supreme Audit Institutions (SAIs) of the G20 conference highlighted a need for a shared international audit framework related to AI to address audit challenges comprehensively.

Adopting Existing Frameworks: Currently, auditors must adopt and adapt existing frameworks and regulations related to IT and communicate with all stakeholders due to the absence of explicit AI auditing guidance.

Data Management Complexity: Managing data, ensuring its integrity, and integrating it from diverse platforms and sources become challenging in AI audits.

Consulting Experts: AI audit assignments might need the involvement of various specialists, such as data scientists and architects, due to the intricacy of AI technologies.

What regulatory actions have been taken regarding AI?
Global Level Regulatory Action

EU AI Act: The European Parliament approved the act, creating new rules and scrutiny for AI tools like ChatGPT. Developers need to get their systems reviewed and approved before they can be used commercially. It also restricts real-time biometric surveillance and prohibits "social scoring" systems.

UK's AI Safety Regulation Intent: UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak wants the UK to be the "geographical home" of AI safety regulation, signaling a direction towards detailed AI regulatory practices.

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AI Auditing Frameworks: Various frameworks for AI audit, like the COBIT framework and the COSO ERM Framework, are in place globally. The UK's Information Commissioner's Office also published draft guidance on an AI auditing framework.

Indian Level Regulatory Actions

Digitalization of Audit Process: The CAG in India will implement "One Indian Audit and Accounts Department One System," a web-enabled IT application, to digitalize the audit process from April 1, 2023.

Need for AI Regulation: India perceives a need to establish AI regulation, inspired by initiatives from global counterparts like the EU. However, specific Indian regulatory actions regarding AI are not detailed.

10. The triumph of Vachathi over a hostile state

Source: The post is based on the article "**The triumph of Vachathi over a hostile state**" published in **The Hindu** on 4th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS2- Governance- Important aspects of governance, transparency and accountability; Role of civil services in a democracy.
News: On September 29, 2023, the court acknowledged large-scale repression by authorities in Vachathi, Tamil Nadu in 1992. The court convicted 215 government personnel, highlighting their violence and illegal actions against villagers.

What happened in Vachathi in 1992?
Incident in Vachathi

In 1992, Vachathi, a village in Tamil Nadu, experienced horrifying violence from about 300 government officials. They violently attacked the village, using the pretext of searching for smuggled sandalwood.

Atrocities Committed

The officials mistreated 18 women, including a pregnant woman, and many other villagers. Around 90 women, 28 children, and 15 men were illegally held in the Forest Ranger's office. Villagers were forced to undergo physical and mental abuse, leading to widespread trauma and displacement.

Initial Government Response

Despite the reporting of these atrocities, Tamil Nadu government officials, ignored the complaints, denying the need for investigation or any substantial action for years.

What legal steps were taken years later?
Public Interest Litigation: In 1995, A. Nallasivan filed a public interest litigation highlighting the Vachathi atrocities.

Role of Ms. Bhamathi's Report: The High Court, using the detailed findings from former IAS officer Ms. Bhamathi's report, recognized the gravity of the crimes.

High Court's Directive: The court directed the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) to investigate the Vachathi incident, emphasizing the need for a thorough inquiry.

Madras High Court's Judgment in 2023: After a long legal battle, the court, in September 2023, convicted all 215 accused government and law enforcement personnel for their roles in the Vachathi atrocities.

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Compensation and Accountability: The court mandated the state to provide a compensation of ₹10 lakh for each rape survivor and ensure jobs for them, reaffirming the state's responsibility in the incident.

Broader Implications: This landmark verdict drew attention to the need for legal amendments, especially in cases involving state-orchestrated violence.

What are the broader implications of the Vachathi verdict?

Highlighting State-Orchestrated Violence: The verdict underscores the occurrence and consequences of organized, large-scale violence by government forces, spotlighting an issue that isn't isolated to Vachathi alone.

Need for Command Responsibility: The case brought attention to the absence of legal structures to hold superior officers and political leaders accountable for the actions of their subordinates, which is critical in state-organized crimes.

Gaps in Criminal Law: It highlighted deficiencies in the criminal justice system in handling crimes committed by state agents, showing a need for specialized processes and evidentiary principles for such cases.

Compensation and State Responsibility: By assigning the state responsibility for compensation and support to survivors, the verdict underscored the principle that governments should be accountable for the actions of their personnel.

Empowering Survivors: The judgment not only provides justice to Vachathi's survivors but also sets a precedent for other victims of state-orchestrated violence, illustrating the possibility of overcoming lengthy and challenging legal battles.

11. MDB reforms off the block

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"MDB reforms off the block"**, published in the **Business Standard** on **5th October 2023.**

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

News: This article discusses the reforms in **Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs)** as an important outcome of **G20's Delhi Summit** under India's leadership. The role of MDBs such as **World Bank and ADB** in addressing global challenges such as **climate change** and **maximising developmental impact** is also highlighted.

Growing Role of Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs)

Firstly, there is an urgent need for mobilizing financial resources for **combating climate change**. For example, **IMF** has estimated the requirement of **$5 trillion annually by 2030** for achieving **Net-Zero by 2050.**

Secondly, since governments have found themselves short of funds for implementing big projects, private investment is required to augment efforts. MDBs can attract **private funds** and work with other financial institutions.

Thirdly, the shortage of resources in **Emerging Markets and Developing Economies (EMDE)** to finance their climate transition and developmental projects can be **supplemented by MDBs**.

What should the MDBs do?

Work on a new operating model to increase their capacity to **serve as "Climate Banks" and** emerge as a **solutions-provider** for developing countries.

It is important for MDBs to **catalyse private capital** through the innovative use of **risk transfers** and **blended finance**.

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MDBs will have to be innovative in mobilising capital from **commercial banks** as well as **institutional investors**, including pension funds, asset managers and insurance companies.

What should be done?

Trillions are needed to meet investment needs for **climate adaptation and mitigation, disaster resilience, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030**, which is becoming increasingly difficult and costly. In this regard, MDBs will have a crucial role to play in assisting governments around the world. **G20 Delhi Summit's reform agenda for MDBs** can help address issues in their functioning and augment their capacities.

12. Nanded Horror – on the deaths of children in Maharashtra

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Nanded Horror"** published in the **Times of India** on **5th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: Social Justice – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health
News: Recent deaths in a Nanded hospital point to the prevailing issues with the health sector in India, especially the challenge of medicine shortage.

What are the reasons behind the Nanded tragedy in Maharashtra?

Government hospitals are in crisis not only in remote areas of a poor state but also in **Maharashtra – the state with the largest economy**.

Hospitals in Maharasthra have been facing many challenges off lately. Following are some of those challenges:

1) Nurses transferred without replacement and vacancies of doctors' posts.

2) Non-functional CT scanners.

3) Garbage pileups and filthy toilets.

4) An immense shortage of essential medicines.

Government hospitals across Maharashtra are facing medicine shortages as a result of a **faulty system of procurement and supply of medicines**. Government's inability to replace it with a new nodal body created under the **recently passed Medical Goods Procurement Act** is making the issue worse.

What should be done?

Accountability of governments towards healthcare has to be ensured to control the deep crisis in public health as seen in the sharp spikes in hospital deaths.

In this regard, **Bombay High Court's decision** to review the details of the state's allocation to health as well as details of the deaths is an important step.

13. Drawing lines in Cauvery waters

Source: The post is based on the article **"Drawing lines in Cauvery waters**" published in The **Indian Express** on **5th October 2023**.
Syllabus: GS 2 – Indian Polity – Issues & Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure
Relevance: concerns with Cauvery water dispute
News: The Cauvery dispute has resurfaced, the first time since the Supreme Court's 2018 re-adjudication of the dispute and the establishment of the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) to enforce the verdict.

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What has been the history of the Cauvery water dispute?
Read Here: Cauvery Water Dispute and Interstate River Disputes

What are the reasons behind the current dispute?
Court Order: The recent dispute started in August when Tamil Nadu asked the Supreme Court to instruct Karnataka to release Cauvery waters at a rate of 24,000 cusecs. Karnataka opposed this due to insufficient rainfall.

Further, the court ordered Karnataka to release water at 3,000 cusecs, leading to widespread protests, including a statewide bandh. The dispute caused civic unrest, violence and significant economic losses.

Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA): The recent Cauvery dispute escalation is partly attributed to the effective role of the **Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA)**

Despite low river water levels causing tensions this year, the CWMA has successfully mitigated the issue by fostering dialogue and facilitating problem-solving between the two states, showing its effectiveness.

Must Read: Cauvery Water Dispute: An analysis and **Cauvery Water Dispute: All You Need to Know**

What are the concerns with involvement of the Supreme Court in inter-state water dispute?
The Supreme Court's 2016 decision asserting appellate jurisdiction in interstate river water disputes contradicted its past stance of having no such jurisdiction.

This change was driven by the expectation that states would be more inclined to comply with the Court's decisions. **However, even the court order didn't prevent disputes from resurfacing and escalating, hampering its image.**

This underscores the need to acknowledge the recurring nature of these disputes and respect **Article 262 of the Constitution and the Interstate River Water Disputes Act of 1956, which prohibit court involvement in such matters.**

What can be the way ahead?
First, recent escalations reveal that river water disputes remain unresolved over time. In transboundary water-sharing, both conflict and cooperation will coexist.

Hence, to address this, we must complement legal solutions with institutional responses to promote cooperation and reduce conflict.

Second, Institutions like the CWMA needs improvement.

Models like the National Council of the Cauvery (NCA), established through consensus, and the Supreme Court-mandated CWMA present distinct approaches. Hence, a renewed focus on consensus-building is required.

14. **University is where India imagines a common future — it needs to have academic freedom**
Source: The post is based on the article "Pulapre Balakrishnan writes: **University is where India imagines a common future — it needs to have academic freedom**" published in "Indian express" on 5th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS2- Governance- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education,
News: The author explores the debate over academic freedom in India, focusing on potential political interference in universities. They emphasize the necessity of freedom for genuine

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knowledge pursuit, contrasting with certain functional aspects of higher education that can operate without such academic liberty, and ponder its implication for the future.

Why is the debate on academic freedom important now?

The debate on academic freedom in India's universities is crucial now due to several factors:

Expansion of Universities: There has been a notable growth in the university sector, especially the establishment of new private universities.

Public Spending: UNESCO data shows India has the highest public spending per student in higher education compared to primary schools, indicating a substantial investment in the sector.

Focus on Liberal Arts: Many newly established private universities emphasize liberal arts, and there's a debate whether genuine liberal arts education can exist without robust academic freedom.

Political Interference: Concerns about political interference stifling academic freedom are prevalent, potentially inhibiting unbiased pursuit of knowledge and research.

Global Relevance: Academic freedom is not just a national issue but has global relevance, impacting the country's international academic and research collaborations, and global image.

These aspects make the debate on academic freedom timely and significant in the current Indian educational and political landscape.

What is the difference between academic freedom and free speech?

Scope of Application: Academic freedom pertains to the educational and research contexts within universities, while free speech has a broader, more general application in society.

Purpose: Academic freedom is specifically tied to the pursuit and dissemination of knowledge within an academic setting, whereas free speech refers to the expression of ideas, beliefs, or opinions in the public sphere.

Restrictions: While the article contends that academic freedom should arguably have no boundaries, free speech can have reasonable restrictions to prevent issues like hate speech, privacy violation, defamation, and threats to national security.

Legal Implications: The author mentions that, in India, restrictions on free speech might sometimes involve the charge of "sedition", which could be interpreted as causing disaffection against the government.

What are the challenges to academic freedom?

Political Interference: In India, there's worry about political interference in universities, impacting the free pursuit of knowledge and potentially guiding research and teaching towards certain ideologies.

Religious and Social Resistance: Historical examples like Galileo Galilei and Charles Darwin illustrate how religious forces have opposed scientific revelations in the past, showcasing societal resistance to academic explorations.

Governmental Pushback: The case of Jay Bhattacharya, who faced opposition from the US government for questioning COVID-19 lockdowns, shows how state mechanisms can sometimes try to suppress academic viewpoints.

Private University Focus: The debates regarding academic freedom in India have recently zoomed in on new private universities, especially those focusing on liberal arts, posing questions on whether they can truly engage in liberal arts without sufficient academic freedom.

These challenges collectively pose a threat to the authentic pursuit of knowledge and academic integrity in global educational settings.

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What are the impacts of academic freedom?

Knowledge Advancement: Academic freedom enables unbridled exploration and progression in knowledge, as seen in historical developments through figures like Galileo and Darwin.

Imagining the Future: Universities, with academic freedom, can critically evaluate current societal and global structures and imagine alternatives, which is vital for societal advancement.

Investment Justification: Considering India's high public spending per student in higher education, ensuring academic freedom is critical to justify the investments and avoid creating institutions that merely echo prevailing narratives.

Global and National Reputation: The state of academic freedom reflects on a nation's image and can influence international academic and research collaborations, impacting a country's global standing in the educational sector.

What should be done?

Uphold and prioritize academic freedom to facilitate unbiased research and teaching in universities.

Develop robust policies that secure the right to explore and share knowledge without fear of backlash or suppression.

Reassess the allocation of educational spending, ensuring both higher and primary education are adequately and effectively funded.

Safeguard the autonomy of universities, particularly those focusing on liberal arts, to enable an unhindered exploration of various disciplines without yielding to external pressures.

15. Retribution for the south, accolade for the north

Source: The post is based on the article "**Retribution for the south, accolade for the north**" published in **"The Hindu"** on 5th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS2- polity- Delimitation; issues and challenges pertaining to the federal structure

News: The article discusses how India's political and financial systems, which are based on population size, put southern states at a disadvantage due to controlled population growth. At the same time, they favor northern states with larger populations in terms of political representation and financial allocations, leading to a policy dilemma.

How does population size affect political representation?

Lok Sabha Seats and Article 81: Article 81 of the Indian Constitution says that Lok Sabha seats should be allocated based on population size, aiming for equal representation across constituencies.

Decisions Based on Old Census: Historically, seats were distributed based on the 1971 Census data, which, through amendments like the 42nd in 1976 and the 84th in 2001, was intended to be utilized until at least the first census after 2026.

Population Control Consequences: Southern states in India, having effectively controlled their populations, risk losing 23 seats if 2023 population projections are applied, while northern states might gain 37.

Inequality in Representation: MPs from northern states represent more people (around 18 lakh) compared to those from southern states (around 16 lakh). However, interestingly, electing an MP requires only about 12 lakh voters in both regions.

What happens when population control is penalized?

Losing Representation: The five southern states (Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana) will witness a decrease of 23 seats, while the Hindi-speaking northern states

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will gain 37 seats. Consequently, the proportion of political representation for the northern states will increase by 6.81%, while that of the southern states will decline by 4.24%.

Decreased Fiscal Share: These states could also get a smaller piece of the Union government's tax revenue. The share of five southern states dropped from 21.1% to 15.8% from 2000-05 to 2021-26.

Political Incentive: Penalizing population control by reducing representation and financial allocations might discourage states from prioritizing such initiatives in the future.

Societal Impact: States which successfully implemented population control through social development efforts, like the southern states, might face unintended negative consequences, altering their societal and economic development trajectories.

Future Policy Dilemma: This situation creates a policy challenge, potentially impacting the federal structure and solidarity by possibly inciting regional disparities and discontent among states.

What should be done?
Maintain Seat Freeze: It's essential to persist with the freeze on Lok Sabha seat distribution, as per the 1971 Census figures, until all states stabilize their populations, to ensure fair representation and avoid penalizing southern states, like Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh.

Incentive for Population Control: Encourage population management in all states by ensuring policies don't penalize those, like Kerala or Tamil Nadu, which have effectively controlled their populations through both family planning and social development.

Fair Fiscal Distribution: Reconsider fiscal distribution formulas to ensure that states are not financially penalized for controlling their populations. For instance, protecting the declining share, such as the drop from 21.1% to 15.8% in five southern states from 2000-05 to 2021-26, in Union government's tax revenue is pivotal.

Promote Equitable Representation: Implement systems that ensure more equal representation per elector across both northern and southern states, maintaining the democratic principle of "one person, one vote."

Social and Economic Development: Encourage policies that promote balanced social and economic development in all states, ensuring uniform progression and stability across India.

16. **If Indian troops are removed, Maldives will lose a diplomatic card to balance China**
Source: The post is based on the article **"If Indian troops are removed, Maldives will lose a diplomatic card to balance China...it will also distance France and US**" published in **The Times of India** on **6th October 2023**.
Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations – Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.
Relevance: India and Maldives Relation
News: The newly elected President of the Maldives, Mohamed Muizzu, has stated his intention to withdraw Indian troops from the Maldives. This has raised concerns that the Maldives may shift its alignment toward China, causing concerns for India.

How has been the bilateral relation between India and Maldives?
The recent statement about removing Indian troops from the Maldives is potentially influenced by external factors.

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However, historically, India has maintained a supportive relationship with the Maldives**, including instances such as Operation Cactus in 1988**, assistance during the 2004 tsunami, and support during the Covid pandemic.

Read More: Election of China-friendly Mohamed Muizzu could test Indo-Maldives ties

What may be the probable consequences of Maldives removing the Indian troops from its country?
The removal of Indian troops from the Maldives may affect the nation's diplomatic balance with China and strain relations with France, the US, and India.

Moreover, India should also explore options like relocating troops and radar stations to an Indian island on the Laccadive Ridge.

Further, despite removal, **diplomatic efforts with Maldives should still continue, highlighting India's significance in the Indian Ocean region.**

How does the removal of troops may impact India's position in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR)?
The possible withdrawal of Indian troops from the Maldives may not be a significant setback for India**. Instead, it will give opportunity to India to adjust its diplomacy in response to China's presence in the Indian Ocean region.**

Moreover, India has matched China's development efforts in the Maldives, and past tensions with Maldives have not seriously damaged bilateral ties. **Hence, the current statement by given by Muizzu may need further observation.**

What are the concerns for countries in the IOR aligning their interest with China?
The Chinese debt trap is a legitimate concern for the countries located in the IOR. Countries in the IOR should also be cautious of Chinese practices, especially their acquisition of critical infrastructure like ports, as seen in Sri Lanka.

Moreover, India has been engaged with and supporting IOR nations for years through organizations like Saarc and IORARC, whereas China is a relatively new entrant in the region.

How can India respond to the Chinese challenge in the IOR?
India's history of naval exercises with IOR nations and its successful hosting of the recent G20 enhance its stature and could lead to deeper engagement with IOR countries.

Foreign Minister Jaishankar has also highlighted the importance of aligning logistics chains and improving naval interoperability in the IOR. He advocated cooperation with like-minded nations like the US, Australia, and Japan to counter the Chinese threat.

17. **Educating our security chieftains**
Source: The post is based on the article **"Educating our security chieftains"** published in **Business Standard** on **6th October 2023**.
Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues Related with Education
Relevance: concerns with Professional Military Education (PME) in India
News: In May 2013, the then Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh, laid the foundation stone of the Indian National Defence University (INDU) in Binola, Gurugram.

What was the purpose of establishing the university?
The Indian National Defence University (INDU) was planned to primarily focus on national security subjects, as recommended by the Kargil Review Committee in 1999.

It aimed to provide education in national security studies for both military and civilian personnel, with a structure similar to Indian Institutes of Management and Technology.

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INDU was intended to be led by a serving three-star general from the army, navy, or air force, with a student composition of two-thirds military and the rest from government, police, and civilians.

However, despite being proposed in 2013, INDU has not been established yet, highlighting the deficiency of institutions for "professional military education" (PME) in India.

How is India's professional military education (PME) system compare to those of other countries?
India's PME system falls behind nations like the US, UK, Russia, China, and even Pakistan, all of which have made substantial investments in specialized PME institutions.

According to the US, PME emphasizes cognitive learning, diverse perspectives, critical analysis, and innovative thinking for complex problems.

However, India's military PME predominantly concentrates on tactical aspects throughout professional development, lacking a focus on strategic studies.

What are the concerns with India's professional military education (PME)?
Currently, India's PME system is primarily overseen by the military, with minimal participation from civilian committees, leading to a focus on "training" rather than "education."

Many officers completing courses in India have reported that PMEs emphasizes more on social activities rather than imparting essential elements of statecraft and national security.

Ultimately, **this limited focus on strategic education hampers their ability to provide crucial strategic advice during national security crises.**

Moreover, **a study by US military officers noted that** the Indian course at DSSC in Wellington was not as competitive as the equivalent courses in Pakistan.

What steps have been taken by the current government to reform military education?
The current government asserts that the military environment has changed significantly, **aligning with the PM's agenda of "transform, reform, and perform."**

Further, modern militaries prioritize providing comprehensive education to their officers for a better understanding of broader national security issues.

Consequently, around 30 Indian military officers are sent abroad each year to attend staff college courses with foreign armies to acquire modern education.

What can be the way ahead?
Indian PME lacks creativity and promotes operational stereotypes. It also does not foster group discussions or prepare officers for future senior positions.

Hence, the PME in India should be restructured to expand officers' cognitive space and facilitate their understanding of macro issues.

18. **Mess-y Education- Segregating students by food creates a terrible learning environment**
Source: The post is based on the article "Mess-y Education- Segregating students by food creates a terrible learning environment. IIT-B must do better" published in "Times of India" on 6th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS2- Governance- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education.
News: The article discusses a situation at IIT Bombay where tables in the mess have been reserved for vegetarians, leading to protests and fines for dissenting students.

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What are the issues at IIT Bombay?
Issue of Segregation in the Mess:

IIT Bombay reserved mess tables for vegetarian students.

The reason given was the discomfort of some at the sight and smell of non-vegetarian food.

Student Protests and Administration's Response:

Protesting students, opposing this separation, have been fined.

The administration accuses them of disrupting "peace and harmony within the mess."

Caste Discrimination Concerns:

This policy is seen as potentially enforcing a purity-pollution matrix and casteism.

A student's suicide in February already spotlighted existing caste discrimination issues at IIT Bombay.

Faculty Involvement:

Some faculty members are supporting protesting students, critiquing the administration's approach.

What are the larger implications of this issue?
Damage to IIT's Global Reputation:

The institute, known for producing globally successful professionals, faces potential harm to its brand due to this controversy.

IIT's international image might be affected as the incident contradicts the spirit of diversity and acceptance promoted globally.

Highlighting Systemic Prejudices:

This situation brings systemic prejudices, like caste discrimination, to the forefront.

Darshan Solanki's suicide already put the spotlight on caste issues, and this mess segregation further emphasizes them.

Threat to Student Harmony and Education:

The action of segregating mess tables could inhibit the harmonious interaction between diverse students.

The educational environment might suffer as students face a physical manifestation of division daily.

Contradiction to Global Standards:

While Indian students abroad enjoy supportive and diverse environments, similar support might be perceived as lacking in their home institutions.

The contradiction between what is practiced abroad and at home, especially at a premier institution like IIT, is stark and potentially disillusioning for students.

What should be done?
Addressing Prejudices Directly:

IIT Bombay should engage in actions that squarely tackle any prejudices and caste-based discriminations on campus.

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Policies should not perpetuate social cleavages and must be formulated to combat systemic issues, not just isolated incidents.

Ensuring Equity in Institutional Policies:

The mess should be de-segregated to assure all students they are equal and welcome.

Practices that may lead to stigmatization or division among students need to be urgently revised.

Promoting a Supportive Environment:

The institute must create an environment that promotes diversity and supports all students equally.

Considering the international engagements and reputation of IIT, adopting global standards in promoting and respecting diversity is vital.

Proactive Management of Student Concerns:

Administrators should be responsive to student protests and concerns, avoiding punitive actions like fines.

Ensuring open dialogue and mutual respect between management and students will help in developing a supportive educational environment.

19. **Defusing the ticking time bomb called diabetes**
Source: The post is based on the article "**Defusing the ticking time bomb called diabetes**" published in "The Hindu" on 6th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS2- Governance- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health,
News: The article discusses the rising issue of diabetes and obesity in India, linked to the high consumption of unhealthy ultra-processed foods. It highlights the food industry's aggressive marketing in India and suggests that strict government regulations and policies are needed to control and reduce the public health crisis.

What is the current situation of diabetes and obesity in India?
As of June 2023, a notable study points out a health concern in India related to diabetes and obesity.

The study reveals that 11.4% of the population, which is 10.13 crore people, are living with diabetes.

Additionally, 15.3% of Indians, or 13.6 crore people, are pre-diabetic, showing a potential risk of developing diabetes.

The obesity issue is also notable with 28.6% of the population being classified as obese according to Body Mass Index (BMI) measures.

What are the reasons for high diabetes rates in India?
Ultra-Processed Food Consumption: Many Indians are consuming unhealthy ultra-processed foods, such as chips, instant noodles, and carbonated drinks. These foods often replace traditional diets.

Dietary Impact: A daily increase of 10% in ultra-processed food consumption is linked to a 15% higher risk of type-2 diabetes among adults.

Food Industry's Role: The food industry in India heavily promotes unhealthy foods. They spend billions on marketing, targeting especially the young and middle class.

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Influential Marketing: Tactics include using cartoon characters, celebrity endorsements, and incentives to attract consumers, especially children.

Lack of Effective Regulations: The Food Safety and Standards Authority of India hasn't effectively addressed the crisis. There's an absence of strong front-of-package labelling to warn consumers about unhealthy products.

Industry Resistance: The food industry opposes restrictions on marketing and often engages in partnerships that might not prioritize public health.

What should be done?
Implementing Regulatory Policies: Government should create legal frameworks or ordinances to reduce ultra-processed food consumption, similar to actions taken by South Africa, Norway, and Mexico.

Defining Healthy Food: Laws or guidelines should clearly define 'healthy food' to inform consumer choices.

Warning Labels: Implementing warning labels on unhealthy food and beverages can inform people about the risks of consuming such items.

Restricting Marketing: Placing restrictions on how unhealthy foods and beverages are marketed, especially to vulnerable populations like children, can control consumption.

Avoiding Industry Influence: Government policies and actions should be devoid of food industry influence to avoid conflict of interest and ensure public health is prioritized.

Promoting Public Awareness: There must be campaigns to inform people about the dangers of consuming ultra-processed foods, leveraging data such as the 15% higher risk of diabetes associated with a 10% daily increase in their consumption.

Following Proven Examples: Adapting measures from other countries, like the Infant Milk Substitutes Act which successfully regulated commercial baby food, can offer a guideline for regulating unhealthy foods and beverages.

20. **Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: History, India's response**
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Nagorno-Karabakh conflict: History, India's response"** published in the **Indian Express** on **6th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 — International Relations: Bilateral relationships involving India and/or affecting India's interests including India and West Asian Nations.
News: The article discusses the history of the **Nagorno-Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan** and the historical development of their bilateral relations with India, and India's foreign policy response to the issue.

Nagorno-Karabakh is at the root of the tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan. The province is **officially recognised as part of Azerbaijan**. Its population is **predominantly ethnic Armenian**, having close cultural, social, and historical ties with Armenia. The Armenians are Christians, while Azeris are Muslims. The enclave is connected to Armenia through the **Lachin Corridor**.

What is the history of the conflict over Nagorno-Karabakh?
Historically, Nagorno-Karabakh was part of the Azerbaijan SSR (Soviet Socialist Republic). Conflict emerged with the weakening and the eventual **collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991**. This led to the following major developments:

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1) In **1991**, the region declared independence leading to war between Armenia and Azerbaijan, with **Armenia having the upper hand**. In **1994**, Russia brokered a ceasefire known as the **Bishkek Protocol**.

2) In **2020**, **Azerbaijan managed to take control** of the territory around Nagorno-Karabakh.

3) In **December 2022**, the **Lachin Corridor was blockaded by Azerbaijan**, causing severe shortages of essential goods in the province.

4) In **September 2023**, **Azerbaijan launched an "anti-terrorist" offensive** and claimed to have regained **full control of the province**.

What has been India's position?
India's foreign policy position has been **one of balance and not taking clear sides**.

Accordingly, India believes that **any lasting resolution of the conflict can only be achieved peacefully through diplomatic dialogue and negotiations.**

In this regard, India supports **OSCE (Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe) Minsk Group**'s continued efforts for a **peaceful resolution**.

How are India's ties in the region?
India has ties with both. The region is also important for its centrality to **India's plans of connectivity through the south Caucasus**.

India-Armenia relations:

Historical ties of the two countries date back thousands of years. Cultural interactions have taken place as part of military invasions, establishing of communities and movement of traders.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, India established diplomatic relations and has a **treaty relationship with Armenia**.

Armenia also supports for India's position on the **Kashmir issue** and on the question of a **permanent seat in the UNSC**.

In 2022, military cooperation strengthened in terms of India's supply of **military weapons and ammunitions worth US $250 million**.

India-Azerbaijan relations:

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, India established **diplomatic relations with Azerbaijan**.

However, Azerbaijan's **proximity to Pakistan** has been seen as a roadblock in the bilateral ties. In contrast to Armenia, there has not been a single high-level visit between the two countries.

What should be the way forward for India?
Because of the geographical location of Armenia and Azerbaijan, the region is important as a viable corridor for **India's connectivity with Russia and Europe** through Central Asia and Iran. Armenia and Azerbaijan are both members of the **International North South Transport Corridor (INSTC),** which holds importance for India.

Hence, tensions in the region directly impact India's plans to **bypass Pakistan as the gateway to Europe and Russia.** India will have to walk a **"diplomatic tightrope"** to figure out a way around this dilemma.

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21. **Focus on female voter is reassuring. But sensitive politics is needed**

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Focus on female voter is reassuring. But sensitive politics is needed"** published in the **Indian Express** on **7ᵗʰ October 2023.**

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

News: The article discusses the recent phenomenon of political parties placing an emphasis on women voters and enacting women-centric policies. It also highlights the requirement of safeguards to handle the challenges therein.

Madhya Pradesh government's decision to reserve **35% of all government jobs for women** has brought the recent phenomenon of women-centric policies to the fore.

Other states have also addressed women voters by enacting policies on free or subsidized transport, healthcare, housing schemes for women, provision of cheap cooking gas cylinders and increase in maternity benefits.

Why the renewed focus on female voters?

Participation of women in the poll process has increased over the last decade. They have sometimes even **overtaken men** and have thus emerged as a **crucial voting bloc** that parties now compete with each other to attract.

What is the need for top-down women-centric policies?

1) It is important in a "**male-centric country"** where the imagination of the Indian woman was limited to **"bachche banane ki machine (the bearer of children)"** or **"parkati mahilayein (emancipated women with short hair)".**

2) It is crucial for providing a "**level-playing field"** and an eco-system that offers equal opportunities to all.

3) **Access** to education, infrastructure, amenities and technology are important for women in an aspirational economy.

What more needs to be done?

Women must not be cornered into women-only compartments. This will lead to the undesirable solidifying of boundaries.

Care should be exercised in ensuring that the language used does not refer to the rightful granting of equal rights as **"protective benevolence"**.

Safeguards need to be built in against **simplistic politics of attaching labels** with regards to discussion on women's rights.

There is a need to draw upon lessons learnt from other areas of social justice to ensure that the **idea of representation and empowerment leads to a shared consensus and** sets women free.

22. **Russia might pull back from nuclear test treaty**

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Russia might pull back from nuclear test treaty"** published in the **The Hindu** on **7ᵗʰ October 2023.**

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

News: The article discusses the concerns regarding escalating tensions between Russia and USA. It might result in Russia possibly revoking the global nuclear test ban treaty and conducting nuclear tests.

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Russian lawmakers are considering **repealing the ratification of a global nuclear test ban (or the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty)**, as told by Speaker of the Russian Parliament. A similar statement was made earlier by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

What is the justification behind Russia's possible exit from NTBT?
The United States has never ratified the treaty (signed but not ratified), while Russia ratified it in 2000.

Moscow's claim that Western military support for Ukraine means the U.S. and its allies are engaged in the conflict directly.

What are the concerns?
There are widespread concerns that Russia could move to resume nuclear tests to try to discourage the West from continuing to offer military support to Ukraine.

23. **Aligning higher education with the United Nations SDGs**
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Aligning higher education with the United Nations SDGs"** published in **The Hindu** on **7th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Social Justice — Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education.
News: The article discusses the importance of higher education in achieving SDG targets and the role of the National Education Policy 2020 in the same. It also highlights the changes required in higher education institutions to accelerate progress towards SDGs.

What are SDGs?
The United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a set of **17 goals with 169 targets** to be achieved by 2030 by all UN-member countries.

SDGs are crucial to **end poverty and other socio-economic and environmental problems**. However, slow progress was reported by **SDGs Report 2023.**

It also highlighted the negative impact of **COVID-19**, **climate crisis**, the **Russia-Ukraine conflict**, and a **weak global economy** on achieving SDGs.

India too has suffered a setback in achieving these goals.

How can NEP 2020 help in achieving SDGs?
India's actions and policies have indicated commitment to SDGs, particularly **SDG4** (which pertains to **access to quality education**). It is a prerequisite for the achievement of other goals.

The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 is an important policy in this regard.

With **priority on higher education**, NEP may help to **accelerate social mobility**, empower people through **creativity and critical thinking**, and make people employable.

According to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development **(OECD) data**, **people with a higher education degree are more employable. They can earn an average of 54% more than those who only have completed senior secondary education**.

Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary systems of education produce multitalented people who can find innovative solutions to global challenges such as affordable and clean energy **(SDG7)**, sustainable cities and communities **(SDG11)**, climate change and global warming **(SDG13)**.

Innovative solutions and start-ups **(SDG 9)** must be developed in collaboration with private companies.

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Introducing **Value-Based Education** will help citizens become responsible towards self, society, and the planet and help our nation achieve "Life on Land" **(SDG15).**

Apart from this, University education has a direct bearing on other SDGs like:

1) Protecting people against poverty **(SDG1)**

2) Preventing hunger **(SDG2)**

3) Supporting good health and well-being **(SDG3)**

4) Promoting gender equality **(SDG5)**

5) Providing decent work, which in turn drives economic growth **(SDG 8)**

6) Reducing inequalities **(SDG10)**

What should be done?

To accelerate the progress towards achieving the 2030 agenda, following steps should be undertaken:

Strengthening of "**Research-Teaching Nexus"** in university education: Knowledge generated from research would benefit students directly.

Education and Orientation of all stakeholders of higher education: All the 56,000+ higher educational institutions and universities should work together.

Active participation of Universities in their local communities: Universities should play a part in the **education, innovation, culture, and civic** life of their local communities.

Evolving a new culture in Universities: This includes focus on community health, energy-saving measures, efficient resource allocation, waste reduction, and the development of local skills.

Sharing of services, infrastructure, and facilities with other universities or external partners.

Incorporating sustainability and SDGs into institutional strategies, both in daily administration and in teaching and research

Higher education must be directly integrated with socio-economic development which helps in achieving the targets under the UN SDGs.

24. **Why there are so few women in banking**
Source: The post is based on the article **"Why there are so few women in banking**" published in **Business Standard** on **9th October 2023**.
Syllabus: GS 2 – Issues associated with Women
Relevance: Issues with women's representation in banking sector in India

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

What are some of the facts related to women representation?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How have women progressed in the banking sector in India?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What can be the way ahead?

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

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

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

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

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

What was the need of the DIA?

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

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

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

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

What are the key provisions of DIA?

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

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

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

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

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

What are the various challenges associated with the DIA?

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

1) **Impact on innovation and the ease of doing business** due to stricter regulations, particularly in emerging technologies: This may lead to less investments and entrepreneurship.

2) **Impact on the freedom of expression of users** due to the review of the **"safe harbor" principle**: Platforms may adopt a more cautious approach.

3) Challenges with regard to **effective enforcement:** This will require **substantial resources, expertise, and infrastructure**.

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4) Another challenge is **balancing the interests of various stakeholders**, including the rights of tech giants as well as citizens.

What should be done?

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

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

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

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

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

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

India's Performance at the Hangzhou Asian Games

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: The post is based on the article "**The New Delhi Declaration was a win for us and the world at large**" published in **Live mint** on 10th October 2023.

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

News: The article discusses India's significant achievements and leadership during its presidency at the G20 Summit in New Delhi. It highlights consensus on global issues like sustainable development, digital transformation, climate change, and inclusive growth. India effectively brought nations together, emphasizing shared commitments, especially considering the interests of the developing world and enhancing multilateral cooperation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How did India handle the G20 presidency?

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

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

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

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

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

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

28. **Russia's loss can be India's gain in clinical trial shift**
Source: The post is based on the article "**Russia's loss can be India's gain in clinical trial shift**" published in "Business standard" on 10th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS2- Governance- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Streamlining Approvals: Efforts have been made to smooth the approval processes, including developing online platforms and easing some approval processes, thereby promoting growth in trials.
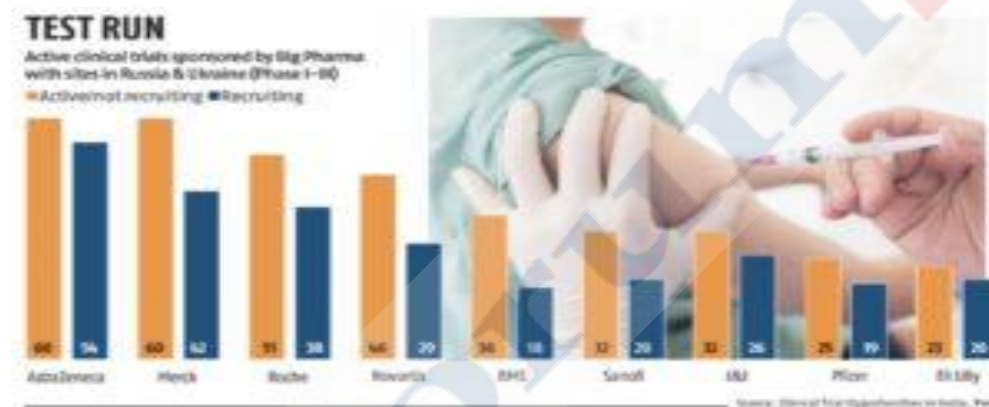
How can India become the new hub for clinical trials?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What are the recommendations of the report?

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

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

What are the flaws in the proposed mitigation?

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

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

Third, a checklist of circumstances to guide whether or not exemption can be applied has **caveats** that include circumstances listed include pregnancy, marital status, family acceptance, good behavior, absence of criminal antecedents and likely references to inter-faith and inter-caste   relations.
These suggest that judicial discretion is guided in favour of underage sexual relations that occur within **socially conforming marriages** backed by familial support.

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

What should be the way forward?

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

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

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

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

30. The state of India's Scheduled Areas

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

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

News: This article discusses the Scheduled Areas — their status, how they are identified and what more needs to be done to safeguard Scheduled Tribes in India.
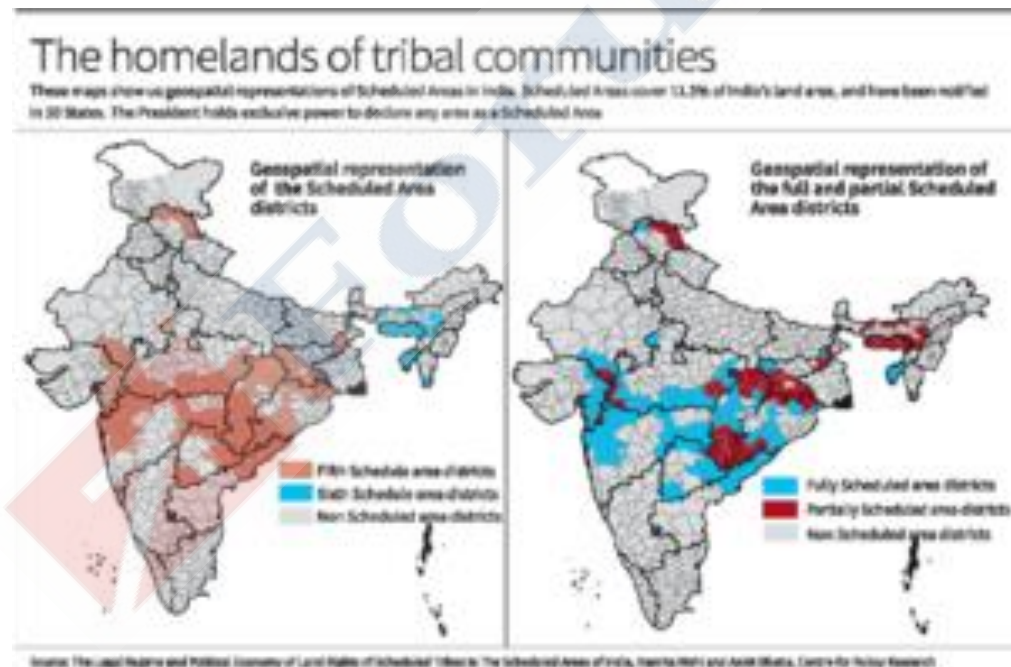
What is the status and constitutional provisions for Scheduled Tribes (STs) in India?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How are Scheduled Areas governed?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How are Scheduled Areas identified?

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

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

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

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

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

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

What should be done?

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

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

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

31. Mental health and the floundering informal worker

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

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

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

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

How are work and mental health related?

Decent work influences mental health in a positive way.

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

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

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

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

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

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

1) Lack of regulatory protection

2) Unsafe working environments

3) Long working hours

4) Little access to social or financial protections

5) High uncertainty

6) Discrimination

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

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

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

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

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

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

What needs to be done?

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

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

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

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

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32. **Economics Nobel: Let's talk gender inefficiency**
Source: The post is based on the article "**Economics Nobel: Let's talk gender inefficiency**" published in **Mint** on **10th October 2023**.
Syllabus: GS 2 – Social Issues – Issues associated with Women
Relevance: reasons behind low female workforce.

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

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

What were the findings of Claudia Goldin's research?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

How is Claudia Goldin's research relevant for India?

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

33. **The end of the two-state solution**
Source: The post is based on the article "**The end of the two-state solution**" published in **The Hindu** on **10th October 2023**.
Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations
Relevance: reasons behind Palestine-Israel conflict

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

Read – Israel Palestine Conflict – Explained

What is the solution to Jewish-Arab conflict?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Must Read: Israel-Palestine Conflict and India-Explained

What can be the way ahead?

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

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

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

34. The essentials of G20's corridor initiative
Source: The post is based on the article "**The essentials of G20's corridor initiative**" published in **Business Standard** on **11th October 2023**.
Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations – Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests
Relevance: About the India Middle East Europe Corridor (IMEEC)

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

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

What is the IMEE Corridor?

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

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

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

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

What is the significance of IMEEC for India?

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

What are the challenges?

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

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

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

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

What is the way ahead?

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

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

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

35. **Women want change, society needs change**
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Women want change, society needs change"** published in **The Hindu** on **11ᵗʰ October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Social Justice — Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the issue with privileged women in leadership positions?

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

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

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

36. **Mass ageing poses a challenge we've never faced before**
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Mass ageing poses a challenge we've never faced before"** published in the **Live Mint** on **11th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Social Justice — Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

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

Ageing is becoming the dominant global demographic trend.

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

What are the reasons for this trend?

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

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

What are the opportunities associated with this change?

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

What are the challenges associated with this change?

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

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

What does the situation in India look like?

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

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

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

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

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

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

What can be the solutions to these challenges?

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

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

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

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

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37. We need evidence-based traditional medicine

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

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

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

What is Modern medicine?

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

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

What is the basis of Ayurveda?

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

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

How does Ayurvedic medicine differ from modern medicine?

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

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

What should be done?

1) Ayurvedic medicines should be evaluated by methods of modern science to increase their acceptability. Therefore, **new investigational methods and trial designs** should be facilitated by the Ministry of AYUSH.

2) An evidence-**based appraisal of all traditional medical systems**, retaining what is useful, and then integrating them into one clear system should be carried out.

3) Denouncing traditional medical systems completely should be avoided. For instance, the **Nobel-winning anti-malarial artemisinin** was produced based on a 1,600-year-old text of Traditional Chinese Medicine.

38. The Maldives, the evolution of a democracy

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

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

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

What is the history of democracy in Maldives?

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

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

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

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

What lies ahead for the new administration?

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

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

1) The **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** which Maldives had accepted under his leadership, is in serious trouble.

2) India's steady help to Sri Lanka during the Sri Lankan financial crisis.

3) The Islamic constituency will note the changed equations between India and the Gulf States.

4) The waning of a bankrupt Pakistan, which has long nurtured extremism in the Maldives.

What are the conditions in favour of India?

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

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

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

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

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

What more should be done?

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

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

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

39. **The impact of Claudia Goldin's work**
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"The impact of Claudia Goldin's work"** published in **The Hindu** on **11th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Indian Economy — Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and **employment.**

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

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

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Read more – Claudia Goldin wins 2023 Economics Nobel Prize for research on workplace gender gap

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

What are the findings of her research?

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

Source: The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences
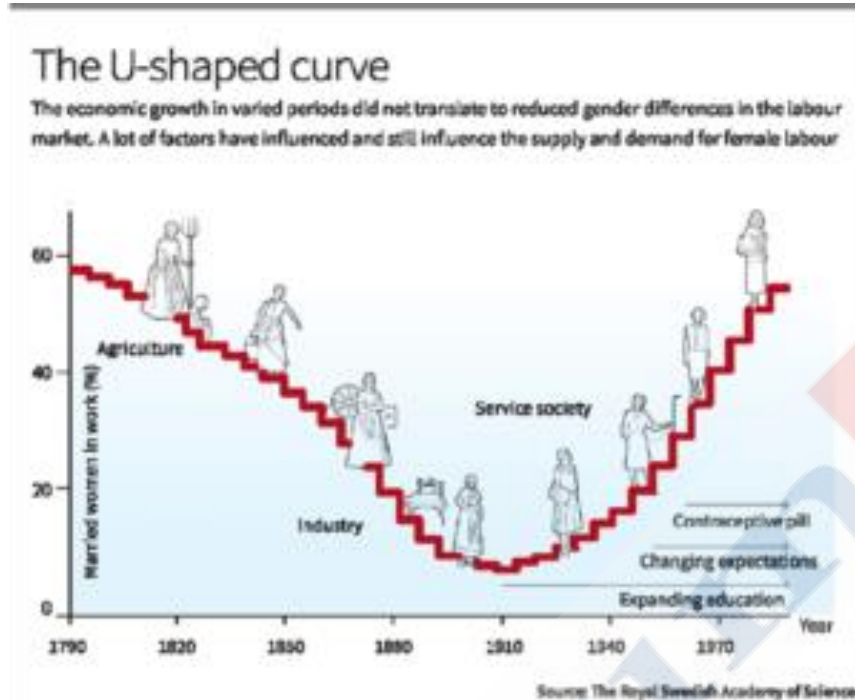
Professor Goldin studied archives of about 200 years of USA to demonstrate how and why **gender differences in earnings and employment rates have changed over time**.

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

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

1) Opportunities for combining paid work and a family.

2) Decisions (and expectations) related to pursuing education and raising children.

3) Technical innovations

4) Laws and norms

5) Structural transformation in an economy.

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

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

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

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

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

What made the female labour force participation increase?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

40. **EC on wrong track asking parties to detail fiscal costs of 'populism**
Source: The post is based on the article "Spent Thought- **EC on wrong track asking parties to detail fiscal costs of 'populism**'. That's a matter between voters & govts" published in "Times of India" on 11th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS2- Polity- Election commission

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

What is the Election Commission's new proposal?

Election Commission's Fiscal Proposal:

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

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

Purpose Behind the Proposal:

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

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

In Practical Terms:

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

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

Why is the proposal criticized?

Lack of Meaningful Information:

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

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

Existing Fiscal Controls:

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

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

Different Priority:

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

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41. **Use of draconian laws against media outfits shows process can be punishment**
Source: The post is based on the article "Vivek Katju writes: **Use of draconian laws against media outfits shows process can be punishment**" published in **Indian Express** on 11th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS2- Security – role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

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

What is the situation with the media outlet?
Media Outlet Under Scrutiny:

The outlet faces allegations of accepting funds from Chinese entities.

Authorities believe this could lead to propaganda-driven content.

Charges Leveled:

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

Suspicions arise that such funds might influence the outlet's stance on national issues.

Outlet's Defense:

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The media organization denies all accusations.

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

Investigation Status:

The legal process is still ongoing.

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

Why is legal fairness important?

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

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

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

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

What are the challenges with legal proceedings?

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

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

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

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

42. **Generic drugs are everywhere – and that's a problem**
Source: This post has been created based on the article "" published in **The Indian Express** on **12th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Social Justice — Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

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

What are some allegations raised with respect to pharmaceutical companies?

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

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

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

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

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

What are the different types of medicine?

Broadly, medicines are of three types:

(1) Still on patent and therefore, a brand;

(2) Off patent and generic, but nonetheless produced by a reputed company, with a brand;

(3) Off-patent, generic and unbranded.

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

What is the status of pharmaceutical manufacturing?

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

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

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

What are the issues with unbranded generic medicine?

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

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

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

43. **Concerns about govt.'s fact check unit**
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Concerns about govt.'s fact check unit"** published in **The Hindu** on **12ᵗʰ October 2023**.
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Governance — Government policies and interventions

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

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

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

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

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

What does the amendment say?

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

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

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

What issues did the High Court find with the amendment?

1) **Lack of necessary safeguards:** The Court observed that it **lacks necessary safeguards**. They do not offer protection for fair criticism of the government.

2) **Ambiguous terminology:** It also highlighted the **ambiguity** surrounding the term "any business of the Central government."

3) **Unconstitutional consequences:** Court remarked that if the **consequences of a law are unconstitutional**, it must be done away with **no matter how sound the motives** were.

4) **Violation of Article 14:** Another argument is that it **violates Article 14** by discriminating between false news about the government and other false news.

5) **PIB already fact-checks:** A **sudden need for an FCU** was also questioned; pointing out that the Press Information Bureau (PIB) has been efficiently fact-checking for years.

6) **Subjectivity of provisions:** The Court also said that terms in the amendments are **subjective and open to various interpretations**.

7) **Violates the principles of natural justice:** There is no provision that provides an opportunity for an aggrieved intermediary to justify or defend the flagged content.

8) **Lack of remedy:** The Court also said that even the user whose post has been removed or whose account has been suspended after being flagged by the FCU.

44. **UN Security Council reform is a song in a loop**
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"UN Security Council reform is a song in a loop"** published in **The Hindu** on **12th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 International Relations — Important International institutions, agencies and fora – their structure, mandate.

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

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

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

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

1) **Do not represent Present realities:** 5 permanent members enjoy the privilege of a veto, merely because of winning a war 76 years ago. The UNSC reflects the geopolitical realities of 1945 and not of today.

2) **Disproportionate under-representation of countries:** Out of 193 member-states of the UN, **only 15 members (less than 8%)** are represented in the UNSC. **Europe**, which accounts for only 5% of the world's population, controls 33% of the seats.

3) **Funders not represented: Japan and Germany** have been the 2nd and 3rd largest contributors to the UN budget but are still referred to as 'enemy states' in the UN Charter.

4) **Major players not represented:** States such as **India**, despite its huge population, share of the world economy, or contributions in kind to the UN (through participation in peacekeeping operations, for example), are not represented.

What are the various challenges in reforming the UNSC?

1) **Lack of support from small countries**: These make up more than half the UN's membership but have been indifferent to reform due to lack of incentive.

2) **Lack of support from medium and large countries:** They are against the select few trying to become permanent members due to a spirit of competition, historical grievance or simple envy.

3) **Difficult procedure:** The procedure to amend the UN Charter is very difficult. Any amendment requires a two-third majority, and further has to be ratified by two-thirds of the member states.

4) **Power of veto:** Any ratification also has to be supported by all of the existing permanent five members.

5) **In the case of India**: China won't like diluting its status as the only Asian permanent member; Pakistan, is also opposed; and Indonesia seems to feel diminished by the prospect of an Indian seat.

6) **In the case of Brazil**: Argentina and Mexico opposed due to Brazil not representing the largely Hispanic Latin America.

7) **In the case of Africa**: Rivalry between Nigeria (largest democracy), South Africa (largest economy), and Egypt (oldest civilization).

What shows the ineffectiveness of the UNSC?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Why is political representation of women not enough?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

46. Remembering Karthyayani Amma: The poster girl of Kerala's adult literacy drive

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

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

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

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

What is the state of female education in India?

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

According to the 2011 Census:

1) Adult literacy rate for women in rural areas is at 50.6% compared to 74.1% for men.

2) Similarly, it is 76.9% for women in urban areas, and 88.3% for men.

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

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

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"In SC, questions of foetal viability and rights of unborn child"** published in **The Indian Express** on **14th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Social Justice – Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

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

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

What is the case about?

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

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

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

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

What is the law on abortion?

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

1) Termination of pregnancy **up to 20 weeks** is allowed on the advice of **1 doctor**.

2) If a pregnancy is **20-24 weeks**, the right to seek abortion is determined by **2 registered medical practitioners** as an exception, but only under certain categories. MTP Act lists **7 categories of forced pregnancies**, including statutory rape in case of minors or sexual assault; women with disabilities; or when there is a change in marital status of women during pregnancy.

3) **After 24 weeks**, a **medical board** must be set up in "approved facilities", which may "allow or deny termination of pregnancy" **only if there is substantial foetal abnormality**.

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What are the complications in this case?

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

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

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

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

What is the foetus "viability test"?

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

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

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

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

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

What is the criticism of India's abortion laws?

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

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

48. **A war that ends the Saudi-Israel 'normalisation' process**

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"A war that ends the Saudi-Israel 'normalisation' process"** published in **The Hindu** on **14ᵗʰ October 2023**.
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 International Relations – Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.

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

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

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

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

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

1) **U.S. approval for a civilian nuclear programme** that provides for uranium enrichment within the country.

2) **U.S. security guarantee** for the country.

3) **Sales of advanced weapons**.

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

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

1) Saudi Arabia's credentials as an **authoritarian state**.

2) Possibility of Saudi Arabia developing its own **nuclear programme**.

3) Saudi Arabia's **poor human rights** record at home and in Yemen.

4) Concerns about Saudi insistence that arms supplies be accompanied by **a transfer of technology** to develop its arms industry.

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

What is the Iran angle?

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

However, this argument has little credibility.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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49. **Inquilab Forever- Who's in charge, if everyone's protesting?**
Source: The post is based on the article "**Inquilab Forever- Who's in charge, if everyone's protesting?**" published in **"The Times of India"** on 14th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS2- Governance- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education.

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

What are the issues at Jadavpur University?

Issues at Jadavpur University:

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

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

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

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

50. **India and Maldives ties: Despite China, bound by history and geography**
Source: The post is based on the article "**India and Maldives ties: Despite China, bound by history and geography**" published in **"Indian express"** on 14th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS2- International relation- India and its neighbourhood- relations.

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

How are the geographical and social aspects of Maldives characterized?
Geography:

Maldives consists of over 1,200 islands.

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

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

Social Aspects:

Maldives boasts a high literacy rate of 98%.

The constitution permits only Sunni Muslims to be citizens.

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

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

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What is the significance of India and Maldives' relationship?

Significance for India

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

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

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

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

Significance for Maldives

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

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

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

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

What might the future hold for India-Maldives relations?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Why is India's GHI ranking problematic?

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

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

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

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

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

What are the challenges faced by India in addressing malnutrition?

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

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

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

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

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

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

What should be done?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: The post is based on the article "**Balancing policy- India must pressure Israel to act responsibly in the face of terror**" published in **The Hindu** on 14th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS2- International relation- Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.

News: The article discusses India's response to a violent attack by Hamas on Israeli citizens. India's Prime Minister expressed solidarity with Israel but also advised observing international

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humanitarian law. India maintains a careful stance, supporting both Israel and the Palestinian cause, while ensuring the safety of its citizens in the conflicted region.

How did India respond to Hamas' attack on Israel?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What challenges does India face now?

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

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

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

53. From Gaza to Bihar — faultlines Ambedkar and Patel warned us against

Source: This post is created based on the article **'From Gaza to Bihar — faultlines Ambedkar and Patel warned us against',** published in **Indian Express** on **16th October 2023.**
UPSC syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, Effect of policies of developed and developing countries on India's interest.

News: Bihar caste survey and killing of innocent civilians in Israel although are unrelated events, but B R Ambedkar and Sardar Patel's words in Constituent assembly addresses the root-cause.

Ambedkar emphasised warned against the volatile consequences of political inequality and social-economic disparity in India. He stressed the need to make our political democracy a social democracy as well. Because without social democracy, political democracy cannot survive.

Social democracy is a way of life that recognises liberty, equality and fraternity.

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What are the issues in Indian democracy?

Indian society fall short on the following **2 parameters of democracy**:

1) **Equality:** India is a society based on the principle of graded inequality.

2) **Economic inequality**

Social inequalities are deeply rooted in our society and institutions, necessitating a national caste census for acknowledgment and remedial action.

Ambedkar's citation of Edmund Burke regarding the impermanence of subjugation through force, reflects the **current reality of Israel-Palestine conflict**. It symbolizes the global repercussion of ignoring minority rights and the futility of force as a conflict resolution mechanism.

Ambedkar time and again warned against the explosive nature of suppressed minorities.

Both Ambedkar and Patel emphasized **the dangers of neglecting minority protection** and social democracy.

Sardar Patel also stated the following statement, 'it is for us who happen to be in a majority to think about what the minorities feel, and how we in their position would feel if we were treated in the manner in which they are treated.'

It serves as a reminder of the and the responsibility of the majority to foster an inclusive, empathetic society.

54. We Should And Can Improve Aadhaar

Source: This post is created based on the article **'We Should And Can Improve Aadhaar'**, published in **Business Standard** on **16th October 2023**.
UPSC syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2, Government policies for various sectors

News: The article discusses the critical analysis provided by Moody's report on Aadhaar. Government has issued many objections against the report.

The report stated that 17% failure rate in Aadhaar Enabled Payment System (AEPS) transactions from 2014-2018 was due to biometric issues, with a total transaction failure rate of 34%.

It also highlights cultural and logistical challenges, such as the reluctance to use iris scanners and the higher cost of these devices.

What are the issues associated with Aadhaar Project?

Biometric authentication, especially fingerprint recognition, is often unreliable for manual laborers whose fingerprints may be unclear due to their work.

This unreliability leads to transaction failures, impacting financial inclusion efforts and the efficient delivery of direct benefit transfers (DBT).

Centralized ID systems like Aadhaar are vulnerable to security breaches, raising privacy concerns. There is a need for continuous improvements in cybersecurity measures, because absence of past breaches doesn't guarantee future safety.

What are the initiatives launched by government to tackle the issues with aadhaar project?

UIDAI launched the Innovative solutions like face-based authentication, and the use of blockchain technology for secure, privacy-focused authentication in systems like DigiYatra.

These innovations aim to reduce dependency on fingerprint or iris recognition, offering more accessible and culturally acceptable alternatives.

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What is the solution?

There is a need for promoting a balanced view of digital identity systems. Challenges should be acknowledged but emphasize should be given to the potential and achievements of Digital India initiative.

Considering India's vast population and diverse needs, country's approach to digital identity and security is a work in progress, which requires adaptive strategies and innovations.

55. Olympian heights – India must be wary of the complexities of hosting the Olympiad

Source: The post is based on the article "**Olympian heights – India must be wary of the complexities of hosting the Olympiad**" published in The Hindu on **16ᵗʰ October 2023**.
Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance – Government Policies & Intervention
Relevance: challenges associated with India in hosting the 2036 Olympics

News: The Prime Minister of India has declared an interest in hosting the 2036 Olympics and has also shown enthusiasm for hosting the Youth Olympics.

What is the significance of this decision?

Enhancing Global Image and Soft Power: The Olympics serve as a global soft power tool, capable of enhancing a nation's sporting, economic, socio-cultural status, and political credibility.

Therefore, **the Prime Minister's recent announcement reflects India's ambition to harness these benefits.**

India's decision to host the 2036 Olympic Games will help it to boost its global image and influence. **It is a move that is in line with India's aspirations for a permanent seat on the United Nations Security Council** and its role in the G-20.

Recent Success: India's recent success at the Asian Games has given it a strong boost in sports.

The country is confident that it can continue to improve its performance at multi-disciplinary events, and even has hopes of winning double-digit medals at the Paris Olympics in 2024.

Hence, the recent success also aligns with the ambition to hold 2036 Olympics. However, hosting a mega event like the Olympics is a huge challenge.

What are the challenges associated with hosting Olympics?

Costs have been a significant concern, as seen in the cases of Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020. **In the case of Tokyo**, the expenses increased to more than the initial estimate

Recently, Australia and Canada have also withdrawn from hosting the Commonwealth Games due to cost issues.

What can be done to address the challenges?

In order to address the issues, **the International Olympic Committee (IOC)** has now moved away from the one-size-fits-all approach to hosting the Olympics.

It is asking potential organizers to present projects that best fit their economic, social, and environmental realities.

Hence, **India's success in hosting the Olympics will depend on its ability** to navigate the challenges and trade-offs involved.

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56. On Middle East, Delhi must stay with abiding principles, find points of convergence

Source: The post is based on the article "**On Middle East, Delhi must stay with abiding principles, find points of convergence**" published in **The Indian Express** on **16ᵗʰ October 2023**.

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

Relevance: concerns associated with Israel-Palestine conflict

News: The Israel-Palestine conflict is being exploited for political advantage by both ruling and opposition parties in India, who are trying to appear balanced to gain voter support.

However, India's challenge isn't about appearing balanced but about sticking to principles and interests when it comes to countering terrorism.

What has been India's principle against terrorism?

India has consistently believed that violence against innocent people is terrorism and cannot be justified by political claims. It has rejected the idea that resolving root causes is necessary to end terrorism.

Hence, the opposition must avoid aligning with terrorism, contrary to India's principles, and the ruling party should avoid exploiting solidarity with Israel and condemnation of Hamas for political gain.

Moreover, India's key interest should be to keep its domestic politics separate from the turmoil in the Middle East, as exploiting the Middle East for political gains at home could be detrimental.

What measures can be taken by India to address the Israel-Palestine conflict?

Globally: India needs to urge Israel to treat Hamas in accordance with the humanitarian principles of war and proportionality.

India must work with its Arab partners to secure the release of Israeli hostages held by Hamas.

India must actively participate in international efforts to prevent the upcoming disaster in the Middle East due to its expanding economic and security interests in the area.

Moreover, India's bilateral relationship with Israel and its ties with key regional players, including Iran, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, position it well to navigate this complex situation.

Domestically: The government should establish regular consultations with opposition parties, brief them on the evolving crisis, and seek consensus on how to address its consequences.

57. India needs more doctors — and how it can happen

Source: The post is based on the article "**India needs more doctors — and how it can happen**" published in **"Indian express"** on 16th October 2023.

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

News: India has a shortage of doctors and medical education seats. Even with increased medical colleges and seats, the number of doctors per population is still low. Small college sizes and regulations make expansion tough. Private colleges face financial risks in scaling up. The government aims for equal distribution of colleges, but this can cause inefficiencies. Policies should address these growth barriers.

What are the current conditions for doctor availability in India?

Shortage in Medical Education: Despite increasing the number of UG and PG seats over the past decade, the demand for medical education still exceeds the supply of seats.

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Growth in Medical Seats: Between 2010-11 and now, UG seats have nearly tripled, PG seats have almost quadrupled, and the number of medical colleges has doubled.

International Comparisons: In 2021, India recorded 4.1 medical graduates per lakh population, lagging behind countries like China (6.2 in 2018), the US (8.5 in 2021), and the UK (13.1 in 2021).

College Size Limitations: The average number of UG seats per college in India is 153. This is less compared to 220 in Eastern Europe and 930 in China.

Regulatory Barriers: Expanding seats in a public medical college involves increasing library books, daily OPD footfalls, and nursing staff, as per 2015 draft guidelines.

Challenges for Private Colleges: Private colleges face financial risks in scaling up, especially when seats remain vacant, leading to potential fee hikes.

58. **Palliative care, a way to reduce financial distress for people with life limiting diseases**
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Palliative care, a way to reduce financial distress for people with life limiting diseases"** published in **The Hindu** on **17th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Social Justice — Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

News: This article discusses the positives of incorporating palliative care in India's healthcare ecosystem. It also highlights the challenges in the palliative care sector in India.

What are the implications of the rising cost of healthcare in India?

With **only 1.35%** of GDP being spent on government health services, patients bear most of the health expenses. Many Indians are either a hospital bill away from poverty or too poor to access healthcare.
It is estimated that **nearly 5.5 crore people fall below the poverty line every year** due to **out-of-pocket healthcare expenditure**.

India's **non-communicable disease burden** is on the rise. This will push more and more people into poverty as they require lifelong treatment and periodic health check-ups.

This rising cost often leads to bankruptcy, decreased treatment satisfaction, foregoing or delays in seeking further medical care, poor quality of life, and poor survival.

Even if treatment is free in govt hospitals, the **cost of travel**, **purchasing medicines** that are out of stock in govt pharmacies, and **loss of wages** due to the absence from work contribute to the financial burden.

Often assets have to be sold-off and education of children in the family stopped to cope with the financial burden.

What is palliative care?

Palliative care is a branch of medicine that looks at improving the quality of life of those having life-limiting illnesses like cancers, end-stage kidney disease, debilitating brain disorders, complications of diabetes, and heart disease among others.

It focuses on **alleviating uncontrolled symptoms** of the incurable illnesses mentioned above.

It takes into consideration not just the physical dimension of health but also looks at the **social and economic realities** of the patient and the family.

Vocational rehabilitation and **social reintegration** are crucial elements of palliative care.

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What are the issues with palliative care in India?

These factors have resulted in poor demand and poor access to palliative care in India:

1) **Low awareness levels:** regarding palliative care in India, both among healthcare workers and the general public.

2) Currently, palliative care is **not covered under most insurance schemes** in India.

3) **Unplanned and low funding levels** has also been a barrier to palliative care services. This prevents long-term planning.

4) Palliative care from **primary and secondary health centres** is far from being achieved.

5) The **private healthcare sector has neglected** it.

What should be the way forward?

1) Early initiation of palliative care in patients has been shown to reduce health expenditure by up to **25%.** For instance, **home-based palliative care** can reduce the travelling costs of patients. Hence, palliative care should be incorporated into the Indian healthcare system.

2) Instead of its current mode of occasional annual budgeting, the **National Program for Palliative Care must be consistently funded**.

3) Palliative care provisions will help in **generating goodwill** for corporate hospitals, and will also **improve the utilisation of beds**, and ultimately help corporate hospitals in generating wealth. Private healthcare providers should prioritise it.

India is becoming the **"Epicentre for non-communicable diseases"**. It is the **moral obligation** of the health system to take care of people, especially when they are suffering from life-long illnesses.

59. **Delay as tactic – The Centre should stick to timelines to avoid friction with the Collegium**

Source: The post is based on the article "**Delay as tactic – The Centre should stick to timelines to avoid friction with the Collegium**" published in The Hindu on **17th October 2023**.

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

Relevance: concerns associated with the collegium system

News: The Indian government's appointment of Justice Siddharth Mridul as Chief Justice of the Manipur High Court is a positive development, showing greater willingness by the government to respect the Supreme Court Collegium's recommendations**.**

What are the issues between the Center and the Supreme Court regarding collegium?

The Supreme Court has expressed concerns that the Indian government has been selectively approving the recommendations of the Collegium.

The government has sometimes delayed or ignored the Collegium's decisions, creating conflicts between the two.

For example, the government ignored the Collegium's recommendation to appoint Justice S. Muralidhar as Chief Justice of the Madras High Court for so long that the Collegium eventually canceled its recommendation.

Must Read: Collegium System and the NJAC: The Issue of Judicial Appointments – Explained

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What can be done to address the issues?

First, it is crucial to streamline the appointment process in line with the Supreme Court's April 2021 order, which established timelines for the government to process Collegium recommendations and express any reservations.

Second, once a recommendation is reiterated by the Collegium, it should be implemented within three to four weeks.

Moreover, **it is important to respect the legal principle that a** reiterated decision by the Collegium is binding on the government. If this principle is undermined, it will weaken the judiciary as an institution.

60. **India-Sri Lanka ferry service restarted after 40 yrs: Opportunities, challenges**
Source: The post is based on the article "**India-Sri Lanka ferry service restarted after 40 yrs: Opportunities, challenges**" published in **The Indian Express** on **17ᵗʰ October 2023**.
Syllabus: GS 2 – International Relations – Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests
Relevance: About the launch of ferry service between India and Sri Lanka.

News: A historic sea route between India and Sri Lanka has been revived with the launch of a passenger ferry service between Nagapattinam, India, and Kankesanthurai, Sri Lanka.

It aims to strengthen bilateral relations, promote tourism, and enhance local trade. **The ferry service, operated by a High-Speed Craft is named 'Cheriyapani,'**

What was the previous sea route between India and Sri Lanka?

Maritime linkage between India and Sri Lanka has existed since the early 1900s.

One of the most popular routes was from Dhanushkodi (India) to Talaimannar (Sri Lanka), which was served by the Boat Mail Express train and a coal-powered steam ferry.

However, the civil war in Sri Lanka in 1982 resulted in the halting of these services.

What were the previous attempts made to restart the service?

India and Sri Lanka have been working to bring back ferry services since the civil war ended in 2009. **They signed an agreement (MoU) in 2011** and started a service. However, it only lasted six months due to the poor demand.

Moreover, **they have also tried to start ferry services from Rameswaram to Talaimannar and Karaikal to Kankesanthurai**, but these plans have not worked out.

Must Read: India Sri Lanka relations: Explained

What may be the potential impact of this new service?

A ferry service between India and Sri Lanka **would boost religious tourism in both countries.**

Indian pilgrims could easily visit religious sites in Colombo and southern Sri Lanka, while Sri Lankan tourists could visit religious sites in Nagapattinam, Nagore, Velankanni, Thirunallar, and temple towns such as Thanjavur, Madurai, and Tiruchi.

Additionally, the ferry service would also **boost regional commerce and trade.**

The development would strengthen **cultural, economic, and civilisational ties.**

It can also improve cooperation in **disaster management and maritime security**.

It may also enable **voluntary repatriation of refugees** from Sri Lanka, living in Tamil Nadu.

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What preparations and infrastructure improvements are being undertaken for the new service?

The Tamil Nadu state government is coordinating with various Union government departments, including Customs, External Affairs, Shipping, and Immigration, to ensure a seamless experience for passengers.

The Nagapattinam port has also received an upgrade with an investment of Rs 8 crore from the Union Ministry of External Affairs.

What are the challenges associated?

Factors such as **Sri Lanka's civil war, lack of patronage and cyclones** have led to lukewarm response to earlier connectivity initiatives.

The effectiveness of the new India-Sri Lanka ferry service **depends on its operational strategy.**

Initially, the Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) intended to operate daily for ten days but has since reduced it to three times a week. **This change is due to the start of the northeast monsoon, high fares, and ticketing system challenges.**

What steps should be undertaken in order to make it successful?

Hence, the following should be done:

1) **Lowering of the fare** and increasing the baggage allowance.

2) The provision of **amenities** at Nagapattinam such as a dormitory and improving rail connectivity.

3) Sri Lanka should consider **promoting economic ties.**

4) **Sustained policy attention** will be critical to making this service a success.

5) **Bookings must be made accessible on well-known travel websites.**

61. **How synergistic barriers are affecting progress on SDGs**

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"How synergistic barriers are affecting progress on SDGs"** published in **The Hindu** on **18th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Governance — Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

News: This article discusses the issue of the lack of synergy in SDG-related policies and the barriers to small-scale applications which has slowed the progress in attaining Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

What is the current status of accomplishing SDGs?

The recent **SDG Summit** recognized that the world could meet **only 15% of its 169 targets** that make up the 17 goals.

A 2023 report by **UNCTAD** estimated a **$4 trillion investment gap in SDGs** in developing countries. This large amount seems unachievable.

Considering this, world leaders have committed to an **SDG stimulus of $500 billion annually**.

What is the issue with SDG-related policies?

1) **Lack of synergy:**

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5 types of synergies in an SDG-related policy includes — synergy arising from resource allocations; creation of enabling environments; co-benefits; cost-effectiveness; and saturation limits.

Concerns have been raised over the lack of synergistic action in the face of the **indivisible and integrated nature** of the 17 SDGs.

For example, in India, the push for renewable energy started with energy security, air pollution and climate commitments in focus. However, it hasn't been able to leverage the health benefits arising from lower air pollution as an argument for investment in renewables.

2) **Barrier for small-scale applications:**

At the same time, the ambitious renewable energy targets themselves became a **barrier for small-scale applications** due to lack of coordination with respect to the goals.

For instance, primary health centres were neglected by the energy departments in terms of renewable energy generation, due to the small magnitude of their contribution.

Therefore, only recognising interlinks without a robust analysis and understanding of institutional barriers won't yield the outcomes India desires.

What should be done?

Both assessing as well as addressing barriers identified should be done.

The country should strengthen the environment for synergistic action and make transparent both the opportunities and limits to synergies arising from SDG interventions.

A full cost estimation of alternative pathways with their synergistic opportunities and **estimating India's own vulnerability to climate-change** impacts will be important.

62. Demolishing the frame from outside the Constitution

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Demolishing the frame from outside the Constitution"** published in **The Hindu** on **18th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Indian Polity — Structure, organization, and **functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary.**

News: This article discusses the recent developments pointing to the undermining of constitutional democracy in India. It also highlights the important role of the judiciary in ensuring a thriving democracy.

Recent Delhi Police raids on the **news portal NewsClick** and invoking of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act to arrest people have brought the issue of undermining democracy to the fore.

The increasingly vulnerable state of **religious minorities** due to **violence and demonization**, and the changes to **political financing** in the form of opaque **electoral bonds**, also point to this trend.

What are the essential conditions of a democracy?

1) **Decision-making under democratic conditions**: Democracy is not just in the principle of **majority** decision-making. Decisions should also be made under democratic conditions treating all members with equal respect and concern".

2) **Basic values have to be guaranteed:** Values such as freedom of speech and expression, freedom of association, etc. contribute to a robust democracy.

The Indian Constitution has created these conditions as part of the basic structure as articulated by the Supreme Court.

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How is democracy undermined without a rewriting of the Constitution?

1) Terrorism laws being invoked against journalists: the fundamental right to speech and expression is textually intact but not in practice.

2) Hate speeches against minorities left unchecked: secularism remains intact in words but not in experiences.

3) Opaque electoral funding: democracy is confined to paper.

Why is the judiciary important in preventing this decline in democracy?

What rules and values should govern a society are perhaps decisions best left to the representative body i.e., Parliament, since it is seen as the representative of the people's will.

But the courts have an obligation to ensure that the **integrity of the process of democracy** is protected.

This is so because if the democratic process itself is faulty, then questions over the legitimacy of the representative body itself can be raised.

A court, being **unelected and outside of this process of popular representation**, can ensure the integrity of the democratic process.

What is the power of the courts in India in this context?

The powers of the Supreme Court of India include those to **strike down laws and constitutional amendments**.

It has even imposed a restriction on the Parliament in amending the Constitution through the **basic structure doctrine**.

Therefore, it would not be wrong to argue that protecting the democratic process is still at the very core of the Court's duties.

What should be the way forward?

Turning a blind eye to such profound violations of democratic conditions outside the text of the Constitution and laws would render both the Constitution and the Court without their identities.

The Court's response to this challenge will determine not only the fate of the people but also that of the Court.

63. **Centralised procurement as a powerful health idea**
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Centralised procurement as a powerful health idea"** published in **The Hindu** on **18th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Social Justice — Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

News: This article discusses the advantages of centralized or pooled procurement of drugs by the central government and how it can revolutionize healthcare in India.

What are the advantages of centralized procurement?

1) **Price efficiency:** Corporate hospital chains, for years, have conducted direct negotiations with pharmaceutical companies, and **availed significant discounts**.

2) **Quality concerns:** In addition to cost savings, buyers can ensure better quality by having the supplies tested independently rather than having to rely on the drug regulator to ensure quality.

3) **Prevent stockouts (medicines 'out-of-stock').**

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4) **Cost-savings for patients:** Hospitals can benefit from better **bargaining power** if they buy in bulk and can then pass on these **cost savings to patients**.

However, the central government chooses to ignore these merits of pooled procurement despite being aware of them.

Centralized procurement for beneficiaries under the CGHS (Central Government Health Scheme), ESI (Employees' State Insurance Scheme) and PMJAY is not yet a reality.

What should the government do in this regard?

The government can follow the centralized procurement model for most of the drugs, like it follows for **procuring male contraceptives**.

Pharma PSUs can provide **benchmark prices** and also ensure that the government is not forced to buy from private manufacturers, given that there is competition from PSUs which can supply at a competitive price.

What should be the way forward?

Centralized procurement has the power and the potential to **reduce costs**, ensure **better deployment of funds** in other areas related to health care, and ensure availability **of life-saving drugs** in this country.

It is an idea that India should implement at scale, and as soon as possible.

64. A renewed Sri Lankan engagement
Source: The post is based on the article "**A renewed Sri Lankan engagement**" published in **"Business standard"** on 18th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS2- International relation- India and its neighbourhood- relations.

News: Sri Lanka faced a big economic crisis. India helped a lot, giving money and resources. Many Sri Lankans now feel positive towards India. Tourism in Sri Lanka is improving, with many tourists from India. Colombo port is growing, handling lots of India-related cargo. India's influence is rising while China's is decreasing.

How severe is Sri Lanka's economic crisis?

Economic Decline: Sri Lanka's economy reduced by 8% in 2022 and is forecasted to shrink further by 3.5-4% this year.

IMF Support: The IMF has extended a package, with a $330 million tranche already disbursed.

Affordability Issue: Essential supplies like food and fuel are available in Colombo, but their high prices make them unaffordable for the poorer sections, exacerbated by decreased incomes.

Rising Unemployment: The nation has witnessed a loss of half a million jobs in the past three years due to the economic downturn.

Increase in Poverty: Over 4 million people have been pushed below the poverty line since the crisis began, a considerable number out of a population of 21 million.

How has India helped?

Financial Aid: In 2022, India provided Sri Lanka with total assistance of about $4 billion.

Petroleum Support: A crucial $500 million line of credit was extended by India to supply petroleum products, mitigating a severe fuel shortage in Sri Lanka.

Currency Swap: The Reserve Bank of India facilitated a currency swap of $400 million with the Central Bank of Sri Lanka.

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Essential Supplies: India offered another $1 billion credit facility, assisting Sri Lanka in procuring urgent necessities such as food, medicines, fuel, and industrial raw materials.

Debt Relief: Payments amounting to around $2 billion that Sri Lanka owed to India under the Asian Clearing Union were deferred.

Agricultural Boost: To revive agricultural production, India provided a $50 million line of credit for Sri Lanka to procure fertilizers.

How has trade between India and Sri Lanka evolved?

Historical Milestone: In 2000, Sri Lanka became the first South Asian country to sign a free trade agreement with India.

Trade Expansion: As a result, bilateral trade jumped from around $600 million at that time to a significant $6.2 billion today.

Further Collaboration: This trade success opened doors to more ambitious plans, leading to discussions about an Economic and Technology Cooperation agreement.

Barriers to Progress: Despite the potential benefits of this agreement, it has not been finalized. Opposition stems from certain political and business groups in Sri Lanka who express concerns over potential Indian economic dominance.

Renewed Negotiations: The talks about the proposed agreement, which were halted for five years, resumed last month, suggesting a renewed optimism in finalizing it in the improved atmosphere of bilateral ties.

What's the future outlook?

Tourism's Revival: Tourism is on a recovery path, with Indian tourists at the forefront. There were 1,23,000 arrivals from India in 2022, and over 200,000 by September this year.

Enhanced Connectivity: A ferry service was recently inaugurated between Sri Lanka's Kankesanthurai and Tamil Nadu's Nagapattinam, likely boosting tourist numbers further.

Trade Prospects: Talks have resumed on the proposed Economic and Technology Cooperation agreement, indicating a brighter future for trade relations between India and Sri Lanka.

Colombo's Port Potential: The port facilities in Colombo, significant for India-related cargo, are expanding, promising a modern and efficient future for the port.

Indian Investments: Indian entities, like ITC and Indian Oil, are undertaking major projects in Sri Lanka, reflecting confidence in its economic resurgence.

65. **Sea service — Ferry between Tamil Nadu, Northern Sri Lanka holds much potential.**
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Sea service"** published in **The Hindu** on **19th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 International Relations — India and its neighborhood-relations.

News: This article discusses the potential of the recent opening of passenger ferry service between Sri Lanka and India. It also proposes suggestions to ensure its success.

Rest of the aspects of this news have been already covered in the following article: https://forumias.com/blog/india-sri-lanka-ferry-service-restarted-after-40-yrs-opportunities-challenges/

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What may be the potential impact of this new service?

The development would strengthen **cultural, economic, and civilisational ties.**

It can also improve cooperation in **disaster management and maritime security**.

It may also enable **voluntary repatriation of refugees** from Sri Lanka, living in Tamil Nadu.

What steps should be undertaken in order to make it successful?

Factors such as **Sri Lanka's civil war, lack of patronage and cyclones** have led to lukewarm response to earlier connectivity initiatives. Hence, the following should be done:

1) **Lowering of the fare** and increasing the baggage allowance.

2) The provision of **amenities** at Nagapattinam such as a dormitory and improving rail connectivity.

3) Sri Lanka should consider **promoting economic ties.**

4) **Sustained policy attention** will be critical to making this service a success.

66. The measure of the working woman

Source: The post is based on the article "**The measure of the working woman**" published in **The Hindu** on **19th October 2023**.

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

Relevance: challenges women face while working outside home

News: Traditional Indian family roles limit women to caregiving at home while men work outside. This model hampers women's full workforce participation, which is unsustainable for India's growing economy.

What are some of the findings of the women workforce?

Economist Claudia Goldin's Findings: Economist Claudia Goldin's 2023 Nobel Prize-winning work reveals that while all women work, not all are paid for their labor.

National Statistical Office Report: According to the National Statistical Office, 81.2% of women are engaged in unpaid domestic services, compared to 26.1% of men.

It also found that men focus more on traditional economic activities, whereas women dedicate more time to household maintenance and caregiving.

As a result, women face a double burden as their outside work doesn't reduce household responsibilities, and their caregiving work isn't considered into economic estimates, leaving them with less leisure time than men.

SBI Report: According to an SBI report, women's unpaid work contributes 7.5% to the GDP, reflecting their dual role in managing domestic responsibilities and boosting the economy. However, these contributions often go unacknowledged in official records.

What challenges do women encounter when they work outside of their homes?

Lack of Support in Low-Income Families: In low-income families in India, women are working hard to support their families, but they are not getting the support they need. Their work is often invisible, not reflected in the data and undervalued.

A study found that 44% of women participate in the labor force over a four-month period, but only 2% are counted when looking at a longer four-year duration.

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Childcare Issues: Domestic responsibilities limit women's employment, and when they do work, their children are often exposed to dangerous conditions such as at construction sites.

This can harm their children's health and development, and undermine subsequent investments in education, health, and skill development.

What are the possible solutions to enhance women's involvement in the workforce?

Improving Anganwadi System: The Indian government's Anganwadi system is the largest public child services network worldwide, most successful with community participation in rural areas.

However, their operating hours (9 a.m. to 1 p.m.) still leave women in need of additional childcare options to accommodate full eight-hour work.

Structural Changes: The Indian government should include women's unpaid work in economic indicators to value their contributions and provide them with the same labor protections as other workers along.

Additionally, they should receive better support to participate in economic activities outside the home.

Enhancing Public Creches: The National Creche Scheme, with around 6,500 creches as of 2020, supports mothers in building stable careers while ensuring a safe environment for children.

While the private sectors' creches caters to high-income families, the public sector needs to increase its efforts to address income inequality and offer quality child services through creches for everyone.

67. **Denied abortion of 27-week-foetus: In India, reproductive autonomy remains a pipedream**

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Denied abortion of 27-week-foetus: In India, reproductive autonomy remains a pipedream"** published in **The Indian Express** on **19th October 2023.**

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

News: This article discusses the recent Supreme Court case on abortion of a 26-weeks old foetus.

Rest of the aspects of this news have been already covered in the following article: https://forumias.com/blog/in-sc-questions-of-foetal-viability-and-rights-of-unborn-child/

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

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

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

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

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68. **Why SLLs also need to be reformed**

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Why SLLs also need to be reformed"** published in **The Hindu** on **20th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Indian Polity — Structure, organization, and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary.

News: This article discusses the significance of **Special and Local Laws (SLLs)** in the wake of recent criminal law reforms. It also highlights the reasons behind the need for reform in SLLs.

Special and Local Laws (SLLs) include "Special laws" enacted by the Parliament to deal with a specific subject. "Local laws" are laws local to a particular region or a state.

SLLs have been kept away from the ongoing reform process, with respect to the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC) and Indian Evidence Act (IEA).

What is the significance of SLLs?

SLLs have immense relevance in the Indian criminal justice system.

1) **In quantitative terms:** Nearly 40% of all cognisable offences registered in 2021 were under SLLs, as per the Crime in India Statistics of 2021.

2) **In qualitative terms:** SLLs have given rise to several important debates regarding the limits on the state's power of criminalisation especially in the context of violation of individual rights and liberties.

Why is there a need for reform in SLLs?

1) **Ambiguous and vague definitions of offences:** For e.g. terms such as 'terrorist act', 'unlawful activity' etc. in Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA).

2) **Issues with application of laws:** For e.g., POCSO Act, 2012 being applied to consensual sexual activities between minors.

3) **Excessive criminalisation of mere civil or regulatory wrongs**

4) **Dilution of due process of law:** For e.g. The stringent provisions provided for under Section 43 of the UAPA make it impossible to get bail.

What should be done?

SLLs should find a place as separate chapters **within the larger structure** of the IPC or the CrPC.

Reforms should be brought in to **address the non-inclusion** of the substantive and procedural aspects of the SLLs in the ongoing reform project.

69. **An opportunity to recast India's food system**

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"An opportunity to recast India's food system"** published in **The Hindu** on **20th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Social Justice — Issues relating to poverty and hunger.

News: This article discusses the importance of reasonable economic returns and resilient environmental system in ensuring food security in India. It also suggests solutions to reform India's food systems.

What is the interconnectedness of nutrition, livelihoods and environment?

Nutrition security can only be achieved sustainably if the producers producing the food make **reasonable economic returns** that are resilient over time.

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This resilience is intricately linked with the **resilience of our natural ecosystem** because the largest inputs to agriculture — soil, water and climatic conditions — are all natural resources.

Acknowledging this interconnectedness of nutrition security with livelihood and environmental security is essential to making our **food system truly sustainable**.

What is the status of nutrition security in India?

India faces a double burden of malnutrition:

1) At one end, a sizable proportion of Indians exhibit **nutrient deficiencies**. As in the **National Family Health Survey, 2019-21**, **35%** of children are **stunted**, and **57%** of women and **25%** of men are **anaemic**.

2) At the other end, due to **imbalanced diets and sedentary lifestyles**, **24%** of adult women and **23%** of adult men are now **obese**.

What are the challenges of food production in India?

1) **Non-remunerative agriculture:** On the production side, **farm incomes are insufficient** to meet the ends of marginal and small farmers. According to a report, more than 68% of marginal farmers supplement their incomes with non-farm activities.

2) **Depletion of natural resources and changing climate** are making India's food production highly vulnerable. As in the 2023 soil health survey, almost half the cultivable land in India has become deficient in organic carbon. In States such as Punjab, more than 75% blocks are over-exploited.

What should be done?

We need an approach that engages all 3 sides of the food system: **consumers, producers, and middlemen.**

First, consumer demand needs to be shifted towards healthy and sustainable diets. For e.g., **Locally-grown millets**.

1) Civil society and the health community could partner with social media influencers who can shape healthier and sustainable consumption for millions.

2) The public sector, through the Public Distribution System, mid-day meals, railways catering, etc., can help improve what Indians are consuming.

Second, to ensure resilient incomes, farmers' transition towards remunerative and regenerative agricultural practices should be supported. For e.g., **National Mission on Natural Farming**.

1) We need to broaden and scale up such initiatives to various agro-ecological practices such as **agroforestry, conservation agriculture, and precision farming**.

2) Agriculture support should **move from input subsidies to direct cash support** to farmers per hectare of cultivation to promote efficient use of inputs.

3) **Agricultural research** should earmark budgets to focus on sustainable agricultural practices.

Third, shifting of farm-to-fork value chains towards more sustainable and inclusive ones.

1) **Enabling more value addition** of agricultural produce in rural areas to enhance rural (farm) incomes.

2) Corporations supplying raw and processed food to consumers should prioritise **direct procurement** and incentivise sustainably harvested produce.

3) Enabling **trading of produce between FPOs** is another way, as shown by **FPOs in Odisha**.

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70. **We must break the silence on suicide prevention in India**

News: The author, associated with Mariwala Health Initiative (MHI), emphasizes the importance of suicide prevention and improving mental healthcare access in India, especially for marginalized communities.

What are some of the findings related to suicide in India?

According to the National Crime Records Bureau, in 2021, more than 160,000 people in India died by suicide. This number has been increasing in the past decade.

Moreover, these numbers are likely lower than the actual problem due to underreporting and social stigma.

Hence, a rise in the suicide rates show that there is an urgent need to prioritize suicide prevention in India.

What are the issues with suicide prevention in India?

Suicide in India is often viewed as an individual problem rather than a social issue, especially in the media.

Hence, it becomes important to present suicide as a societal issue that requires collaboration from government, healthcare, non-profits, workplaces, mental health experts, and communities.

Additionally, there is also a need to recognize that marginalized communities face extra challenges in preventing suicides.

Must Read: The suicide cluster in Kota is a public health emergency

What efforts have been taken to prevent suicides?

National Suicide Prevention Strategy (NSPS): India launched its first National Suicide Prevention Strategy (NSPS) in November 2022, in cooperation with MHI experts. The NSPS emphasizes valuing lives and providing support, recognizing the complexity of suicide and the importance of inter-sectoral collaboration among different government departments.

Inclusion in the G20 Agenda: MHI collaborated with Civil20 India to include suicide prevention and mental health in C20 recommendations. As a result, both topics made their way into the G20 agenda for the first time and were also addressed in the G20 health declaration.

What more can be done to prevent suicides?

First, there is a need for a holistic approach to suicide prevention that includes both psychological support through counseling and enhanced access to social resources such as employment, healthcare, and education.

Second, there is a need to end the stigma around mental illness and make sure that everyone in India has access to mental healthcare as a basic right.

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71. **Not just a case about improving investigation**

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Not just a case about improving investigation"** published in **The Hindu** on **21st October 2023.**

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Governance — Role of civil services in a democracy.

News: This article discusses the issue of poor quality of investigation in India. It also highlights the status of implementation of reforms such as the separation of investigative functions.

The Supreme Court of India, recently, in **Rajesh & Anr. vs The State of Madhya Pradesh**, emphasised the need to devise 'a consistent and dependable code of investigation' so that the guilty do not walk free on technicalities.

The Court also mentioned the **poor standard of police investigation** and the principal causes of a low rate of conviction due to **inept and unscientific investigation** by the police.

What are the various official observations regarding the quality of police investigation?

1) **Malimath Committee:** It recommended that the investigation wing should be separate from that of the law-and-order wing.

2) **Law Commission's Report number 239:** observed that 'the police stations are understaffed', 'sufficient priority is not given for investigation of crime' and that 'there is no periodic exercise to upgrade the skills of investigation'.

3) **Prakash Singh Case (2006):** Out of the 7 directives by the Supreme Court, one pertained to a separation of investigation from law and order to ensure quicker investigation, better expertise and improved rapport with the people.

What has been the response of the States in implementing these recommendations?

According to **Prakash Singh (Retd IPS)**, **only 17 states** have taken measures to separate the investigative and law and order functions of the police.

When it came to the overall 7 directives, **only 9 States** fell under the 'good and satisfactory' category.

What should be done?

1) **Sanctioning of additional manpower:** Investigating officers are not only inadequate in number but are also unable to upgrade their skills because there is a shortage of officers.

2) **Ensuring compliance:** The Supreme Court needs to step forward and ask every State and Union Territory to report compliance of its directives on investigation.

3) **Consistency in rulings:** There must be consistency in court rulings regarding Indian Evidence Act.

72. **C Raja Mohan writes: If the Gaza crisis explodes, India too will lose**

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"If the Gaza crisis explodes, India too will lose"** published in **The Indian Express** on **21st October 2023.**

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

News: This article discusses the implications of the recent Israel-Palestine crisis on India and its foreign policy imperatives in the wake of the Gaza war.

In wake of the recent Israel-Hamas conflict, the triumph of violent religious extremism and the weakening of moderate regimes will have security and political consequences for India.

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What have been the underpinnings of India's foreign policy in the Middle East?

1) India's early stance on the Middle East involved the preference for **modern secular nationalists**. India was **uncomfortable with traditionalist and religious forces** in the region.

2) Several developments since the late 1970s led to the rise of **violent religious extremism** and **Islamic republicanism** that today threaten both secular and conservative regimes.

3) In the last few years, **India has become closer to Arab moderates and Israel**. This has been facilitated by the **"converging interests"** and **"expanding engagement"** between Arab moderates and Israel.

What are the implications of the recent crisis for India?

This crisis has cast a shadow over India's recent gains in the Middle East.

The challenge for Indian policy is the possible breaking up of the **emerging coalition of Arab moderates and Israel** and limiting the rise of forces seeking regional chaos.

The **triumph of violent religious extremism** will also impact India politically and in terms of security.

The Gaza war has **compelled Saudi Arabia to suspend dialogue** with Israel. Muslim countries that were looking at engaging Israel are walking away from that idea.

How should India deal with these challenges?

3 essential areas need to be given attention by Indian foreign policy:

1) **Encouraging moderation in Israel:** India must caution Israel against its quest for revenge. It is unlikely that Hamas's ideology can be defeated through military means. In fact, the massive costs of Israel's invasion will lend greater legitimacy to Hamas and weaken that of Israel.

2) **Strengthening the moderate Palestinian Authority against Hamas.**

3) **Recognition of the regional ambitions of Iran and Turkey** which may have implications for India (E.g., in J&K).

Strengthening moderates in Israel and Palestine, supporting reconciliation between them, and promoting a wider coalition of moderate states is critical for India's long-term prospects in the Middle East.

73. **Unseating Futures-Cancelled MBBS admissions hide a bigger problem**
Source: The post is based on the article "**Unseating Futures – Cancelled MBBS admissions hide a bigger problem**" published in **The Times of India** on **21st October 2023**.
Syllabus: GS2- Governance- Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education.

News: The National Medical Council (NMC) cancelled MBBS admissions in private medical colleges in Maharashtra. Some colleges violated NMC's rules. NMC has been accused of being too strict. Aspiring doctors are negatively affected.

Why did the NMC cancel MBBS admissions in private colleges in Maharashtra?

Violation of Deadlines: Admissions in some colleges went beyond the NMC's allowed deadline of September 30.

Stray Vacancy Round: Maharashtra's medical education department allowed students to apply directly to individual private medical colleges for Round 4, termed the "stray vacancy" round.

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Breach of Centralized Admission Rule: NMC specified that all four rounds of MBBS admissions must be done centrally and online. Maharashtra's approach was contrary to this.

What are the impacts of the admissions being cancelled?

Uncertainty for Students: Aspiring doctors are left in a lurch, with their futures becoming uncertain due to the abrupt cancellation of admissions.

Reputation of Colleges: Private medical colleges, notorious for questionable practices, face scrutiny and reputational damage with such cancellations.

Conflicts Among Stakeholders: Disagreements arise between the regulator (NMC), state governments, and colleges, causing further chaos in the admissions process.

Questionable Decisions by NMC: NMC's decision to derecognize colleges, even well-regarded government ones, for minor breaches, has raised eyebrows.

Transparency Concerns: NMC's lack of transparency, especially by not making its inspection reports public, is concerning for all stakeholders involved.

74. **Making films accessible to the disabled can serve everyone**
Source: The post is based on the article "**Making films accessible to the disabled can serve everyone**" published in **"Indian express"** on 21st October 2023.
Syllabus: GS2- Governance- protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

News: The article discusses the need for media accessibility in India for people with disabilities, especially the deaf and blind. It highlights the benefits of features like subtitles for everyone, not just the disabled. The article suggests including accessibility features in digital film packages, making it easier and cost-effective for the entertainment industry. The government's role is emphasized in setting guidelines for this change.

Why is media accessibility important for people with disabilities?

Representation in Court: Sarah Sunny was the first to use Indian Sign Language in the Supreme Court, highlighting the necessity for accessible communication tools.

Media Access for All: Rahul Bajaj's case in the Delhi High Court emphasized the need for accessible cinema halls. With interpreters, deaf and hard of hearing persons can follow court proceedings.

Universal Benefit: The article debunks the myth that only the deaf and blind benefit from media accessibility. The BIRD initiative has shown that features like Same Language Subtitles help improve literacy and language skills for everyone, even in noisy environments.

Rural Demand: BIRD's surveys in rural schools revealed a strong preference for content with subtitles, showing its wide-reaching impact.

How can the government help?

Setting Standards: The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting (MIB) can establish Accessibility Standards. With their oversight over all entertainment content, MIB can set necessary guidelines to ensure content is accessible.

Certification Inclusion: The Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) can require films to provide Same Language Subtitles or Captions (SLS/SLC) and Audio-Description (AD) files after they've been certified. This would make these features an integral part of the film certification process.

Leading by Example: The Delhi High Court has already directed Yash Raj Films to deposit SLS/SLC and AD files for their film "Pathaan." This can become a standard practice for all films.

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What should be done for media accessibility in India for people with disabilities?

Integrate Accessibility Features: Accessibility features should be an integral part of all content. This includes video and audio, making it easier for everyone to access.

Digital Content Package: Incorporate accessibility features as separate files in the Digital Content Package (DCP). This approach is cost-effective and can be implemented across various platforms and devices.

Flexibility in Use: Once integrated, stakeholders should have the freedom to turn accessibility features on or off at almost no additional cost.

Standardize Accessibility: Disability rights groups recommend four key features: SLC, AD, English translations, and ISL video interpretation. Adopting these ensures inclusive content distribution and consumption.

75. Behind the Global South-The geopolitical phrase of 2023

Source: The post is based on the article **"Behind the Global South-The geopolitical phrase of 2023 – but what does it actually mean?"** published in **Business standard** on 23rd October 2023.

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

News: The article discusses India's aspirations to lead the "Global South," comprising developing nations not aligned with traditional Northern Hemisphere powers. India seeks to offer an alternative to Chinese dominance and Western patronage, aiming to enhance its global influence and represent shared concerns of developing nations.

What is the Global South?

As per the definition provided by University of Virginia, the Global South was traditionally defined as economically disadvantaged nations, an alternative to the "Third World". Following are presently accepted features of Global South.

- **Beyond Geography**: It's now a term for areas affected by capitalist globalization, regardless of actual location. For example, there can be "Souths" in the geographical North.
- **Shared Experience**: It represents a shared experience of subjugation under global capitalism. The term captures the collective resistance against global capitalist forces, reminiscent of cold war discourses.

Essentially, it's an evolving term reflecting complexities in global power and economy.

What grievances does the Global South hold?

Pandemic Response: The Global South felt neglected during the COVID-19 crisis. While northern countries had ample vaccines, many developing nations struggled without.

Economic Setbacks: Post the pandemic, many countries in the Global South faced economic hardships. They accumulated debt but couldn't recover the growth they lost between 2020-22.

Effects of Global Politics: The instability caused by events like the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the subsequent Western sanctions affected the Global South, especially in terms of food and fuel.

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Why is India championing the Global South?

Alternative to China: India wants to offer an alternative to countries caught between Chinese dominance and Western influence. This positions the Global South as the developing world excluding China.

Increase Global Influence: By leading the Global South, India seeks to elevate its global status. This aligns with its ambition to be recognized as a "Vishwaguru" or world leader.

Address Common Grievances: India aims to voice the shared concerns of the Global South. For instance, the disparity in vaccine distribution during the pandemic saw the North getting vaccinated multiple times over, while the South struggled.

Bolster Partnerships: Initiatives like the India-Middle East-Europe Corridor (IMEEC) showcase India's strategy. By using European funds, American security, and its goodwill, India seeks to strengthen relationships with other nations.

What challenges does India face in this role?

Resource Limitations: Unlike China, which offers benefits through trade and projects like the Belt and Road Initiative, India lacks such vast resources. India's primary asset is its reputation.

Balancing Influence: As India's influence grows, it needs to ensure that it remains seen as a friend and not a dominator. This is crucial to avoid situations where its leadership could be viewed negatively.

Positive Image Maintenance: The situation in Maldives serves as a reminder. India's high profile there turned into a disadvantage during a recent election.

Competition with China: China sees itself as the leader of the developing world and expects their support. India's championing of the Global South challenges this assumption, potentially leading to geopolitical friction.

Delivering Tangible Benefits: India must provide real, tangible benefits to its partners, not just symbolic gestures or promises.

Question to practice:

Analyse the strategies and implications of India's efforts to position itself as a leader of the Global South in the context of geopolitical dynamics with China and the West.

76. Trade potential — India should reconsider its RCEP decision

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Trade potential — India should reconsider its RCEP decision"** published in **Business Standard** on **23rd October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 International Relations – Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

News: This article discusses the need for India to reconsider its position on the RCEP considering the recent developments.

What is the RCEP?

RCEP is a trade deal that created one of the world's largest trading blocs.

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Its members include:

10 Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) members: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam.

5 other FTA partner countries of ASEAN: Australia, China, Korea, Japan, and New Zealand.

RCEP members account for about 30% of the global GDP and 1/3rd of the world's population.

What are the ongoing developments with respect to RCEP?

Slower economic growth and increasing **geopolitical fragmentation** has led to slowdown of global trade.

In light of this, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are considering joining the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP).

For **Sri Lanka**, which is dealing with an economic crisis, easier access to regional markets could help it become more competitive.

For **Bangladesh**, RCEP could help compensate for export loss as it exits from the group of least developed countries.

Their joining the RCEP will also open markets for China in India's neighbourhood.

What has been India's position regarding the RCEP?

India exited the RCEP 4 years ago due to various concerns. These include:

1) Potential increase in the **import of cheaper goods** from member countries, particularly China.

2) **Geopolitical and national-security considerations:** Especially with respect to China.

3) **Lack of safeguards:** India had cited the grouping's refusal to accede to its requests on safeguards as a deal breaker.

What is India doing to counter the impact of not joining the RCEP?

India has been working with a different **strategy of higher tariffs**, along with **fiscal incentives for large manufacturers**.

Additionally, India is working on **various free-trade agreements (FTA)**.

Why should India reconsider its position?

1) Countries such as **Australia and Japan** have joined RCEP **despite ongoing geopolitical tensions** with China.

2) **Lost opportunity** to become part of the **world's largest and most dynamic trading bloc**, which has the potential to enhance transnational economic integration.

3) **India's trade deficit with China** has been increasing significantly despite India not joining.

4) It would give India the opportunity to deal with trade-related issues more effectively, besides **opening markets of member countries**.

5) **Opportunity to become part of large global value chains:** This will improve participation in global trade, which is critical in **boosting local manufacturing** and **generating employment**.

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6) **Limited gains through FTAs.**

Question for practice:

India needs to rethink its stand on multilateral trade agreements like the RCEP considering the recent geopolitical and economic developments. Discuss.

77. **Women's Reservation Bill: After passing, challenge now to ensure promise translates to equality**

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Women's Reservation Bill: After passing, challenge now to ensure promise translates to equality"** published in **The Indian Express** on **23rd October 2023.**

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

News: This article discusses the various advantages of increasing the representation of women in politics in India through the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill by the Parliament. It also provides suggestions for women willing to join politics.

Rest of the aspects of this news have been already covered in detail in the following article: https://forumias.com/blog/women-reservation-bill-explained-pointwise/

What are some of the possible benefits of the passage of the bill?

1) Can help transition India from the "**politics of rhetoric**" to the "**politics of presence**" **(from "words to action")**.

2) **Morally binding on the state:** The idea of political equality is integral to the Constitution, making the inclusion of women in politics morally binding.

3) **Marginalisation of women can be prevented:** The political sphere has been largely dominated by men and masculinist politics.

4) Some have advocated that women can bring **unique skills and political strategies** rooted in their life experiences, making them **role models** for future generations.

5) **Revitalising of democracy:** The presence of women ensures **fair negotiations and deliberations between genders** on various issues, free from biases.

6) **Exercised leadership roles:** Women have held positions at the highest level – President, Prime Minister, Chief Ministers, etc.

7) **Increasing competence of women:** They have made progress in education. They are also informed, responsible, and demanding voters.

8) **Rising aspirations:** Women have excelled in fields such as aviation, bureaucracy, medicine, space, arts and literature.

What should be the way forward for women aspiring to become part of Indian politics?

1) **Training:** This should include encouraging them to pursue higher education in subjects such as public policy, political science and law.

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2) **Engagement:** Women leaders need to engage with local issues and facilitate local solutions to local problems.

3) **Empathy:** A sense of empathy needs to be nurtured that underlines harmony in society.

It will ensure that the formal equality promised by the Act will transform into substantive equality for women.

Question for practice:

The Women's Reservation Bill has come as a breath of fresh air in the male-dominated political setup of India. Highlighting the benefits of the passage of the bill, provide suggestions how women in politics can contribute positively to the women empowerment?

78. **On the Supreme Court's Decision of 'no fundamental right to marry'**

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"No Indian has the right to marry"** published in **The Indian Express** and the article **"The Court's 'no fundamental right to marry' is wrong"** published in **The Hindu** on **23rd October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Social Justice – Mechanisms, laws, institutions and bodies constituted for the **protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.**
GS Paper 1 Indian Society – Diversity of India.

News: This article discusses the issues with the recent Supreme Court judgment on same-sex marriages in India in the context of the denial of the fundamental right to marry.

Rest of the aspects of this news have been already covered in detail in the following article: https://forumias.com/blog/same-sex-marriage-verdict-implications-explained-pointwise/

What were the outcomes of the judgment?

In the **Supriya Chakraborty v Union of India case**, a 3-2 majority favoured the **refusal of legal recognition to unions other than heteronormative ones.** The bench asserted that there is **no fundamental right to marriage** under the Indian Constitution.

What are the jurisprudence issues with the judgment?

1) **Constitutional morality not considered:** Prevailing ethos of **"majoritarian morality"** were given precedence over "constitutional morality". In Navtej Johar Case (2018), CJI DY Chandrachud had held that "the Court has to be guided by the conception of constitutional morality and not by societal morality".

2) **Refusal of the Court to innovative:** It cited the limits of its jurisdiction and emphasised the legislative authority over such matters.

3) Extensive scope of **Article 32** and the judiciary's duty to safeguard citizens' rights not exercised by the judiciary.

4) **Restriction of the scope of the Puttaswamy judgment (2017):** The privacy judgment upheld privacy of choice, which should ideally include the choice of entering into a matrimonial relationship.

5) **Departure from judiciary's liberal interpretation of Article 21.**

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6) **Against the right to life:** The conservative position considers procreation to be the primary purpose of marriage. Hence, the right to marry should be an extension of the right to life.

7) **UDHR ignored:** India is an original signatory to the UDHR. The Indian Constitution and courts have also been greatly influenced by the UDHR. For instance, in **the Maneka Gandhi** case, the Court relied on Article 10 of the UDHR to include principles of natural justice in the administrative process.

8) **Indian constitutional jurisprudence ignored:** Jurisprudence of the courts interpreting constitutional provisions and including new rights in a liberal and expansive manner was not put into practice in this case.

Question for practice:

Illustrate the issues with the recent Supreme Court ruling regarding the denial of the fundamental right to marry for same-sex couples in India.

79. **On politicization of bureaucracy – Crossing a line**
Source: This post on politicization of bureaucracy has been created based on the article **"Crossing a line"** published in **The Hindu** on **25th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Governance — Role of civil services in a democracy.

News: This article discusses the recent government decision to showcase its achievements across the country by deploying government officials, which has raised concerns around it

What is politicization of bureaucracy?

It refers to the dilution of the principle of non-partisanship and implies a politically committed bureaucracy.

The bureaucracy loses its public-orientation and becomes subservient to one political party/ideology.

What is the recent incident regarding politicization?

The Central government has requested all ministries to assign officials to present its accomplishments nationwide, reaching even the rural areas, under an initiative called the **Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra.**

The outreach is about the achievements of the last 9 years under the present ruling party.

Joint Secretaries, Directors, and Deputy Secretaries will be appointed **Rath Prabharis** (chariots in-charge) for the roadshow.

The government has been criticized by opposition parties for **politicizing the bureaucracy and the military.**

What can be the possible effects of politicization of bureaucracy?

1) **Separation of power:** Goes against the spirit of Indian Constitution's **separation of power** among the three arms of the state — **the executive, the judiciary and the legislature**.

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2) **Non-partisanship of bureaucracy:** It also goes against the line of **separation between the bureaucracy and the military from the political executive**. These directives compel civil and military officials to assume **partisan positions**.

3) **Undermines Impartiality of Elections:** It can undermine the **election process in India,** which has largely retained its credibility because of bureaucratic impartiality.

4) **Irreversible damage to institutions:** Disregarding norms in pursuit of electoral gains leading to **undermining of institutions** may lead to irreversible damage.

What should be done to avoid politicization of bureaucracy?

1) **Merit-based appointments and promotions** in bureaucracy.

2) **Transparent transfer policies.**

3) **Legal and institutional measures** to strengthen the **autonomy and independence** of the bureaucracy. For instance, Whistleblower protection.

4) **Code of Conduct:** Adherence to **Code of Conduct** by civil servants.

5) **Moral education: Strengthening ethics and values** through **training.**

6) **Code of Ethics:** Enforcing a **Code of Ethics** for both the civil servants and the political executive.

7) **Strengthening civil society:** Civil society organizations can play a crucial role in holding bureaucrats and politicians accountable.

Question for practice:

In recent years, there have been rising concerns about the "politicization of bureaucracy" in India. What do you understand by the term? What are its consequences for India's democracy?

80. **On Pakistani artists in India – Bombay High Court's 'salaam' to art without borders**
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Bombay High Court's 'salaam' to art without borders"** published in **The Indian Express** on **25th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 International Relations — India and its neighborhood-relations.

News: This article discusses the recent Bombay High Court decision to lift the ban on Pakistani artists performing in India and its impacts on the Indo-Pakistan relations.

What were the events leading to the ban on Pakistani artists?

1) **26/11 Mumbai attacks in 2008** disrupted Indo-Pakistan cultural exchanges.

2) In **2015, Shiv Sena** protested Ghulam Ali's concert in Mumbai and led to its cancellation.

3) After **2016's Uri attack**, there was a blanket ban on Pakistani artistes working in the Indian film industry. **Pulwama attacks in 2019** reinforced it.

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What were the observations of the Bombay High Court in this matter?

The **Bombay High Court quashed a plea to ban** Indian companies, citizens and associations from working with Pakistani artistes – including actors, singers, musicians, lyricists, and technicians – in India.

The court also observed that art, music, sports, culture, and dance can truly bring about peace, tranquility, unity and harmony in the nation and between nations.

Art has the capacity to evoke a sense of community, solidarity and self-awareness, and get through people's hearts. The recent camaraderie between the Indian and Pakistani cricket teams – both men's and women's – has proven it.

What are the rules regarding entry of Pakistani artists in India?

Officially, as per the **India-Pakistan Visa agreement 2012**, "Reputed Pakistani artistes, including actors, musicians etc., who desire to visit India for giving commercial performances in India on remuneration basis may be granted **visitor visa** for a period not exceeding one year subject to the condition that each stay in India shall not exceed three months and with a special endorsement 'Commercial performance permitted'."

These cross-border exchanges were put to an end by the September 2016 Uri attack leading to resolutions by the **Indian Motion Pictures Producers Association and the Federation of Western India Cine Employees**, preventing Pakistani artists from working in the Indian film industry.

In 2019, the Pulwama strikes brought forth a resolution by the **All-Indian Cine Workers Association**, upholding the 2016 ban.

What should be done?

Both countries must show the ability to **rise above differences** to find ways to collaborate.

Question for practice:

"Confidence-building measures like the welcoming of Pakistani artists in India are required to put Indo-Pakistan relations on a positive trajectory." Discuss.

81. On Blood Transfusion in India – Bloody mess

Source: This post on Blood Transfusion in India is based on the article "**Bloody Mess-Patients infected via transfusion in UP hospital tells larger all-India story of poor regulation**" published in **The Times of India** on **25th October 2023**.

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

News: In Kanpur, 14 thalassemia children received infected blood, causing HIV and hepatitis. India has many thalassemia cases. Blood transfusions are essential but risky. Blood management in India is poor. Stronger regulations are needed.

What is blood transfusion?

According to the American Red Cross Society, blood transfusion is generally the process of receiving blood or blood products intravenously. Transfusions are used for various medical conditions to replace lost components of the blood.

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What is the system of blood transfusion in India?

The system of blood transfusion in India is structured and regulated to ensure the safety, quality, and availability of blood and blood components to those in need. Here's an overview:

- **NACO's Role**: The National AIDS Control Organization (NACO) has been pivotal since 1992 in ensuring the provision of safe blood across the country.
- **Network of Blood Banks**: India has a network of 1131 blood banks, spread across over 600 districts, primarily supported by NACO.
- **National Blood Policy**: Introduced by the Government of India in April 2002, this policy aims to guarantee easy access to adequate, safe, and high-quality blood.
- **Regulatory Body**: The National Blood Transfusion Council (NBTC), formed as per a Supreme Court mandate in 1996, serves as the apex policy-making body for issues related to blood and plasma.
- **Modernization and Quality Control**: NACO has undertaken numerous steps to modernize blood banks, ensuring that the country's blood supply is safe.

Why is blood transfusion becoming important in India?

Thalassemia Prevalence: India has 1-1.5 lakh children with thalassemia. These patients require a lifelong regimen of blood transfusions.

Chronic Conditions: The country has a growing number of people with chronic diseases like cancer. For such patients, transfusions are integral to treatment.

Maternal Health: Studies indicate that 25% of maternal deaths result from haemorrhaging. A report by The National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) highlighted that 70% of deaths from postpartum haemorrhage occur due to a lack of available blood.

Health Issues: High demand for blood is driven by preventable health problems, including complications from malnutrition, anaemia, and pregnancy-related issues.

What are the issues with blood management in India?

Shortage of Safe Blood: Blood is consistently a health emergency. High demand is driven by conditions like malnutrition, anaemia, and complications from pregnancy. However, supply often falls short.

System Mismanagement: Blood and its components are among India's most mismanaged resources, with issues ranging from collection, safety, storage, to distribution.

Inadequate Regulation and Oversight: Despite having testing and screening regulations, there is minimal monitoring. This permits the operation of fraudulent blood banks with outdated testing facilities.

Illicit Blood Trade: A concerning grey market for blood exists, taking advantage of desperate families and patients.

What should be done?

Investigation and Accountability: India's haemovigilance programme should thoroughly investigate incidents like the one in Kanpur to ensure accountability and prevent future occurrences.

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Strengthen Regulations: Clearer and stricter regulations are essential. This includes rigorous testing and screening standards for blood and its components.

Enhanced Monitoring: Regular monitoring of blood banks, especially for their testing facilities, is crucial. This will help weed out spurious blood banks with outdated methods.

Empower NACO: NACO should be granted more authority. It should be able to mandate audits, set strict standards, and most importantly, penalize mismanaged blood banks and hospitals.

Collaborative Effort: State authorities must invest more resources and collaborate with agencies like NACO to streamline procedures and improve blood management.

Public Awareness: There's a need for campaigns to educate the public about the importance of safe blood donation and the risks of the grey blood market.

Terminology used:

The National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO):

The National AIDS Control Organisation (NACO) was established in 1992.

It is the nodal organization for National AIDS response in the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare.

National AIDS Control Programme is a fully funded Central Sector Scheme implemented through State/ UT AIDS Control Societies (SACS) in States/Union Territories (UTs) and closely monitored through District AIDS prevention and control unit (DAPCU) in 188 high priority districts.

Questions to practice:

How can the integration of stricter regulations, public awareness campaigns, and enhanced monitoring mechanisms improve the safety and efficacy of blood management in India, especially in preventing tragedies like the one in Kanpur?

82. **On regulatory environment of India – When the regulated become the regulator**
Source: This post on **regulatory environment of India** has been created based on the article **"When the regulated become the regulator"** published in **Business Standard** on **26th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 Indian Polity — Statutory, **regulatory,** and various quasi-judicial **bodies**.

News: This article discusses the issues with the regulatory environment of India. It also suggests reforms in the public consultation process to tackle these challenges.

Recently, Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) invited suggestions from the public for a comprehensive review of its regulations.

Several other regulators have also initiated similar exercises involving a comprehensive review of existing regulations, in line with the government's proposal in the Union Budget for 2023-24.

What are the issues with regulations?

1) **Difficult task** to ensure the **right quality and quantity** of regulations.

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2) A regulator is accused of **lacking democratic legitimacy**.

3) Regulations stay in the legal framework once enacted, even if **outdated** or leading to **unnecessary costs**.

What should be done by regulators to ensure ease of doing business?

1) **Engaging with the public:** Every regulator should **engage with the public** to both formulate new regulations and review existing ones.

3) **Releasing of draft regulations:** Drafts of proposed regulations must be released to invite suggestions.

4) **Periodic review:** Periodically review existing regulations to ease the compliance burden.

4) **Universal application:** These principles should also apply to subsidiary directions (such as orders, circulars, guidelines, etc.).

5) **Remove outdated regulations:** Regulations should be made contemporary and in tune with the requirements of dynamic businesses.

What is the need for public consultations?

In 2016, the Supreme Court exhorted Parliament to mandate consultation with stakeholders for making laws and regulations. It has the following advantages:

1) **Bridges democratic deficit:** Public consultations help to **bridge the democratic deficit** of regulators.

2) **Raises awareness among the public:** Public consultation enables **the regulated** to know the rationale and implications of regulations.

3) **Large number of solutions can be offered by the people:** The regulated have **first-hand experience of the market**, and they can offer a wide range of **practical solutions**.

What are the limitations of public consultations?

1) **Not conducted periodically:** A public consultation is meaningful only if it is **done periodically** and when a comprehensive picture of regulations and their intended objectives is presented.

2) **Technology not utilized:** It is efficient if it uses **technology which** is currently not being utilized substantially.

3) **Passive participation of the public:** Public consultation is **passive participation**, as stakeholders limit their comments to what is asked, and have a short timeframe to formulate their views.

What should be done?

1) **Providing opportunity to the regulated:** The regulated must be given an opportunity to ask for/suggest new regulations and changes in existing regulations at their convenience.

2) **Periodic examination of proposals:** The regulator should periodically examine proposals coming from stakeholders and publicly comment on those proposals.

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3) **Incorporating proposals in regulations:** It should take forward the proposals it considers useful for making regulations, following due process.

Question for practice:

A comprehensive public consultation framework can augment the Indian regulatory structure. Discuss.

83. **The legality of using white phosphorus**

Source: This post on the topic **white phosphorus** has been created based on the article **"The legality of using white phosphorus"** published in **The Hindu** on **26th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 International Relations — Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements.

News: This article discusses the military applications of white phosphorus in the wake of their recent usage by Israel in Gaza. It also highlights the international legal framework associated with its use.

Human Rights Watch has accused Israel of using white phosphorus munitions in Gaza which are putting civilians at risk of serious and long-term injury.

In the past, a **2009 UN Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict** had also condemned Israel's use of white phosphorus in civilian areas.

What is white phosphorus?

White phosphorus is a waxy, yellowish-to-clear chemical with a pungent, garlic-like odour. It is a highly combustible chemical that burns quickly and brightly when exposed to air.

Its chemical reaction with atmospheric oxygen can create **intense heat (about 815°C),** light, and smoke

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Source: Mohammed Abed/AFP (Al Jazeera).

Read More on white phosphorus here: **https://forumias.com/blog/what-is-the-white-phosphorus-that-israel-is-accused-of-using-in-gaza/**

What are the military uses of white phosphorous?

1) Employed to create **dense smoke screens** in combat, hindering visibility and providing cover for military movements.

2) Used in **incendiary devices** such as grenades and artillery shells, which can result in **persistent and intense fires**.

What are the safeguards in international law regarding usage of incendiary weapons?

1) **Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW):** It imposes restrictions on the use of incendiary weapons, including white phosphorus, with the aim of safeguarding civilians.

2) **International humanitarian law:** White phosphorus use is subject to the rules and principles of **international humanitarian law**, which aims to minimize harm to both civilians and combatants in armed conflicts.

3) **1980 Geneva Convention:** White phosphorus bombs are internationally prohibited under it. It forbids their use against both humans and the environment.

What should be the way forward?

1) **Bringing white phosphorus under the ambit of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC)**.

2) **Strengthening and removing ambiguity in Protocol III of the CCW:** Protocol III deals with incendiary weapons. It does not effectively regulate multi-purpose munitions such as those containing white phosphorus.

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3) **Strict adherence to international humanitarian law:** Parties involved in armed conflicts must ensure that their actions conform to legal standards.

Question for practice:

In the light of the recent controversy regarding the usage of white phosphorus bombs by Israel in Palestine, discuss the role of various international agreements in protecting the human rights of civilians during war.

84. Urban health in India – Unhealthy urban India must get into street fight mode

Source: The post on **Urban health in India** is based on the article "**Unhealthy urban India must get into street fight mode**" published in **The Hindu** on **26th October 2023**.
UPSC Syllabus: GS 2 – Social issues – Issues Related to Health
Relevance: Health related concerns with urban Indians

News: India's urban population is expected to become the second largest in the world by 2035**.** However, despite their role in driving economic growth, most Indian cities are struggling to meet healthcare, environmental, and equity goals for their residents.

What are the concerns associated with Urban health in India?

Urban residents in India face a variety of health risks, including air and noise pollution, limited green space, lack of sidewalks and parks, outdated transportation, unhealthy food, and significant exposure to toxic substances.

These factors, especially when combined with a lack of physical activity, increase the risk of heart disease and diabetes, **also known as cardiometabolic diseases.**

In India, 20% of the population is inactive, 37% are only mildly active, which means that a total of 57% of the surveyed population does not meet the physical activity guidelines set by the World Health Organization.

Hence, physical activity becomes necessary to mitigate the problems of cardiometabolic diseases.

What factors contribute to the rising health risks in India?

Dysfunctional Provisioning Systems: Globally, seven key provisioning systems: food, energy, transportation, housing, green infrastructure, water, and waste management, are fundamental to human health, well-being, equity, and sustainability.

However, these systems are often dysfunctional and contribute to environmental degradation and health disparities.

Colonial Origins: Urban provisioning systems in India are often rooted in colonial legacies. These systems both reflect and worsen social inequalities in cities, resulting in significant disparities in health risks and outcomes.

Hence, **a new approach that aligns with** global frameworks like the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, the New Urban Agenda, and the Health in All Policies approach is needed.

Stagnant Health Infrastructure: Investments in clean energy and electric transport in India offer an opportunity to reduce air pollution and advance climate and equity goals.

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However, their potential impact on health may be limited without changes in other systems like food, transportation, and green infrastructure.

Studies have also shown that even small changes to urban planning can have a big impact on health and productivity. **For example,** creating safe walking and biking lanes can improve physical activity and reduce air pollution.

Long Working Hours: A majority of urban Indians work long hours, often in sedentary jobs. This leaves them with little time and energy for exercise.

High Stress: The high levels of stress that many Indians experience make it difficult to motivate themselves to exercise.

Lack of Awareness: The lack of awareness of the benefits of physical activity is another factor that contributes to the lack of regular exercise in Indian urban cities.

Many people are not aware of the link between physical inactivity and chronic diseases such as heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, and obesity.

How can the issues related to urban health in India can be addressed?

Regular Physical Exercise: Regular physical exercise is an effective way to reduce the risk of heart disease and other cardiometabolic diseases.

Further, electrifying transportation alone would not be enough as studies have shown that increasing physical activity is much better for health.

Investing in Footpaths: Investing in active transportation, like walking and biking paths, can also provide added health and economic advantages.

Comprehensive Policies: Encouraging healthy diets along with promoting active transportation should be integral components of comprehensive policies, benefiting both public health and economic productivity.

Increasing Awareness: It is necessary to increase awareness of the benefits of physical activity and to promote healthy lifestyles through public education campaigns.

What lies ahead?

Unhealthy diets, reduced physical activity, and urban air pollution in India pose greater health risks than drugs, tobacco, and alcohol. Hence, India needs to tackle these issues urgently.

Question for practice: Despite playing a role in driving economic growth, Indian urban population faces significant health risks. Discuss.

85. **On internationalization of higher education -Why India must offer student work visas**
Source: The post on **internationalization of higher education** is based on the article "**Why India must offer student work visas**" published in **"Indian Express"** on 26th October 2023.
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS2 Governance – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to **Education.**

News: The article discusses India's aim to internationalize its higher education. Many Indian students study abroad due to varied college quality at home. India struggles to attract and retain

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foreign students, mainly because they can't work after studying. Changes in visa policies are suggested to address this.

What is the meaning of internationalizing higher education?

According to the International Association of universities, Internationalization of higher education is the process of integrating an international/intercultural dimension into the teaching, research and service elements of an institution.

This ensures that students, faculty, and the community experience a globalized curriculum and environment, preparing them for a more interconnected world.

It also helps one to understand and appreciate diverse cultural and ethnic groups, including those within one's own country.

NEP 2020's goal: Internationalization of education is one of the goals of NEP 2020. It aims to achieve it by making the Indian education system self-reliant and compliant to global standards & norms. It would help India in attracting students from abroad, in large numbers.

What is India's Student ("S") visa policy?

India's student visa policy allows foreign students to pursue education in recognized institutions. It is characterized by:

The Student Visa duration is either the course length or 5 years, whichever is shorter.

Working on a student visa is prohibited, but NRIs, OCIs, and PIOs are exempted.

What is the significance of internationalizing higher education in India?

1) Raising Standards through collaboration as provided in the NEP 2020: This includes updating syllabi, offering joint degrees with foreign institutions, and enhancing campus diversity.

2) Meeting Demand: Despite having 54,000 colleges, there's a gap in quality. This has led to 7.5 lakh Indian students seeking education abroad annually.

3) Economic Opportunities: Attracting foreign students can boost India's economy.

4) Building Global Networks: Indian companies benefit from hiring foreign talent who understand both India and their home countries.

5) Addressing Workforce Challenges: India's aging population means a potential workforce decline. Foreign students working post-studies can help fill this gap.

What is the concern associated with permitting foreign students to work?

Job Competition: A primary worry is that foreign students might take jobs that would otherwise go to Indian students.

Bureaucratic Procedures: Currently, foreign students cannot gain work experience post-studies. Changing this requires an amendment to India's "S" Visa, involving bureaucratic procedures.

Tax Implications: The Ministry of Finance would need to address how India's tax laws and double taxation treaties would apply to income earned by foreign students.

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Regulatory Coordination: Multiple ministries, including Education, Home Affairs, and Finance, must coordinate closely to implement such changes, which can be a complex task.

Long-term Residency Concerns: While the idea is to offer work status to foreign students, it might lead to concerns about whether this could be a pathway to longer-term residency in India.

What should be done in this regard?

Amending of Visa Rules: India should modify the "S" Visa policy to allow foreign students to work post-studies in India.

Enhancing Coordination between Ministries: The Ministry of Home Affairs needs to work alongside the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Education for a cohesive approach to visa and tax issues.

Issuing of Guidelines on Recruitment: The Ministry of Education, through bodies like the UGC and AICTE, should issue guidelines for on-campus hiring of foreign students.

Promoting Higher Education Abroad: India's Prime Minister has highlighted higher education as a key export sector. For instance, IIMs and IITs are opening branches overseas.

Engaging Private Universities: Institutions like Manipal, Sharda, and Amity, which already have foreign campuses, can share insights and best practices.

Involving Indian Companies: They can advocate for student visa changes, benefiting from hiring globally acquainted talent.

Question for practice:

In this era of globalization and the resulting internationalization of education, India should reconsider its stance on student work visas for foreign students. Analyse.

86. **The T.N. experience on caste survey**
Source: The post is based on the article "**The T.N. experience on caste survey**" published in **The Hindu** on **27th October 2023**.
Syllabus: GS 2 – Governance – Government Policies & Intervention
Relevance: Issues associated with providing reservation to Backward Classes in Tamil Nadu

News: The Bihar caste-based survey has sparked a national debate about increasing the 50% reservation limit. But Tamil Nadu's experience shows that a caste census alone may not be enough to provide reservation.

Read Here for other aspects related to the caste-based survey: Caste Census Significance and Challenges- Explained

When were the First and the Second Backward Classes Commissions formed by the Tamil Nadu government?

The first Backward Classes Commission was formed for the period 1969-1970. It suggested raising Backward Classes (BCs) reservation.

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How did the Second BC Commission come into being?

In Jan. 1980, the AIADMK government in Tamil Nadu increased the reservation for Backward Classes (BCs) from 31% to 50%.

This brought the total reservation to 68%, including 18% for Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs).

This decision was challenged in the Supreme Court. After which the state government set up (Second Backward Classes Commission), headed by J.A. Ambasankar.

What was the finding of the Ambasankar Commission?

The Ambasankar Commission conducted a survey to enumerate and classify Backward Classes (BCs), primarily focusing on BCs without providing a comprehensive breakdown of all communities.

The survey found that BCs made up 67.15% of the state's population. In March 1989, an exclusive quota of 20% was provided for Most Backward Classes (MBCs) and Denotified Communities (DNCs) within the total share of BCs of 50%.

What were the issues related to reservation for Backward Classes faced by the Commission?

Amount of Reservation: The Chairman wanted to reduce the quota from 50% to 32% to keep the overall quota within the 50% limit.

However, **the other panel members argued that the quota should** be at least 50%, since BCs made up 67% of the population.

Scope of Reservation: The Chairman insisted on maintaining two separate lists of Backward Classes (BCs): one under Article 15(4) and another under Article 16(4).

He believed that being eligible for a quota under Article 15(4) did not automatically entitle individuals to reservations in job appointments under Article 16(4).

However, the majority of panel members supported having only one list. They argued that social and educational backwardness were interconnected, and educational benefits provided under Article 15(4) were a means to achieve employment benefits under Article 16(4).

What were the recommendations given by the Commission?

The government received two sets of recommendations, one from the Chairman and the other from panel members.

However, the government retained the status quo of 50% reservation for Backward Classes and accepted the inclusion of 29 communities but did not agree to remove 24 communities from the list.

How did the 1992 Supreme Court judgment affect State reservations?

Tamil Nadu government enacted a law to protect its 69% reservation for BCs and SCs by placing it under the Ninth Schedule after the Supreme Court's Mandal Commission judgment in 1992.

The Tamil Nadu government has also provided reservation to other groups such as Muslims, Christians, Arunthathiyars (a sub-caste of SCs), and Vanniyars.

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However, the Supreme Court has struck down the law providing a separate quota for Vanniyars on the ground that the data used by the government was not contemporaneous.

What can be the conclusion drawn?

The Tamil Nadu case illustrates that conducting a survey alone is insufficient for implementing reservations for the Backward Classes. Overcoming challenges such as court intervention, political will, scope and amount of reservation is also essential in providing reservation.

Question for Practice – Critically examine the issues and challenges associated with conducting a caste-based survey and providing reservation based on it, with proper examples.

87. On Abortion Rights – Judges & doctors, listen

Source: The post on **Abortion Rights** is based on the article "**Judges & Doctors, Listen**– A recent SC judgment shows why Indian medical boards must be made aware of scientific evidence on the impact of forcing women to continue an unwanted pregnancy" published in **"The Times of India"** on 27th October 2023.

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

News: The article discusses the Supreme Court's decision to deny an abortion for a woman with mental health issues in India. Medical boards and courts often advise women to continue unwanted pregnancies and consider adoption. This neglects the mental and physical consequences for the woman.

What is abortion?

An abortion is a medical procedure to terminate a pregnancy. It uses medication or a surgical procedure to end the pregnancy. However, this medical procedure has a 'Pro-Choice' vs 'Pro-Life' surrounding it.

Pro-Choice-Support abortion rights of women. 'Right of women to bodily autonomy' is paramount.

Pro-Life- Oppose abortion rights of women. 'Right to life of the foetus' is paramount.

Read here for more details: Abortion laws in India

What are the implications of the Supreme Court's decision to deny an abortion to a woman with mental health issues?

1) **Mental Health Neglect:** Evidence suggests of forcing a woman to continue an unwanted pregnancy can result in depression, anxiety, and other mental health problems.

2) **Lack of Empathy in Medical Advice:** Medical boards frequently suggest women to complete pregnancies and then give the baby up for adoption. This dismisses the impact such decisions have on the woman's mental well-being.

3) **Risks for Young Girls Ignored:** For instance, in the 2018 case of a 10-year-old, the risks of a full-term pregnancy were overlooked, even though she had a congenital heart condition and other pregnancy-associated risks.

4) **Contradiction with Mental Healthcare Law:** The 2017 law supports mentally ill individuals making their own healthcare decisions. The recent case contradicted this.

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What are the issues with the current medical view on late abortions?

Foetal Injections: These are routinely administered for late abortions in cases of foetal anomalies. This practice is aligned with the health ministry's guidelines.

Discriminatory Gestational Limits: The Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act sets different gestational limits for foetal anomalies. This is seen as discriminatory as it reinforces stigma and negative attitudes towards disabilities.

Late Abortion Safety: If a late abortion is deemed safe in the case of a foetal anomaly, it raises the question of why it wouldn't be considered safe for other unwanted pregnancies.

Paternalistic Attitudes: Women seeking late abortions often face judgment and reprimand for their delay in seeking the procedure, reflecting a paternalistic medical model.

What should be done?

1) **Update Medical Training:** Medical professionals' education needs to integrate the concept of reproductive rights and ensure they understand individual agency regarding reproductive choices.

2) **Exposure to International Standards:** Medical practitioners should be made familiar with international standards for late abortions, ensuring they're equipped with the recommended techniques.

3) **Embedded Patients' Rights:** There's an urgent need to include patients' rights and ethics in medical training, emphasizing respect for patient autonomy and decision-making.

4) **Redefine "Counseling":** Counseling should be genuine and respectful, not a tool to repeatedly persuade women to continue unwanted pregnancies.

Terminology used:

Reproductive rights: As per the United Nations, reproductive choice entails women's right to make decisions about reproduction, which includes the freedom to choose whether to continue or terminate an undesired pregnancy and the ability to select their preferred family planning and contraception methods.

Question for practice:

Discuss how the Supreme Court's recent denial of an abortion impacts women's reproductive rights and mental health in India.

88. **On India's bid to host Olympics 2036 – Is India ready to host the Olympic Games?**
Source: This post on **India's bid to host Olympics 2036** has been created based on the article **"Is India ready to host the Olympic Games?"** published in **The Hindu** on **27th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 International Relations — India's Soft Power.
GS Paper 2 Governance — Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors.

News: This article discusses the opportunities and challenges in front of India in its bid to host the 2036 Olympic Games.

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A detailed account of **India's bid to host Olympics 2036** has been discussed here: **https://forumias.com/blog/indias-bid-to-host-olympics-2036-explained-pointwise/**

What is the process of Selection of Host Country/City for Olympics?

In the 2014 IOC session, roadmap for the future of the Olympic Movement, Olympic Agenda 2020, was laid out. It dealt with a new process for host city selection, and it was called the 'New Norm'. It is based on 3 Pillars – **Flexibility, Sustainability and Cost Effectiveness.**

Why does hosting an Olympics hold such great importance?

1) **Pinnacle of sports:** It showcases not only the nation to the world, but also **soft power**.

2) **Political statement:** India is a geopolitical power, and its standing will go up if it hosts the Games.

3) **Showcasing development:** Hosting the Olympics would also underscore India's importance as a sporting nation and showcase its development.

4) **Promotion of Investment and Tourism-** India's bid for hosting the Olympics can catalyse investment and tourism in the country.

What are the necessary conditions for making an Olympics successful?

1) **Strong National Olympic Committee (NOC):** The Games are given to the NOC, which is India's Indian Olympic Association (IOA). It has to be governed efficiently.

2) **Strong legacy:** Including people's participation, the social structure, and building of infrastructure.

3) **Coordination and cohesion:** Knowing how to work with one another well would be important. All elements such as culture, hospitality, infrastructure, government, and sports bodies have to work in coordination.

What does India need to do to host a successful Olympics?

1) **Games Village:** You need to have a top-class village for the Games.

2) **Specialists:** Including marketing specialists, engineers, scientists, etc.

3) **Sound ports governance:** Indian sport is governed poorly. Most federations are not functioning properly.

4) **Temporary movable structures:** Temporary structures, instead of big stadia, can be built, and after the Games, they can be used by the community.

5) **Shortlist cities and hire feasibility consultants:** To report on cities that can host the Games best.

Question for practice:

'India's ambitious bid for 2036 Olympics has brought with it various opportunities and challenges'. Elaborate.

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89. On India-Qatar relations – Qatar Questions

Source: This post on **India-Qatar relations** has been created based on the article **"Qatar Questions"** published in **The Times of India** on **27th October 2023.**

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 International Relations — Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

News: This article discusses the recent challenge for Indian foreign policy in the wake of a Qatari court sentencing 8 former Indian navy personnel to death.

Aspects of **India-Qatar bilateral relations** have been discussed in detail here: **https://forumias.com/blog/india-qatar-and-the-continuing-saga-of-eight-detained-ex-indian-navy-officers/**

What was the reason for the sentencing?

The precise charges remain unknown.

Various news reports suggest that they were arrested for allegedly **leaking classified information** related to a high-value Qatari submarine project.

There is also speculation in some news reports that the receiver of the classified information was Israel.

What makes the situation challenging?

1) **Secrecy of the trial:** The precise nature of charges is not yet known.

2) **India's investments in bilateral relations:** India has invested a lot to improve bilateral relations with Qatar, in line with India's greater engagement with other Gulf states.

3) **Qatar's geopolitical standings:** Qatar also hosts a plethora of opposition and militant movement leaders from the Islamic world, including from Palestinian Hamas, Muslim Brotherhood, and Taliban.

4) **Interests of global and regional powers:** Qatar houses American and Turkish military-bases and simultaneously has a working relationship with Iran.

5) **Soft power:** In the government-owned Al Jazeera broadcaster, Doha has an opinion-influencer in the region.

6) **Fuel exports to India:** India is one of the largest importers of Qatari gas.

7) **Large Indian diaspora:** 800,000 Indians live and work in Qatar.

India will have to tread very carefully as it tries to help the ex-navy personnel.

Question for practice:

India's outreach in the Gulf has received a setback in the form of the recent diplomatic row with Qatar. In this context, analyse the challenges in India's bilateral relations with Qatar.

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90. **On Potential of India-China Relations: A China-India partnership, its vast global potential**

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 International Relations – Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

News: The article discusses the ongoing global crises and suggests that China and India, as ancient Asian civilizations, can lead the way in promoting peace and development. They propose building a global community with shared values and future goals, emphasizing cooperation, mutual respect, and multilateralism.

What history and vision do China and India share?

Ancient Civilizations: Both countries have a rich history, having coexisted as neighboring ancient civilizations for thousands of years.

Common Philosophies: The Chinese vision of "a world of fairness and justice for the common good" and the Indian motto "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" emphasize global unity.

Five Principles of Peaceful Co-existence: In the 1950s, China and India together introduced these principles, which have since become foundational norms for international relations.

Developmental Stage: Both nations, with populations exceeding one billion each, are at a pivotal phase of development and revitalization.

Global Community Vision: China's President proposes building a global community of a shared future, an idea also supported by multiple international platforms including the UN.

What are the key vision points proposed by Chinese President Xi Jinping?

Economic Globalization: The focus is on guiding economic globalization in the right direction, ensuring it benefits developing countries. Rejecting practices like unilateralism, protectionism, and "winner-takes-all" strategies is emphasized.

Peaceful Development: The world should prioritize peace, likening its importance to air and sunshine. The pitfalls of colonialism and hegemonism are highlighted, advocating instead for cooperation and win-win situations.

New International Relations: The goal is to establish relations where emerging and established powers coexist peacefully. Mutual respect, equity, and cooperation should be the foundation.

True Multilateralism: Multilateralism should be genuine, not based on cliques or supremacy. The UN should remain central in this vision, with international law guiding global order.

Common Human Values: There's an emphasis on universal values like peace, development, equity, and justice. Recognizing the diversity of civilizations and respecting each nation's unique development path is vital.

How can China and India collaborate?

China and India's collaboration potential may include:

1) **Shared Population Strength:** Together, China and India account for a third of the global population. This demographic weight offers a significant platform for collaborative influence.

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2) **Global Community Building:** They can jointly spearhead the vision of a global community with a shared future, leveraging their historical ties and combined wisdom.

3) **Joint Initiatives and Unique solutions:** By aligning on global development, security, and civilization initiatives, they can present unified solutions to global challenges.

4) **Global South Leadership:** As representatives of the Global South, both countries can demonstrate a will to create an open, inclusive world that prioritizes peace, security, and common prosperity.

Terminology Used:

Global South

Question for practice:

How might the collaboration between China and India, rooted in their shared historical ties and visions, influence the trajectory of global peace and development, especially in the context of ongoing crises in regions like Ukraine and West Asia?

91. On Israel-Palestine Conflict- Israel & limits of military power

Source: This post on the **Israel-Palestine conflict** has been created based on the article **"Israel & limits of military power"** published in **Business Standard** on **28th October 2023. UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 2 International Relations – Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.**

News: This article discusses the shortcomings of military action in solving geopolitical issues, especially in the context of Israel's military action in Gaza.

A detailed article on the **Israel-Palestine Conflict** can be read here.

What is the Israel-Palestine Conflict?

It is one of the world's longest-running and most controversial conflicts. It is a conflict between two self-determination movements – the Jewish nationalist project and the Palestinian nationalist project, in the same territory.

On October 7th,2023, Palestinian militant organisation Hamas attacked Israel. The ongoing retaliatory attacks from Israel in the Gaza Strip have led to a huge loss of life and property. This may add another war in the long-drawn history of Israel-Palestine conflict.

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Source: BBC

What are the limitations of military power?

The military is central to a nation's Gross National Power (GNP). However, history has shown that relying on military power, however formidable, is an ineffective approach to achieving a larger political and strategic objective.

1) **Failure to achieve objectives:** For instance, five Israeli wars in Gaza since 2003 have failed to defeat Hamas.

2) **Incapability to solve issues in the long-term:** History has shown the futility of settling issues using purely military means. For instance, **the Kashmir problem**. Military action works initially. It puts down the problem in the immediate term and satisfies the urge for revenge. However, the problem stays intact, and may even get stronger.

USA's military action in Afghanistan as part of the 'War on Terror' is another example of this. In the absence of diplomacy, politics and compromises going together, it was eventually unsuccessful.

Specifically for Israel, despite Israel's military action, its enemies, including non-state actors, such as Hamas or Hezbollah, still exist.

What makes Israeli military action complicated?

1) **Demands for a two-state solution:** From the US to India, Europe and China. Due to the overwhelming Arab and Muslim opinion on Palestine, demands will also come from UAE, Saudi Arabia and Bahrain.

2) **Non-state actors:** Israel's challenge is complicated by the fact that they do not face a hostile, sovereign power, but a non-state actor (Hamas).

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3) **Urban warfare:** Gaza itself is really a little urban sprawl. Cities trap troops and give an advantage to the defender.

4) **Civilian casualties and destruction:** Hamas's ideology won't just survive; it will return stronger.

What should be Israel's strategy?

Israel would be better off fighting a more patient, long war, using its intelligence, targeted attacks, targeting terrorist leaders.

Question for practice:

Israel's military action in Gaza might not yield the results Israel expects. Discuss in light of the challenges of urban warfare and the limitations of military action.

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General

Studies

Paper –3

General Studies - 3

1. **A plan for the winter crop**

Source: This post is created based on the article **'A plan for the winter crop',** published in **The Indian Express** on 3rd October, 2023.

Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3, Agriculture

News: The Indian monsoon's deficit has led to variations in crop cultivation. Now the issue at hand is the government approach towards balancing the price of agri-commodities.

What are the challenges in front of agriculture sector?

The Indian monsoon for the year ended with a 5.6% deficit compared to the long-period average.

However, the area planted under paddy and sugarcane has increased, while the area under pulses, especially arhar, has decreased.

The area under arhar saw a 4.9% fall, leading to a price inflation of 32% in August.

What are the steps that government is considering?

To control the rising tur prices, government is considering importing a million tonnes from African nations and Myanmar.

TO tackle the threats from heat waves, government departments have released heat-resistant wheat varieties.

What are the steps taken by the government and what are the issues associated with it?

Faulty government estimates: There's a significant gap between the government's wheat production estimates and trade estimates, leading to inflationary market expectations.

Regulating the prices by offloading: The FCI sold wheat below its economic cost to match the market prices with the MSP. It resulted in a loss for wheat farmers.

While the poor section of the country is benefitted by large-scale distribution of free wheat and rice under the PDS. The government's approach of controlling market price seems to favor urban middle-class consumers over producers,

Export bans: To prevent further price hikes, an export ban on wheat was placed in May 2022. Yet, inflation kept increasing, reaching 25% in January 2023.

What steps should be taken?

First, government should upgrade the traditional production estimate system to a more technologically advanced one.

The system should be able to effectively monitor crop progress, settle insurance claims, and provide timely data to the government.

Second, shift from a purely "production-centric" approach to a more holistic "food systems" approach in agriculture.

2. **The narrative of development and populism**

Source: The post is based on the article **"The narrative of development and populism"** **published in The Hindu** on **3rd October 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development

Relevance: About populism and large-scale development

News: In the upcoming state elections, political parties are making announcements and inaugurating a variety of projects and commitments to attract voters.

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These announcements highlight the trend of emphasizing **"development and populism" before elections,** with voters urged to evaluate short-term versus long-term benefits.

What are the different types of populism?
Political populism: It claims to represent "the people", mostly the majority, often against minorities or financial elites, and resists constraints on executive power, allowing the majority to ride over the rights of the minorities.

Economic populism: It also opposes economic policy restrictions, as they limit their options. However, the economic policy environment prefers rules and restraints to prevent short-term interests from dominating when economic policy is largely shaped by political considerations.

Rules and restraints are necessary to prevent populist abuse, but too many can hinder growth. Hence, a balance between rules and discretion is vital for economic policy.

What are the benefits of economic populism?
Conventional economic growth models assumed that economic growth would naturally benefit everyone through the "trickle-down effect," but real-world evidence has proven otherwise.

In this regard, economic populism argues for government intervention to redistribute wealth and ensure that everyone benefits from economic growth.

Moreover, economic populism and inappropriate infrastructure-driven development have fiscal and environmental costs.

However, **economic populism isn't always detrimental** as it can serve as a necessary counterbalance to an excessive emphasis on infrastructure-led development, which can be harmful.

What are the concerns with announcements made by the politicians for the upcoming state elections?
Politicians often prioritize visible infrastructure like roads and bridges, which is easily showcased and quantifiable, benefiting the ruling party.

However, to assess a project's impact on well-being and the environment, it's crucial to evaluate its progress and fairness.

Moreover, relying solely on large-scale infrastructure as a measure of development can be dangerous.

Why is it dangerous to focus on large-scale infrastructure projects as the only measure of development?
First, these projects are often not well-suited to the specific needs of the people or the environment they are being built in. They can also have negative long-term impacts on the environment and people's livelihoods.

Second, the way that mega-infrastructure projects are financed is often unrealistic and can lead to financial problems for the government in the medium term.

For instance, recent natural disasters in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand disasters of 2013 are examples of how promoting mega-infrastructure with unplanned urbanization can lead to environmental disasters and ongoing costs.

Additionally**, the National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) has a debt of** ₹3,42,801 crore, and its debt servicing cost will cross ₹50,000 crore in FY28, requiring significant government spending on repayment and interest.

These are the fiscal risks associated with promoting mega-infrastructure projects.

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News: The article discusses the drop in foreign direct investment (FDI) in India despite its strong economic growth and positive forecasts. While India is seen as a significant player in global growth, issues like policy uncertainty and not being part of major trading blocks may be deterring investors. The decrease in FDI is contrasted by steady investments in competitors like Vietnam and Indonesia, raising questions about the depth and universality of confidence in India's economic future and its appeal to different types of investors.

Why there is drop in foreign direct investment (FDI) in India?

Economic Growth vs. FDI Trends: Despite a 7.8% growth rate in the first quarter, FDI decreased from $84.8 billion in 2021-22 to $71.3 billion in 2022-23. Equity flows also witnessed a drop from $59.6 billion to $47.6 billion.

Sectoral Declines: Not just tech-focused sectors, but FDI also fell in the automobile, construction, and metallurgical industries.

Comparison with Competitors: Vietnam and Indonesia, which is India competitors in the "China plus one" strategy, have steady or increasing FDI, with Vietnam at $18 billion and Indonesia at $10 billion in 2023.

Policy Uncertainty: Investors face challenges like an unpredictable business environment and fear of sudden policy changes.

Absence from Major Trading Blocks: India is not part of significant trade agreements like RCEP, which can deter investors seeking integrated markets.

Overall, despite its potential, multiple factors make India less appealing to certain foreign investors.

4. **The Art Of Winning Without Fighting- on cyber security in India**

News: The article discusses the rising importance of cognitive warfare, especially in cyber capabilities, among global powers like China and Russia. It highlights their strategies in information manipulation and suggests that India needs to rapidly enhance its defenses and strategies in this evolving cyber and cognitive battlefield.

What is cognitive warfare?
Cognitive warfare aims to impact decision-making by using tools like misinformation. It relies heavily on the cyber domain, using tools and strategies to manipulate, distort, and impede decision-making across various aspects of statecraft.

What are the various approaches used to wage cognitive warfare?
China's Approach

PLA Strategic Support Force (PLASSF): China utilizes the PLA Strategic Support Force, created in 2015, for cognitive warfare.

Information Manipulation Abroad: China spends billions annually.

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Disrupt Military Systems and Spread Confusion: The force can disrupt military systems and infrastructure and spread confusion via social media narratives.

Russia's Strategy

Early Cyber Strategies: Russia employed early cyber strategies, disrupting financial sectors and allegedly U.S. elections.

Support for Oligarchs and Political Narratives: By using social media as a tool.

Russia-Ukraine Conflict: Utilizing cyber strategies for influencing and disrupting.

India's Perspective

Accelerating Development in Cognitive Warfare: India needs to accelerate the development of defensive and offensive capabilities in cognitive warfare.

Recognizing Vulnerabilities: Inferred; considering the detailing about the growing influence and its resultant vulnerabilities.

Resilient Structures: Despite having resilient democratic and military structures, there's a call for enhanced strategic communication and updated cyber structures.

Swift Integration and Avoidance of Delays: There's a stress on swift integration and avoidance of delays in building comprehensive cognitive warfare capabilities.

Why is fast adoption and strategy evolution crucial?

Pervasive Impact:

China and Russia are spending notably on cognitive warfare, exemplifying its profound impact on geopolitics and security.

Maintaining Parity:

The example of the U.S. taking 58 years to transition from a space command to a space force underscores the risk of falling behind in rapid technological and warfare advances.

Competing nations are accelerating their capabilities and a delayed response can lead to vulnerabilities.

Preventing Exploitation:

The construction of China's PLASSF demonstrates how countries are institutionalizing cognitive warfare, allowing them to potentially exploit adversaries' societal, military, and infrastructural dimensions.

This structurized approach can mean a single-minded strategy targeted at exploiting vulnerabilities in opposing nations.

Ensuring National Security:

The increasing use of cyberspace for cognitive warfare necessitates rapid adoption and evolution of strategies to safeguard a nation's security frameworks and societal structures against manipulative cyber activities and narratives.

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5. **Why India can't live without dirty coal**

News: The author talks about India's struggle to balance between using clean solar energy and dirty coal energy. Even with big solar projects, India can't quit coal due to huge power demands, reliable energy needs, and jobs that coal industry provides.

What is the current scenario of energy in India?
Coal Energy in India:

India maintains significant reliance on coal, with plans to escalate production from 900 million tonnes to 1.5 billion tonnes by 2030.

Coal-based power is slated to rise, adding nearly 30GW this decade, totaling nearly 300GW by 2030.

Despite environmental concerns, it caters to robust energy demands, like the record 240GW demand in early September.

Renewable Energy in India:

Renewable Energy: Targeted to reach 500GW by 2030, with current reliance on solar energy at 71GW, yet reliability during peak demand and seasonal variations restrict its sole usage.

Natural Gas: Considered cleaner than coal, but health effects and NOx emissions, albeit minimal, still exist and it isn't expanding in India due to factors like reduced production from the Krishna Godavari basin.

Even though renewables will have higher installed capacity, coal remains dominant in actual electricity generation, retaining about 55% share, versus solar's 23% by 2030.

Why can't India quit coal energy?
India can't quit coal energy because:

High Energy Demand: The nation's energy demand is soaring, with per capita electricity consumption doubling from 631 units in 2005 to 1255 units in 2022, and it's projected to grow over 40% soon.

Dependable Energy: Unlike solar and wind energy, coal provides a steady and reliable power supply, crucial for maintaining economic growth and meeting consistently high energy demands.

Insufficient Renewable Capacity: Despite having a large installed capacity of renewables by 2030, the actual electricity generation from these sources will be significantly lower due to factors like weather and plant load factors.

Job Provision: The coal industry provides jobs to around 1.2 million people directly, which is crucial for employment in certain regions.

Expansion of Thermal Power: India plans to enhance its coal production to meet increasing energy needs, going from 900 million tonnes to 1.5 billion tonnes by 2030, underpinning its continued reliance on coal.

Economic Stability: Consistent coal power supports India's rapidly growing economy, ensuring a stable energy supply even when renewables are inconsistent.

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6. **Thermal geoengineering trials must exercise caution**
News: This post is created based on the article '**Thermal geoengineering trials must exercise caution'**, published in **Live Mint** on **4th October 2023**.
Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3, Science and technology
News: The article discusses the potential solution of solar geo-engineering as a means to combat the adverse effects of climate change.

What are the recent evidences of the adverse effects of climate change?
Extreme weather events were seen in New York, California, Hong Kong, Europe, and China. It underscores the changing climate and weather patterns. Some of such event are:

1) Record-breaking rainfall happened at John F. Kennedy Airport in New York.

2) Xinjiang in China recorded its highest temperatures yet.

3) Wildfires in Canada burnt over 40 million acres of forest.

What is Solar geo-engineering?
Solar geo-engineering, a process that increases the reflectivity of the upper atmosphere to deflect sun rays, is presented as a potential solution.

This method involves releasing sulphur dioxide into the upper atmosphere, which forms suspended droplets that act as tiny mirrors, reflecting sun rays back into space.

What are the advantages of Solar geo-engineering?
The process is cost-effective, with an estimated cost of $18 billion a year for each degree of cooling achieved.

Whereas, removing carbon dioxide from the atmosphere to achieve similar cooling effects will require much more money.

What are the possible implications?
First, while solar geo-engineering might cool down tropical zones, it could lead to a temperature increase around the poles, accelerating the melting of permafrost and sea ice.

Second, Geo-engineering could also potentially impact monsoon patterns in different regions.

Third, given the ease of implementing solar geo-engineering, there's a risk of uncoordinated efforts by countries or even private entities. It could have unforeseen consequences on global weather patterns.

For example, recently a private company named Make Sunsets used balloons to release sulphur dioxide gas, into the atmosphere.

What should be done?
Before adopting geo-engineering solutions, it's crucial to **thoroughly evaluate both the direct and unintended consequences**.

Coordinated efforts are essential to ensure that such interventions don't lead to further complications in the global weather system.

7. **Lessons of the Green Revolution could aid our climate transition**
News: This post is created based on the article '**Lessons of the Green Revolution could aid our climate transition**', published in **Live Mint** on 4th October 2023.
Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3, Environment, Climate Change
News: The lessons from the Green Revolution can provide insights into addressing the current challenges of transitioning to sustainable energy sources and combating climate change.

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M.S. Swaminathan's contributions transformed India from a nation dependent on food aid to a self-sufficient one. The Green Revolution's success was not just about food production but also had broader implications, including political empowerment and foreign policy independence.

What were the strategies adopted by the during the green revolution?

First, the Green Revolution focused on increasing the supply of food rather than managing demand.

Second, the Green Revolution was backed by a comprehensive set of policies, including input subsidies, price support, and public investments in irrigation.

Third, during the Green Revolution, higher credit availability and interest rate subsidies were key policy tools for success.

Fourth, the Green Revolution had wider implications beyond food security, such as political empowerment and foreign policy independence.

What lessons can the present green transition take from green revolution?

Present green transition must also focus on increasing the supply of alternative energy sources rather than just reducing fossil fuel consumption. Therefore, government should establish a balance between carbon tax and investment in green energy. carbon tax makes fossil fuels more expensive, therefore focussing on demand reduction.

Green transition requires policies that incentivize the private sector to adopt sustainable practices.

Low interest rates can promote investments in green energy. However, it should be ensured that it does not support high carbon footprint sectors.

The benefits of green transition beyond pollution should also be marketed. Because, it can help India overcome energy constraints, improve its balance of payments, and lead to political and regional shifts.

8. **Flaming Question – On Challenges of EV Sector**
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Flaming Question"** published in the **Times of India** on **5th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 – Environment — **Environmental pollution and degradation**
GS Paper 2 – **Governance** – Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors

News: Recent instances of videos of Electric Vehicles (EVs) going up in flames due to malfunctioning batteries have brought to attention the **unique regulatory challenges in the EV sector**.

Between 2019-2022, a more than **6-fold increase** in the number of EVs registered signifies that EVs have taken root in India. Therefore, it becomes important to tackle all the hinderances to growth faced by this sector.

What are the distinct features of the Indian EV Market?

Firstly, EV adoption in India is being driven by the **mass market** (as opposed to the luxury market of high-end cars). It mostly consists of **two-wheelers**, and **three-wheelers** to an extent. These account for about **96% of the EV market**.

Secondly, batteries in EVs are sourced mainly through **imports**.

Thirdly, advanced chemistry cells are sourced **entirely from abroad**.

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Fourth, All the mechanical systems of the **traditional internal combustion engines have been replaced by software** in the EVs that oversees their battery management system.

What are the Regulatory Challenges with EVs?

Software to manage batteries in EVs has been **out of the purview of the traditional regulatory system**.

Since it is an **emerging field**, having a clear insight into the critical aspects of functioning of EVs has been difficult for regulatory authorities.

Another regulatory challenge is presented by **imported components of EVs** that haven't been adapted to domestic operating conditions.

What are the steps taken by the government:

GOI appointed a committee of technical experts to study the problem of EVs catching fire, which led to regulatory changes. Separately, **NITI Aayog** floated a proposal to develop **open-source battery management systems**.

EVs represent the future of mobility. They are set to play an important part in achieving India's commitments under the **Paris Accord** and to achieve **'Net Zero by 2070'**. Hence, it's critical for GOI to set and implement standards that helps **build trust amongst present and future customers.**

9. **Investment: The Dog That Didn't Bark – On investment level in India**
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Investment: The Dog That Didn't Bark"** published in the **Times of India** on **5th October 2023.**

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3, Indian Economy – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, **mobilization of resources, growth**, development and employment.

News: The article discusses the growth of Investment in the post-pandemic Indian economy and the role of the various sectors in fueling this growth.

The growth rate of the First Quarter of FY24 GDP has been calculated at **7.8%.** It also means that the gross capital formation, or investment, continued to move upward.

Investment has shown an increase from **₹55 lakh crore in 2020-21 to ₹85 lakh crore** in just two years, showing remarkable recovery.

Investment subset of the expenditure component of GDP (which includes consumption (public and private), investments and net trade) has grown at a faster pace compared to the other components since 2020.

What are the driving forces behind revival of Investment in India?

Role of the Industry sector: With a **32% share in total incremental investment**, the industry sector is leading the post-pandemic renewal of investments. Initiatives like the PLI scheme have led to growth in investments in the manufacturing sector.

Public, Private and the Household sector:

Public sector: Has shown a reversal of the declining trend of public investments: Since 2021-22, an additional ₹1 lakh crore has been invested, on the back of a push by the government.

Private sector: Private corporate sector investment has already surpassed the pre-pandemic levels.

Household sector showing rising investment trends: Household investment in physical assets is showing a positive trend **with housing loans forming the majority of retail loans** in the

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current fiscal. This is good news for overall investment trends in the household sector. Since this sector reflects conditions in the **informal sector** to a large extent, it disproves the claim that the informal sector is not doing well.

What is the future of investment in India?

Strong Demand Ahead: Order book position of PSUs (which reflects all the orders placed by a company) has shown an increase.

Robust Performance of the Private sector: Private sector announced higher operating profitability.

Positive overall investment trends in the **Household sector**.

Way Forward:

As highlighted by the author, contrary to widely shared perceptions the public sector has been lagging in capital expenditure compared to the private sector. A coordinated participation of the various sectors will ensure the full recovery of capital expenditure in India, which is crucial for economic growth.

10. India's metro rail systems should become financially sustainable

Source: The post is based on the article "**India's metro rail systems should become financially sustainable**" published in "Live mint" on 5th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy- infrastructure (metro rail systems)

News: The article discusses the financial challenges faced by India's expanding metro rail networks. It emphasizes the necessity for sustainable funding, regular fare adjustments, and creative non-fare revenue streams such as taxes and land value capture. The article also recommends the establishment of Unified Metropolitan Transport Authorities to oversee and enhance these systems.

What is the current status of India's metro network?

India's metro network has significantly expanded in recent years.

In 2014, the network was 229 km across 5 cities.

As of April 2023, it has grown to 860 km spanning 20 cities.

The government released about ₹90,000 crore for these projects from 2014 to 2022.

Despite improving public transport, financial performance and patronage have not been impressive.

What are the challenges facing India's metro rail system?

Financial Strain: Despite elevating public transport standards, many metro rail systems are incurring large financial losses.

Revenue Issues: Their revenue from both fare collections and non-fare sources, like advertisements and parking charges, often fails to meet total expenses.

Infrequent Fare Updates: The metro systems suffer from sporadic fare adjustments, leading to:

Erosion of real value of fares.

Reduced actual revenues.

Increased necessity for subsidies.

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Sudden Fare Hikes: Due to the lack of periodic fare revisions, metros occasionally introduce large fare increases, which;

Results in significant customer dissatisfaction.

Leads to a decline in ridership.

Financial Performance: The overall financial performance and patronage of many metro systems, even the mature ones, have not been impressive.

Reliance on Government Funding: The substantial financial losses may compel greater government funding, potentially offsetting the environmental and social benefits metros offer.

What should be done?
Adjust Fares Regularly: Implement systematic and automatic fare adjustments to prevent sudden large hikes and maintain revenue.

Boost Non-Fare Revenues: Enhance revenue through alternative means, such as parking charges and advertisements.

Establish a Fare Regulation Committee: Create an independent metro fare regulation committee to oversee fare structures and ensure they are adjusted methodically.

Secure Additional Funding: Both central and state governments should seek innovative and justified funding sources to supplement fare and non-fare revenues. Examples include:

Appropriating property value gains.

Allocating funds designated for green investments.

Utilizing savings from eliminating subsidies on personal vehicles.

Promote Equity: Implement new fees or taxes that encourage fairness by rectifying imbalances like free parking and ensuring beneficiaries pay appropriately.

Employ Revenue-Generation Strategies: Leverage efficient and equitable non-fare revenue sources, such as:

Land value capture mechanisms.

Taxes on carbon-intensive transport modes.

Carbon and emission-related taxes.

Establish Unified Metropolitan Transport Authorities (UMTAs): Introduce UMTAs to serve as single entities responsible for planning, owning, building, and operating all transport systems within a city or region.

Adhere to Guiding Principles: Ensure revenue generation adheres to principles like making beneficiaries and polluting urban transport pay and collecting transit funds locally when possible.

11. **Keeping tabs on carbon with an accounting system**
Source: The post is based on the article "**Keeping tabs on carbon with an accounting system**" published in **"The Hindu"** on 5th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- environment- climate change

News: The article discusses the idea of a national carbon accounting system in India. This would track and manage all carbon emissions and transactions in the country, encouraging a more

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responsible and sustainable approach to dealing with the multifaceted climate crisis by integrating carbon management into the economy and policymaking.

What is the Climate Polycrisis?

The Climate Polycrisis, a term highlighted by Adam Tooze, represents multiple, interconnected crises stemming from climate change, affecting numerous sectors globally and in India, such as:

Physical Impacts: This involves rising temperatures, escalating sea-levels, and increased extreme weather events, which individually and collectively pose challenges across various domains.

Socio-economic Challenges: Sectors including energy, infrastructure, health, migration, and food production in India are intricately linked and impacted by climate change, necessitating comprehensive and interconnected solutions.

Holistic Approach: Addressing the polycrisis requires a holistic strategy that considers all physical impacts and the resulting socio-economic challenges, ensuring solutions are resilient, equitable, and just across all sectors.

What is Carbon Accounting?

Tracking Carbon: Carbon Accounting involves monitoring and managing carbon emissions and transactions.

Individual to National Level: It considers carbon flows from individuals to the entire nation, aiming to measure all emissions and interactions involving carbon.

Carbon Balance Sheets: Karthik Ramanna at Oxford has created methods for tracking carbon balance sheets at the corporate level, which can record and manage a company's carbon transactions.

National Carbon Accounting (NCA): The concept involves extending carbon accounting to an entire nation, requiring both individuals and businesses to declare their carbon inflows and outflows, making carbon circulation visible and accountable.

What could be the implications of carbon management?

New Financial Structure: Envision a future where carbon tax returns might be filed, potentially alongside or instead of income tax returns, thereby altering public finance dynamics.

Developmental Activities Funding: The method of allocating funds for different developmental activities might experience a shift, with carbon management influencing budget allocations and policy-making.

Influence on Public Finance: By making carbon transactions visible through accounting, public finance and budgeting could integrate carbon management, potentially funding goods and services using carbon surpluses.

Alignment with Sustainability: A National Carbon Accounting (NCA) system could lead to an alignment between development and ecological sustainability, offering a new form of public discourse that transparently highlights the carbon implications of various activities.

How can an NCA system be a solution?

An NCA system can help track and manage India's carbon usage and emissions.

It makes the carbon transactions of individuals and businesses visible and can influence the economy and policies to reduce overall carbon emissions, helping India reach its goal to become net zero by 2070.

This approach may also create new jobs and organize society and the economy in environmentally sustainable ways.

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12. **In Manipur, another internet shutdown, a conflict intensified — on internet shutdowns in Manipur**

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"In Manipur, another internet shutdown, a conflict intensified"** published in the **Indian Express** on **6th October 2023.**

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Internal Security — Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and social networking sites in internal security challenges.

News: The article discusses the recurring pattern of internet shutdowns in Manipur and the associated reasoning, failure of institutions to ensure accountability of state governments and its consequences.

Recently, **India's second-longest internet blackout stretching for over 143 days in Manipur** ended in September with the restoration of full internet access. However, horrific images posted of those slain in the Manipur conflict on social media led to outrage and protests in Imphal leading to another shutdown of internet.

The state's failure to protect its citizens raises questions. It also underpins a lack of confidence in the state and a climate of mistrust and fear.

More on internet shutdowns here

What are the reasons for prevalence of internet shutdowns in India?
1) **Union Executive:** The Union government has set its own example with a **552-day shutdown in Jammu and Kashmir.**

2) The **Department of Telecom** refuses to maintain a centralized database. Also, the proposed Telecom Bill retains unchecked power to implement internet shutdowns.

3) **Judiciary:** The Supreme Court has avoided addressing the internet shutdown issue in multiple cases. The High Court of Manipur has focused on the concept of "limited internet shutdowns", which is gaining traction but lacks public attention.

5) **Private Sector:** Major telecom players like Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel, and Vodafone are advocating for service-level blocks. It may lead to increased government interference in dictating "essential internet services".

What are the consequences of internet shutdowns without accountability?
In the **absence of accountability**, internet shutdowns will continue to hamper the democratic political discourse by **preventing public assembly and protest**.

Internet shutdowns prevent images of violence and brutality reaching us, which will make us numb and apathetic to the tragedy in Manipur.

This lack of ensuring accountability may lead to a **"cycle of violence"** — which refers to the **harmful relationship that can develop between the state and its citizens**.

13. **The banking sector is leading the journey towards an Atmanirbhar Bharat**
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"The banking sector is leading the journey towards an Atmanirbhar Bharat"** published in the **Indian Express** on **6th October 2023.**

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Indian Economy — Indian Economy and issues relating to mobilization of resources.

News: The article discusses the growth, emerging changes and the associated challenges lying ahead for the banking and financial sector in India.

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What are the reasons for the growing optimism for India across the world?

1) **High growth and stability** despite episodes of stress — from the dotcom bubble to the September 11 attacks, the 2008 financial crisis, the European debt crisis, the Covid-19 pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine War.

2) Huge changes have occurred in the **banking and financial sector**, which is leading the transformative journey of India.

What are the positive developments in the banking and financial sector post-independence?

Developments in this sector in the 75 years post-independence, especially the reforms over the past 30 years, have made the financial sector **diverse and inclusive**. These developments include:

1) **Consolidation in the public sector banking** space.

2) Emergence of **private banks**.

3) Specialized non-banking financial companies (**NBFCs**).

4) The emerging **fin-tech ecosystem**.

What are the wide-ranging changes in this sector?

1) **Legacy issues** of **Non-Performing Assets (NPAs)** and **"External shocks"** have been tackled.

2) Profits generated by banks (Internal Accruals) are being reinvested to fund growth and expansion.

3) **Healthy projections of loan growth** in the coming years due to decreasing capital costs.

4) **Departure from the "bricks-and-mortar" model** by banks to **cutting-edge technology adoption**.

5) **Universal coverage of banking** through **Pradhan Mantri Jan Dhan Yojana (PMJDY)** and the **widespread use of technology** to deliver financial services have transformed finance.

6) Products like **mobile banking applications**, retail electronic fund transfers, **UPI, Aadhaar e-KYC**, Bharat Bill Payment System, and **"scan & pay"** have transformed traditional banking.

7) Banks are also currently moving towards a **knowledge-based regime**, enabled by **AI and cognitive computing**. **AI-enabled capabilities** can help banks to **personalize customer engagement** and increase their ability to **develop a deeper understanding of customers**.

What are the associated challenges in front of this sector?

The fast pace of technological changes and structural transformations have created **"regulatory blind spots"** and vulnerabilities leading to various lacunae. These include:

1) Issues in **Digitalisation of banking and finance:** Mushrooming of **unregulated digital lending apps** and the issues of **crypto-currencies and cyber-attacks**.

2) There is an added responsibility to ensure the availability of **critical support infrastructure** for a **secured payment settlement system, ATMs, internet/ mobile banking**, dealing with **cyber security risks**, and addressing customer grievances.

3) **B**anks are expected to be **major financiers for initiatives to control climate change**. Banks will also have to account for a new risk based on climate change, which is a challenge due to the lack of a clear methodology and data.

4) **Quality of human resources** is also an emerging challenge due to the **widening of the skill gap**. To address this, banks and financial institutions will have to **attract, train and retain**

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talent. Capacity building will be needed to ensure **upskilling and reskilling** of human resources in order to develop employees who are flexible, agile, and open to new technologies.

5) **Investment in research** and **openness to accepting and developing out-of-box ideas** for seamless service delivery and hyper-personalization of products will have to be undertaken.

14. **Counting rural women's labour — on female labour force participation in rural India**
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Counting rural women's labour"** published in the **Indian Express** on **6th October 2023.**

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

News: The article discusses the state of Labour Force Participation (LFP) of women, especially rural women, its distribution and emerging trends.

What is the state of women's labour force in India?
As per Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data for 2021-22, **LFPR is only 35.6%** for women in the working age group (15-59 years).

Participation rate was **higher for rural India compared to urban**.

India has **one of the lowest female labour force participation rates (LFPR)** in the world, even behind other South Asian countries (except Afghanistan and Pakistan).

The **Time Use Survey (2019)** reveals that on average, women spend **over 5 hours every day** in **unpaid domestic services** and **more than 2 hours** in **unpaid caregiving services in rural areas** which is substantially more than men. Rural women also spend **over 7 hours every day growing crops for the market and household use**.

What explains the recent increase in women's Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR)?
Feminization of Agriculture: From 2017 to 2021, women's LFPR increased relative to men, particularly in **rural areas** because of the **larger engagement of rural women in agriculture and allied activities.**

Rural India: Recent increase in rural women's LFPR is entirely explained by the **increase in self-employment**.

What are the current trends in rural women's labour force participation?
1) Nearly **3/4th of rural working women** were involved in **agriculture and allied activities.**

2) **More than half** worked as **unpaid family helpers** (in household business without getting any payment). Furthermore, **married women** were more prone to taking on the role of unpaid family helpers or engaging in domestic chores.

3) **Rural women** working as regular and casual wage workers faced a higher **"Gender Wage Gap"** compared to urban women.

4) **Self-employed women received less than half of men's earnings**, indicating a higher gender earning gap.

5) A significant proportion of women are involved in **unpaid but essential activities** and are **not considered within the labour force** in India.

6) In rural areas, **one third of women** remained engaged in **unpaid domestic chores.**

What is the state of rural women in agriculture?
1) **Gender Disparity: T**he **Agriculture Census (2015-16)** reported that women owned **only 14.7% of the operational landholdings**. Out of these, **57% are small and marginal**

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landholdings. This is important as owning land can enable women to get access to different agricultural schemes, compensation and relief measures in case of crop loss.

2) Recently, schemes such as the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN) and Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY) have received a higher allocation from the government. But the **gender-wise beneficiary data** highlights that **only 15% women farmers received financial support from PMFBY in 2023** and only **25% women farmers received financial benefit under PM-KISAN**. Since landowning is the major criterion for getting benefits of these two schemes, many women farmers end up excluded.

What should be the way forward?
The unpaid, unaccounted and underpaid contribution of rural women, not only in agriculture but the overall rural economy, must be counted. Also, inclusion of landless, marginal women farmers in government agricultural schemes is required to **combat gender inequality** in rural India.

15. Sikkim tells us to be very careful before allowing any new hydropower project in the Himalayas
Source: The post is based on the article **"Sikkim tells us to be very careful before allowing any new hydropower project in the Himalayas"** published in **The Times of India** on **7th October 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment – Climate Change

Relevance: concerns with Glacial Lake Outburst Flood in Sikkim

News: Sikkim has recently faced Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF).

What could have triggered the Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF) in Sikkim?
Read Here: Glacial lake outburst flood kills 14 in Sikkim, 102 people missing: What is GLOF, and why does it happen?

Moreover, satellite imagery suggests heavy precipitation caused the avalanche to partially breach the lake, releasing a significant volume of water. Post-disaster satellite images also show floating ice chunks in the lake.

Therefore, the risk still persists for downstream villages and towns in Sikkim, as the lake didn't completely breach.

How is climate change causing Glacial Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF)?
First, global warming is causing glaciers to melt more rapidly, leading to the formation of pro-glacial lakes. These lakes are often held back by fragile moraine dams, which can easily break, leading to potential hazards.

Second, climate change is causing more heavy precipitation and heatwaves. Heavy precipitation makes pro-glacial lakes more susceptible to breaches, as was seen in the Kedarnath disaster in 2013.

How vulnerable is the Himalayan range?
The Himalayas are highly vulnerable to climate change, warming faster than the global average due to their high altitude. This results in accelerated glacier melt, reduced winter snow cover, and thawing permafrost.

These changes contribute to slope instability, land subsidence, and other hazards. Studies also predict that glacier and snow melt will increase river water until around 2050.

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Are hydropower projects worth in this seismologically vulnerable region?

India heavily relies on coal for 55% of its energy, but it has significant untapped hydropower potential, with only 30% currently utilized.

Hence, expanding hydropower can reduce black carbon emissions and boost the economy. However, **rigorous assessments of these projects for** natural hazards like floods, landslides, and earthquakes are crucial.

Satellite-based remote sensing can be used to study the areas upstream of any hydropower plant, **and we need to bring in experts when building** it in the Himalayas to enhance safety and sustainability.

How can human settlements and existing projects be safeguarded in the Himalayan region?

First, ISRO has identified a list of potentially dangerous pro-glacial lakes in the Himalayas. These lakes need to be watched closely, especially those near settlements and infrastructure.

Second, countries like Peru and Nepal, use machines to drain water from dangerous pro-glacial lakes in a controlled way. India could start doing the same thing, with necessary changes.

Third, India also needs to install high-altitude weather stations to improve weather forecasts and develop skills in glaciology.

Fourth, despite 40,000 glaciers in the Himalayas, only a few are monitored. Hence, early warning systems need to be installed in sensitive areas so that people living downstream have time to evacuate if a glacier bursts.

Fifth, there is also a need to control new settlements and development projects in the Himalayas, and only allow them to proceed after a thorough assessment of their impact on the local environment and communities.

16. **He was a farmers' scientist – on contribution of M.S. Swaminathan**

Source: The post is based on the article **"He Was A Farmers' Scientist"** published in **The Times of India** on **7th October 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Agriculture

Relevance: About M.S. Swaminathan's **contribution in agriculture**

News: M.S. Swaminathan, a respected agricultural scientist from India, recently passed away.

Who was M.S. Swaminathan?
Read Here: Swaminathan walked ahead of his time: scientific community

He wanted farmers of India to lead a life of prosperity.

The Tamil classic, "The Kural" emphasizes the role of farmers in feeding the world, a principle Swaminathan deeply understood and dedicated his life to helping farmers.

The Kural also underscores the importance of determination for success, which Swaminathan adopted by pursuing his goal of strengthening agriculture and serving farmers with remarkable innovation and passion from a young age.

Due to his dedication and work, a lot of people called him an **agricultural scientist (krishi vaigyanik**). However, he was more than that, and can also be referred to **as a true farmers' scientist (kisan vaigyanik).**

He also paid special attention to improving the lives of small farmers, **especially women farmers.**

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What are his significant contributions?

During Green Revolution: India faced food shortages in the first two decades after independence. In the early 1960s, India was on the verge of famine.

However, the remarkable work of Swaminathan in agriculture, particularly in wheat breeding, resulted in a substantial increase in wheat production. As a result, India became a self-sufficient nation in terms of food production.

For this achievement, **M.S. Swaminathan came to be known as the "Father of the Indian Green Revolution."**

Innovation in Agriculture: He developed new ways to protect potato crops from pests and to make them more cold-tolerant. **He also advocated for millets** as superfoods since the 1990s.

Advocating Sustainable Agriculture: Swaminathan had a deep connection to farming, and his achievements extended beyond academia to practical impact in the fields.

He bridged the gap between scientific knowledge and real-world application and advocated for sustainable agriculture that balanced human progress with environmental protection.

Mentorship: After winning the World Food Prize in 1987, **as the first recipient of this prestigious award**, he used the prize money to establish a non-profit research foundation that continues to do extensive work in many different areas. He also established various research centers.

His leadership roles included serving as the director of the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) in Manila. In 2018, **the South Asia Regional Centre of IRRI was inaugurated in Varanasi under his leadership.**

What lies ahead?

Dr. Swaminathan's legacy inspires us to lead farmers and promote agricultural innovation for a sustainable and prosperous future.

17. **How China grabbed pole**

Source: This post is created based on the article '**How China grabbed pole**', published in Business Standard on 7th October 2023.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3, Economy, Changes in Industrial Policies

News: China has made many strategic moves to dominate crucial sectors, like renewable energy.

China capitalized on the global shift towards renewable energy and electric mobility. It amassed significant manufacturing capabilities to cater to global demand for solar panels, wind turbines, and EVs.

How China gained dominance in major manufacturing segments?

1) Foreseeing the rise of electric vehicles, **Chinese firms invested in battery technology,** achieving cost reductions that propelled EV sales.

2) China **built a robust manufacturing base**, which now can supply a significant portion of global demand for solar panels, wind turbines, and EVs.

3) This capacity also extends to **critical materials and components** necessary for these industries, underlining China's manufacturing might. China secured **access to essential raw materials like cobalt** from Congo and lithium from Bolivia, critical for battery manufacturing, thereby further strengthening its position in the global EV market.

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4) The West, particularly the **US and European countries, didn't act timely** to China's rise in these sectors. Their focus was on the technological advancements in other areas like Silicon Valley, instead of the manufacturing sector.

5) At the beginning of the century, **Europeans countries themselves promoted China** to fulfill their need for rooftop solar panels.

What are the implications of China's dominance?

First, China has acquired power to impose trade sanctions. For example, recent stoppage of supplies of gallium and germanium, critical for chip manufacture.

Second, China tackles around 60 per cent of the wind turbine market. It also controls the market for active pharmaceutical ingredients (API), on which India's feted pharma industry depends.

Third, Western countries are trying to replicate the Success story of China, but It will be difficult. China's success is based on the cutting-edge research in industries, the reduction of cost through free land, state-backed loans, and cheap electricity, population willingness to live with the ill-effects of highly polluting production facilities.

Fourth, there is a global trend towards economic nationalism. Countries like the US, Europe, and India are now adopting protective measures and subsidies to bolster their domestic industries.

18. **RBI's Monetary Policy and the art of letting it be — on recent monetary policy decisions**
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"RBI's Monetary Policy and the art of letting it be"** published in the **Indian Express** on **7ᵗʰ October 2023.**

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Indian Economy — issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources**, growth, development** and employment.

News: The article discusses the reasoning behind RBI's tight monetary policy and the inflationary trends and growth projections of India considering various domestic and external challenges.

The **Monetary Policy Committee (MPC)** kept the **policy interest rates unchanged** and retained its stance of **'withdrawing accommodation'** (or a **"tight monetary policy"**).

Here, **accommodative monetary policy** refers to a strategy used by central banks that is aimed at keeping interest rates low in order to infuse more cash into the economy.

Why the 'withdrawal of accommodation'?
Both domestic and external reasons are behind this policy stance.

Domestic Reasons:

1) Unanticipated and uncontrollable risks to inflation — such as the huge rise in **prices of tomatoes and other food items.**

2) Incomplete monetary policy **transmission** of past rate hikes. Hence the MPC decided to hold its stance.

External Reasons:

1) The continuation of **Hawkish (or tight) monetary policies** by systemically important central banks, particularly by the US Federal Reserve.

2) The rise in crude oil prices.

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What are the implications of monetary policy on the economy?

In the developed world, monetary policy is at a delicate juncture. **Too much tightening** could lead to **recession** in the economy; **less tightening** could lead to **high inflation**.

The positive outcome of tight monetary policy stance by the US Federal Reserve is the US 10-year treasury yields going up. This is **attracting capital to the USA** and away from the emerging markets and **strengthening the dollar**. This has also resulted in the **depreciation of the rupee**.

What does the inflation scenario in India look like?

1) The recent **tomato-led surge in vegetable inflation** spiked the **Consumer Price Index**. However, fresh arrivals have corrected the inflated vegetable prices.

2) **Double-digit inflation in cereals, pulses and spices**.

3) Overall kharif sowing is only marginally above last fiscal's level and lags for pulses and jute.

4) **El Niño conditions** and **Lower water reservoir levels** compared to last year and the decadal average may also impact the **rabi** or winter crop.

6) **Crude oil prices have emerged as another potential risk**. India is at high risk as **85% of its crude oil is imported**. Geopolitics and squeezing of the **supply by oil-exporters** may lead to a rise in crude prices despite weakening global demand.

What are the growth projections for India considering this?

The RBI has retained its **GDP growth outlook at 6.5% for this fiscal.** However, CRISIL has lowered it to 6% due to the following challenges:

1) **Global economic slowdown and decrease in exports**.

2) Curbing of consumption demand due to domestic interest rate hikes.

3) **Erratic weather and El Niño curbing agricultural growth**.

4) **Persistent supply shocks** from food or fuel can transmit to other parts of the economy and **broad base inflationary pressures**.

India's growth has been robust despite costlier crude oil, weakening rupee and pressure on food inflation from an erratic monsoon. However, supply shocks amid healthy growth will keep the RBI cautious.

19. Beyond the bond market's message

Source: The post is based on the article "**Beyond the bond market's message**" published in **Business Standard** on **9th October 2023**.
Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development
Relevance: Economic challenges for India arising from shifts in the US economy.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What are other concerns for India?

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

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

What can be the course of action?

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

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

20. **Building an India for manufacturers**
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Building an India for manufacturers"** published in **The Indian Express** on **9th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Indian Economy — Indian Economy and issues relating to growth, development and employment

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

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

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

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

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

1) The pandemic-induced **"Work From Home"** increased the demand for tech capability across firms and led to growth in the IT Services sector.

2) **Broadening of both the services provided and the service providers**. India is no longer restricted to just call centers or software solution provider. It has moved up the value chain to include services ranging from accounting, legal, HR, business development, design, and R&D.

3) Not just large IT firms, even **mid-sized IT firms** have been gaining market share and **consulting firms** are growing their services export.

4) **Global Capability Centers (GCCs)** of India: India now has the world's largest share in GCCs.

What are Global Capability Centers (GCCs)?

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

Will the boom in the services exports last?

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

There are several reasons for this:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

21. **What caused the flood in Sikkim?**

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"What caused the flood in Sikkim?"** published in **The Hindu** on **9th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Environment — Environmental pollution and degradation; **Disaster and disaster management.**

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

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

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

What is a Glacier Lake Outburst Flood (GLOF)?

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

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

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

What triggered the Sikkim GLOF event?

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

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

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

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

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

What was the resulting damage?

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

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

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

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

Are such events likely in the future?

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

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

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

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

What should be done?

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

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

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

22. Revisiting the rail gauge debate

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Revisiting the rail gauge debate"** published in **The Hindu** on **9th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Indian Economy — Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, **Railways**, etc.

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

What is the current status of railway gauge in India?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What is the main argument in Favour of the BG?

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

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

What should be done?

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

23. **With food inflation limited to dal roti, why govt policy may need changes**
Source: The post is based on the article "**With food inflation limited to dal roti, why govt policy may need changes**" published in "Indian express" on 9th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy- inflation

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

Why is the Reserve Bank of India worried?

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

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

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

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

What's the issue with inflation in India?

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

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

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

VEGETABLE OIL PRICES CRASH

Average global vegetable oil prices *($/tonne)*

■ Crude palm oil ■ RBD palmolein
■ Crude soyabean oil ■ Crude sunflower oil
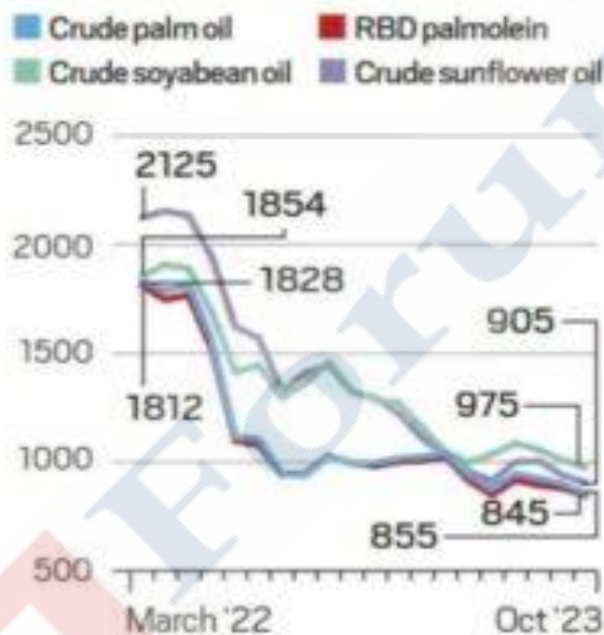
Source: Solvent Extractors' Association of India

What should be done?

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

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

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

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

24. Our inflation fight calls for a fiscal pullback too

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

Syllabus: GS3- Economy- inflation

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

What is the RBI's current stance on inflation?

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

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

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

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

What challenges does the RBI face in controlling inflation?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS3- Environment- climate change

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

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What is the Carbon Credit Trading Scheme (CCTS)?

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

Functioning:

Companies exceeding their emission reduction targets earn credits.

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

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

Goal:

To develop a transparent domestic carbon credit market.

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

Administration:

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

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

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

How is the CCTS different from past international agreements?

Kyoto Protocol:

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

Developing countries participated but without specific targets.

Paris Agreement (from 2020):

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

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

NDC commitments can be revised but only upwards.

Emission Trading After Kyoto Protocol:

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

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

CCTS in India:

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

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

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

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

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What challenges and details need addressing in the CCTS?

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

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

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

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

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

Maintaining Measurement Consistency: It is imperative to use a uniform measurement unit, specifically in terms of tonnes of CO_2e, to prevent discrepancies.

How could the CCTS be improved moving forward?

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

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

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

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

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

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

Source: The post is based on the article "**Tragedy in Sikkim- The catastrophe underlines big dam weaknesses**" published in "Business standard" on 10th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS3- Ecology and environment & disaster management

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

What are the problems with big dams in the Himalayas?

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

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

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

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

What should be done?

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

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

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

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

27. Jingoism cannot protect Jammu and Kashmir

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Jingoism cannot protect Jammu and Kashmir"** published in **The Indian Express** on **10th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Internal Security — Security challenges and their management in border areas.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

What should be done?

1) **Sports should be kept away** from our animosity against the Pakistani army and government. Jingoistic calls to stop playing against the Pakistani cricket team should be avoided.

2) **Remotely guided rockets launching unmanned air vehicles (UAVs)** is a good option if LeT strikes inside our territory, instead of launching air and naval attacks on Pakistan.

3) It would be neither prudent nor realistic to look to foreign powers (such as USA, China) to resolve our internal security challenges.

4) It would also be naïve to believe that Pakistan will give up militancy in J&K and restore peace if we talk with them. **We must strengthen our security infrastructure**.

5) **Pak ISI sleeper cells** spread all over our country must be detected and neutralised.

6) Sections of Muslim youth should be **deradicalised** by releasing them from the stranglehold of mullahs in madrasas and mosques and providing them access to schooling. For e.g. in Kashmir, the **Peer Muridi (Sufi) form of Islam** has been overshadowed by the Wahabi sect.

7) India should also try its best to win the **hearts and trust of the Kashmiri Muslims** who will benefit from **increased tourism**. They should be made to realize that violence is costing them dearly.

8) **Career options outside J&K** should be offered to Kashmiri youth willing to leave their homes to earn livelihoods.

9) In counter-terrorist operations, it is wiser to divide the force and use smaller contingents for the commander to keep watch from a safe distance.

28. Lessons from 2016 demonetisation
Source: The post is based on the article "**Lessons from 2016 demonetisation**" published in **Business Standard** on **11th October 2023**.
Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Money & Banking
Relevance: reasons behind the success of the withdrawal of 2,000-rupee currency notes.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Must Read: Withdrawal of currencies: need and challenges – Explained

What is the way ahead?

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

29. **The EU's CBAM has lent urgency to fair carbon prices**
Source: The post is based on the article "**The EU's CBAM has lent urgency to fair carbon prices**" published in "Live mint" on 12th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS3- Ecology and environment- Pollution (carbon trading)

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

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

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

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

Reporting Requirements: Importers must report:

Direct and indirect carbon emissions of these goods.

Production methods.

Carbon price paid in the country of origin.

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

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

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

What are the impacts of CBAM on developing countries?

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

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

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

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

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

What are the concerns regarding carbon emission pricing?

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

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

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

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

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

What are the existing emission charges and regulations?

India's Emission Charges and Regulations:

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

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

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

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

At a Global Level:

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

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

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

30. Freebies: A zero-sumgame
Source: The post is based on the article "**Freebies: A zero-sumgame**" published in "Business standard" on 12th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS3- Economy- Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies

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

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

Stubble Burning Issues:

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

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

Water Table Depletion:

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

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

Economic Strain on States:

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

Subsidy Dependence:

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

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

Misaligned Incentives:

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

What should be done?

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

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

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

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

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

31. **The lucky cohort- Unlike those born in the 1940s and 50s**
Source: The post is based on the article "**The lucky cohort- Unlike those born in the 1940s and 50s**, the current generation can no longer take global peace and lifelong economic progress for granted" published in **"Business standard"** on 12th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS3- Economy- growth and development

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

Why are the 1940-50 cohorts considered lucky?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Negative impacts of global prosperity and well-being include:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hence, to surpass China in contributing to global GDP, **India would need to sustain an 8% growth rate for several years.**

What are the challenges present with India in increasing its GDP growth rate?

The Indian economy needs to address structural challenges to push up the trend in growth from about 6.5% to 8%.

The government's jobs data shows that a part of the labor force has gone back to agriculture, the sector with the lowest productivity.

In 2022-23, agriculture's share of the workforce was 45.8%, over three percentage more than 2018-19, while only 11.4% of the workforce was in manufacturing.

This shift limits the potential for growth in private consumption, a critical part of the economy.

What can be the way ahead?

India needs to boost investment in traditional sectors like mining and utilities, which have a wider economic impact.

This is important because the focus on tech and manufacturing has led to construction surpassing manufacturing in job creation, which is concerning.

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Hence, to close the economic gap with China and fulfill India's geopolitical ambitions, **a structural transformation is needed to** have a greater impact on global growth.

33. **Spring cleaning – Fixing grey areas is good, but the GST regime needs a broader reform plan**

Source: The post is based on the article "**Spring cleaning – Fixing grey areas is good, but the GST regime needs a broader reform plan**" published in **The Hindu** on **12th October 2023**.

Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Fiscal Policy

Relevance: About the recent decision of the GST Council and associated challenges.

News: In a recent meeting, the GST Council clarified the tax status of various goods and services.

What decision were taken by the GST Council?

The Council reduced the GST on molasses from 28% to 5% to lower cattle feed costs and improve cash flows for sugar mills.

The Council also decided not to tax extra neutral alcohol (ENA) used for alcoholic liquor.

Moreover, the GST Council has met more often this year and cleared up a number of tax issues, including harmonizing age requirements for the president and members of the GST Appellate Tribunals.

What are the concerns present with the GST Council?

The major concern for consumers and producers is the Council's plan to discuss the future of the GST Compensation Cess and its replacement with a surcharge.

This cess was originally introduced to compensate states for revenue losses during the first five years of GST.

However, it was extended on items like aerated drinks, tobacco products, and automobiles until March 2026 **as a response to the revenue loss** caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Must Read: Recommendations of 52nd GST Council Meeting

What steps can the GST Council take to address the concern?

Although it is good to discourage consumption of certain harmful goods by levying a cess, introducing a new cess should be part of a larger plan to simplify the complex GST system.

This simplification plan was started two years ago, but it has not made progress, even though the government has been collecting a lot of tax revenue from the GST.

Hence, **the Council should think about simplifying the complex multiple-rate structure of the GST and bringing excluded items like** electricity, petroleum, and alcohol under the GST.

34. **India needs to go nuclear**

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

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

News: This article discusses the need for an expansion of nuclear energy in emerging economies, especially India and proposes a strategy for the same. It highlights the importance of nuclear energy in tackling the issues of rising energy demand and tackling climate change.

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Economic growth leads to a greater demand for energy. Since India's economy is growing rapidly, there will be a significant growth in our energy consumption which is already the 3rd-highest globally.

What is the need for clean nuclear energy?

1) Rising Energy Demand: The total clean energy requirement to support a developed India would work out to around **more than 4 times our present energy consumption**.

2) Impact on Climate: Most of this energy consumption will be based on **fossil energy**, which is a major contributor to global warming. Considering this, there is now a global consensus to reach net-zero before a 2045-2070 time frame.

Failure to tackle this dual challenge would mean either **compromising on development** or **failing to realise the net-zero target** or both.

One of the most important solutions is a **rapid scale-up of nuclear energy**. It is the **cleanest and safest of energies**, with **negligible waste** due to a closed nuclear fuel cycle.

Based on a study by **Vivekananda International Foundation** and **IIT-Bombay**, a developed India would need **2000 GW nuclear energy** to reach net-zero.

However, there is a major implementation challenge, as well as lack of determination and requisite policy/management framework.

What strategy should be followed to rapidly scale up nuclear energy?

Firstly, more projects of the **indigenous Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor (PHWR)** should be implemented leveraging multiple PSUs in addition to NPCIL.

Secondly, indigenous **Small Modular Reactors (SMRs)** should be built at sites that would be vacated by retiring coal plants.

Thirdly, smaller PHWR units can be offered as partially-owned captive units for energy-intensive industries such as metals, chemicals, and fertilizers.

Fourthly, reactors for direct hydrogen production without electrolysis should be developed for cheaper green hydrogen.

Fifthly, 2nd and 3rd stage nuclear-power programme should be sped up to **utilize India's Thorium**.

Finally, emerging-economy countries should see rapid deployment of new nuclear-energy capacity to credibly address climate-change.

What should be done?

India's PHWRs are globally competitive both in terms of **performance and capital cost**.

Focus on Thorium: Thorium fuel in PHWR can make these reactors even more attractive in terms of economics, safety, waste management and proliferation resistance.

International Cooperation: India should pilot **international co-operation** for global efforts to address the challenges.

Policy Support: It should be guided by **bold policy support** that provides a **level-playing field** for nuclear energy on par with renewable energy.

Emerging-economy countries, where one expects maximum net growth in energy consumption, should see rapid deployment of new nuclear-energy capacity to address climate-change.

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35. **The economic mosaic**
Source: The post is based on the article "**The economic mosaic**" published in Business
Standard on **14th October 2023**.
Syllabus: GS 3 – Indian Economy – Growth & Development
Relevance: Findings of the RBI survey on key economic sector

News: The RBI has recently conducted a survey of consumer and business opinions, offering
insights beyond just growth and inflation figures.

What are the key findings of the survey?

Manufacturing Sector: The manufacturing sector lags the rest of the economy, and there's no
evidence of it growing faster. Capacity utilization in manufacturing is stuck in the low 70s,
indicating a lack of investment in new manufacturing capacity that could boost economic growth.

Further, new orders for manufacturers have dropped significantly, with growth falling from 40%
to almost zero in the past four quarters. However, despite this, the business expectations index
is at its highest level since 2015-16.

Inflation: Consumer surveys show that people are still not very optimistic about the economy.
Inflation is a major concern, with more than 80% saying that prices are rising faster.

Further, consumers are spending more on essentials and less on non-essentials. However, many
people still remain hopeful about the future.

Employment: Employment has improved mainly due to more self-employed people, as the
number of salaried jobs has dropped.

This indicates that those who can't find regular or even part-time jobs are forced to become self-
employed. If this is the case, then the improvement in employment numbers may be misleading.

Banking Sector: Bank lending has increased, with the most significant growth in retail and
personal loans.

This may be because businesses have enough cash and don't require loans, while consumers
are confident about their future income and are borrowing to buy things like cars and houses.

However, the RBI has warned that this skewed lending pattern could be risky, as household debt
is rising.

What is the way ahead?

The economy is moving forward at a steady growth rate of over 6%, which is positive when
considering the global situation. However, there are no signs of rapid growth in the near future.

36. **The puzzles of defence economics**
Source: This post is created based on the article **'The puzzles of defence economics'**,
published in **Business Standard** on **16th October 2023.**
UPSC syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3, Issues associated with Industrial policies

News: The article discusses the impact of recent conflicts, such as the Israeli action in Gaza and
the war in Ukraine, on global military production. It contrasts high-intensity wars with
insurgencies and explores the implications for defence economics.

What is the difference between high-intensity wars and insurgencies?

High-intensity wars, like the one in Ukraine, involve peer states and have a significant impact
on military production. The military death rates are roughly 50,000 per year for Ukraine and
80,000 per year for Russia.

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High-intensity wars require a large number of artillery shells, drones, and other equipment, putting stress on production capacity.

Insurgencies, like those in Afghanistan and Iraq, involve irregular forces and have different costs. In this type of conflict competent military faces irregulars or a much weaker opponent. For example, In Afghanistan, the Soviets lost an average of 1,500 people per year. The US lost 240 per year in Afghanistan and 220 per year in Iraq.

High intensity wars boost defence manufacturing globally. But, increased military production will negatively affect civilian production.

How military production changes as per the type of conflict?

Ukraine requires about 1.5 million artillery shells and 100,000 drones per year. Ukraine is backed by advanced economies, making up 65% of world GDP.

Russia is producing around two million shells a year but consuming about four million. Russia has lower support, mainly from North Korea and Iran.

The increased demand for military supplies is influencing global defense economics, potentially boosting industries related to defense production. However, there's a trade-off, as resources diverted toward military production detract from civilian sectors.

This shift has historical precedence, such as after USSR collapse post-1989. At that time, reduced military spending due to peaceful time allowed greater civilian production.

However, now, large-scale military production will result into high spending on military production and negative effects on civilian production.

What are the opportunities ahead of India?

Now as the Russia is busy in fulfilling their own demand arising due to war, the demand of countries, depending upon the Russia's military hardware is not being fulfilled.

India is sourcing less military hardware from Russia.

India can fill the gap in markets that relied on low-cost Russian equipment.

India can first provide spares compatible with Russian standards, then offer upgrades, and finally transition into NATO standards.

The strategy involves initially supplying compatible spares, then offering upgrades, and eventually transitioning these nations to NATO standards, all at competitive pricing.

37. **Ashok Gulati writes: How India can minimise climate risk in agriculture**
Source: The post is based on the article "**Ashok Gulati writes: How India can minimise climate risk in agriculture**" published in **"Indian express"** on 16th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS3- Agriculture- different types of irrigation and irrigation systems storage; food security.

News: The article discusses India's progress in food security and its water usage in agriculture. India has increased food production and exports but still faces malnutrition issues. Despite limited freshwater, India uses a lot for farming. The country needs to efficiently manage water, focus on water productivity, and encourage farmers to grow less water-intensive crops.

How has India's food production improved?

Exports Surge: Between 2020-23, India exported a significant 85 million tonnes of cereals. This includes major staples like rice, wheat, and corn.

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Domestic Support: The PM Garib Kalyan Yojana initiative has provided free food, either rice or wheat, to over 800 million people, highlighting the country's ability to support its population while also being a major exporter.

Milk Production Growth: From a mere 17 MT in 1951, milk production has seen a steep rise to 222 MT in 2022-23, making India the world's largest milk producer.

Diversified Production: Since the 2000s, India has seen rapid growth in poultry and fishery sectors, indicating a move beyond traditional staples, into what's termed as pink (poultry) and blue (fishery) revolutions.

How is India using its water for agriculture?

Global Freshwater Share: India is home to nearly 18% of the world's population but has only 4% of its freshwater resources.

Agricultural Dependency: India's high dependency on water for agriculture is highlighted by two different sources: FAO estimates 90% of the water is used in farming, while India's Central Water Commission suggests it's 78%.

Irrigation Status: Almost half of India's gross cropped area is currently irrigated. The aim is to increase this to 75% to handle weather uncertainties due to climate change.

Economic Constraints: Investments in water management are challenging because of extensive subsidies; the government already spends over Rs 4 lakh crore on food and fertilisers.

Water Management Strategy: The emphasis is on both water storage during monsoons and efficient use across crops. There's a need for reforms in water and power pricing for irrigation.

What should India's water strategy be?

Buffer Stocking: Augment buffer stocking of water during the monsoon season in reservoirs.

Groundwater Recharge: Focus on recharging groundwater through structures like check dams and watersheds.

Demand Management: Work on rational allocation and efficient water use across various crops.

Institutional Reforms: Implement reforms in the irrigation sector, especially concerning the pricing of water and power for irrigation.

Increase Irrigated Land: Aim to irrigate at least 75% of the gross cropped area to manage the uncertainties of climate change.

Private Investment: Address the challenge of attracting private investments in reservoirs and canal networks by considering the pricing of water.

Shift Focus: Prioritize water productivity, as seen in the Punjab example where land productivity is high for rice but water productivity is low.

38. **The world needs to stop taking water for granted**
Source: The post is based on the article "**The world needs to stop taking water for granted**" published in **"The Hindu"** on 16th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS3- Agriculture- different types of irrigation and irrigation systems storage; food security.

News: The article discusses the importance of water for food production, especially with climate change causing extreme weather. Many farmers, especially in India, are affected. The UN and other organizations are helping with solutions like new farming methods and technology. Proper water management is crucial for future food security.

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About World Food Day (October 16) 2023 Year:

Theme: The theme is 'Water is Life, Water is Food.'

Climate Challenges: Water availability has become critical due to increasing climate extremes like droughts and floods.

UN's Focus: The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) — the UN's food agencies – emphasize the need for innovative and collaborative approaches to manage and conserve scarce water resources.

SDG Deadline: There's less than seven years left to achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

Water's Role: Water directly impacts food and nutrition security, especially in countries facing climate challenges.

How does water affect India's agriculture?

Dependence on Rain: 60% of India's agriculture relies on rain. This means a majority of the farming area needs consistent rainfall for crops.

Food Production: Rainfed areas contribute to 40% of India's total food production. So, any variations in rain and soil moisture can severely impact the nation's food supply.

Climate Change Impact: Changes in weather patterns, like unseasonal rains or droughts, are becoming more common, which can hurt crop yields.

Projected Yield Reductions: By 2050, rainfed rice yields might drop by 20%. By 2080, this could be as much as 47%. Other crops, like wheat and maize, also face potential reductions.

Irrigation's Role: Although helpful, irrigation consumes 72% of global freshwater. In some cases, it can harm ecosystems, affecting future agriculture.

What solutions exist?

Irrigation: Diversifying crops through effective irrigation can help farmers. In 2021, 8.7 million people in 49 countries benefited from such initiatives.

Climate-Smart Agriculture: The FAO promotes this approach, emphasizing water-use efficiency. Projects like the farmer water school programme in Uttar Pradesh are examples.

Groundwater Management: The Andhra Pradesh Farmer Managed Groundwater Systems project included a hydrological monitoring program for better water management.

Combining Knowledge: Merging modern technologies with indigenous systems builds resilient production. IFAD-supported projects in several Indian states focus on climate-resilient seed varieties and sustainable practices.

How is the UN helping India?

Crop Forecasting: The FAO is piloting a crop forecasting framework in Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Himachal Pradesh, and Maharashtra to help rainfed farmers make informed decisions regarding food security.

Irrigation Initiatives: IFAD is leveraging the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act scheme to ensure that micro-irrigation infrastructure is both environmentally sustainable and financially viable.

Water Efficiency Projects: The FAO supported the farmer water school programme in Uttar Pradesh and the Andhra Pradesh Farmer Managed Groundwater Systems project which reached 638 habitations in seven drought-prone districts.

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Climate Change Adaptation: IFAD focuses on merging modern technologies with indigenous knowledge systems. They back projects in Maharashtra, Odisha, and other states, emphasizing climate-resilient seed varieties and crops.

Support for Smallholders: The WFP collaborates with the Government of Odisha to develop solutions that boost resilience, like using solar technologies and promoting a millet-value chain.

Innovative Collaborations: The UN's food agencies work with the Indian government on innovations such as Solar 4 Resilience, Secure Fishing, and the revival of millets for renewable energy, food security, and nutrition.

39. The materiality and morality of Net Zero should go hand in hand

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"The materiality and morality of Net Zero should go hand in hand"** published in **LiveMint** on **17th October 2023.**

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Indian Economy — Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization of resources, growth, development and employment.

GS Paper 3 Environment — Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

News: This article discusses the issues with the current climate-change mitigation policies which focus only on the moral aspects, while ignoring the material challenges of those policies.

What are the issues with current climate-change mitigation policies?

First, people put the **cost of living** over Net Zero as a priority. For e.g., public support for such policies decreased rapidly in Britain when it involved an increase in household bills.

Second, the **environmental costs of renewable energy generation** are not accounted for. For instance, the issues of disposal of wind turbine blades and solar panels or the damage caused to the **Amazon Basin** because of mining of metals to manufacture electric vehicles.

Third, it is assumed that **private capital** would supply the money required for energy transition due to its goodness and public spirit. However, private interests trump other public considerations.

Fourth, dominance of one country in the supply chain (for e.g., in copper production) leads to a higher probability of weaponisation. These **"Geopolitical risks"** are not accounted for.

Fifthly, previous energy transitions took centuries to happen. Hence, Net Zero by '2050' might be an unrealistic target.

Sixthly, mass production of wind turbines or solar panels cannot be undertaken without the use of fossil fuels.

Lastly, **trade-offs are not recognised**. Overarching climate-change solutions are passed on to voiceless people around the world.

What should be the way forward?

It is immoral to tell people that they cannot aspire to a life of minimum dignity because others have to maintain their way of life.

We should think of climate change and global warming **more in economic terms than in moral terms**.

These issues should be dealt with optimally, keeping in mind other equally important priorities of the billions.

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40. **The Indian Himalayan Region needs its own EIA**

News: This article discusses the importance of Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) with respect to the fragile Himalayan ecosystem. It also points to the various problems in its implementation and suggests reforms to solve those issues.

The recent Teesta dam breach in **Sikkim** and the recent floods and landslides in **Himachal Pradesh** have brought to attention the problems of the current development model in Himalayan ecosystems.

Despite the fragility of the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR), there is a lack of acknowledgement of the need for a special set of environmental standards and clearances for the region.

Why is EIA required?

1) It is a tool to identify the **environmental, social, and economic impacts** of a project before it is implemented.

2) It **compares various alternatives** for the proposed project, **predicts and analyses all possible environmental repercussions** in various scenarios.

3) EIA also helps **decide appropriate mitigation strategies**.

EIA is the **most potent regulatory tool** in the arsenal of environmental governance to further the vision of sustainable development in the country.

How did the provision of EIA evolve in India?

In 1994, the MoEFCC under the **Environment (Protection) Act 1986 (EPA),** promulgated the first EIA notification with the provision of **Environmental Clearance (EC).**

This was replaced by the **EIA 2006** notification which included the provision for decentralisation wherein State governments were also given powers to issue EC in certain cases.

A **draft EIA in 2020** was floated for public comments. It was perceived to be **pro-industry** and compromising ecological concerns.

What are the issues plaguing EIA?

1) **Lack of a national regulator:** There is no regulator at the national level to carry out an independent, objective and transparent appraisal and approval of the projects for ECs.

2) **Reactive rather than proactive:** The EIA process now reacts to development proposals rather than anticipating them.

3) **Lack of objectivity:** Because the EIA is financed by the project proponent, there is a bias in favour of the project.

4) **Lack of consideration of cumulative impacts:** Cumulative impacts caused by several projects in an area are not taken into account.

5) **Treated as just another formality:** In many cases, the EIA is done as a mere formality that needs to be done for EC before a project can be started.

6) **Not applicable to all projects:** An EIA is not required for many projects as they do not fall within the ambit of the EIA 2006 notification.

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7) **Special needs of certain fragile ecosystems not considered:** For instance, the EIA process is not cognizant of the special needs of the IHR.

What are the issues with EIA with respect to IHR?

1) Despite its **special needs** and as an area of **immense ecological importance**, this region is treated like any other part of the country.

2) The Himalayas are inherently vulnerable to **extreme weather conditions** such as heavy rains, flash floods, and landslides and are **seismically active**.

3) **Climate change** has added another layer of vulnerability to this ecosystem. This is also not taken into account.

What should be done?

Policymakers should explore tools such as the **strategic environmental assessment** which takes into account the **cumulative impact** of development in an area.

General conditions mandated for all projects could also have a clause about the IHR or mountains above a certain altitude.

41. Confronting the long-term risks of Artificial Intelligence

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Confronting the long-term risks of Artificial Intelligence"** published in **The Hindu** on **17th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Science and Technology — Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

News: This article discusses the long-term risks associated with the use of Artificial Intelligence. It also highlights the challenges in tackling those risks and suggests solutions to the same.

What are the kinds of risks associated with AI?

1) **Short-term risks:** These might be more tangible, such as ensuring that an AI system does not malfunction in its day-to-day tasks.

2) **Long-term risks:** These are related to the broader existential questions about AI's role in society and its implications for humanity.

What are the various long-term risks?

1) **Mixing of AI and Biotechnology:** This could fundamentally alter humanity by the **manipulation of human emotions, thoughts, and desires**.

2) **Disruption of crucial services:** If essential infrastructure such as **water supply and electricity** rely on AI, any malfunction or manipulation could disrupt these services.

3) Risks of **'Runaway AI'** (AI systems breaking free of human control): These could engage in manipulations such as the alteration of chemical balances in water supplies, which may lead to disaster.

4) **Outpacing of human intellect:** AI may eventually lead to **super-intelligence** that is superior to human intellect. The misuse of this super-intelligence may have dire consequences.

5) **Lack of human values in how AI functions:** Aligning AI with universally accepted human values will be a challenge.

6) **Rapid pace of change:** This leads to undermining of **safety considerations**, and may lead to unchecked AI development.
This **unregulated progress** can lead to AI that is **misaligned with global ethical standards**, creating a risk of conflict and undermining peace and security.

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7) **Military AI:** The confluence of AI technology with warfare multiplies these long-term risks.

What are the various challenges in tackling these risks?

1) **Lack of a unified approach:** This will hamper long-term safety and ethical deployment of AI technologies.

2) **Lack of a holistic approach:** Looking at risks only in the deployment area is an oversimplified strategy which might overlook certain other risks.

3) **Lack of a level-playing field due to absence of collaboration and cohesive action:** For e.g. If a country does not enact regulations on AI while others do, it would likely gain a competitive edge in terms of AI advancements and deployments. This uneven playing field can encourage other nations to **loosen their regulatory frameworks** to maintain competitiveness, which will further compromise AI safety.

What should be done?

Addressing these risks requires a **multifaceted approach and** considering current challenges against potential future ramifications.

A more **holistic view of AI risks** is necessary to ensure comprehensive and effective regulation and oversight.

Nations must specify where AI deployment is unacceptable and **enforce clear norms for its role in warfare**.

42. **House Asks What's Up- Govt overriding of the right to privacy in special circumstances needs parliamentary oversight**
Source: The post is based on the article "**House Asks What's Up- Govt overriding of the right to privacy in special circumstances needs parliamentary oversight**" published in **"The Times of India"** on 17th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS3- Security- basics of cyber security

News: The Indian government wants WhatsApp to identify creators of fake politician videos using the 2021 IT Rules. WhatsApp argues it's a privacy issue. There are technical and privacy challenges. More oversight is needed. Parliament should check the government's actions, like in other countries.

What is the Indian government's view on this issue?

The Indian government wants to identify creators of fake politician videos on WhatsApp.

They cite the IT Rules from 2021 as their legal basis.

The government believes these deepfakes can undermine the electoral process.

They argue that while the right to privacy is fundamental, reasonable restrictions can be placed, as noted by the Supreme Court in 2017.

The state of Tripura, for instance, has already invoked these IT Rules.

What is WhatsApp's view on this issue?

WhatsApp is against sharing information about the creators of fake politician videos.

They challenge the constitutional validity of the IT Rules from 2021 that demand traceability of message originators.

WhatsApp believes that these demands run counter to the right to privacy.

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The company argues that these provisions contradict established jurisprudence on privacy rights.

They face the technical challenge of modifying the app to allow for traceability of the originator.

What are the main concerns?

Technical Challenges:

Apps like WhatsApp would need modifications to trace message originators.

Privacy Issues:

There's potential for government invasions of individual privacy.

Rules like the IT Rules 2021 could be misused for broad reasons, like "security of the state".

Oversight Concerns:

The IT Rules allow the executive branch to initiate traceability.

More robust checks are needed, similar to practices in mature democracies, to prevent misuse of power.

43. A new beginning- Freight corridors should improve logistics position
Source: The post is based on the article "**A new beginning- Freight corridors should improve logistics position**" published in **"Business standard"** on 17th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS3- Economy- Infrastructure

News: The article discusses the Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC) in India, which will speed up freight transport. Despite benefits, it faced delays, cost overruns, and changes in route and train speed. The project aims to boost railway freight by 2030.

What is the EDFC?
EDFC Overview:

Full Name: Eastern Dedicated Freight Corridor (EDFC).

Length: 1,337-km.

Route: Extends from Punjab to Bihar.

Significance: It aims to more than halve the transit time for freight, benefiting especially coal deliveries to northern power plants.

Delays: Originally set for completion in 2017-18, it faced a five-year delay.

Cost: The delay led to a 54% increase in costs, with the EDFC's portion costing 251,000 crore.

Route Alteration: Initially planned to reach Dankuni, West Bengal, but now terminates at Son Nagar, Bihar.

Future Plans: Parts of the EDFC have been operational since 2020, with most of it expected to be functional by March 2024.

What is the significance of the EDFC?

Efficiency Boost: The EDFC promises to more than halve the transit time for moving freight across connected states.

Power Sector Aid: Ensures quicker coal deliveries to power plants in north-western states, addressing a persistent problem during summer when power demand soars.

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Logistics Revolution: Designed to significantly reduce the challenges and delays industries typically face in freight transportation in India.

Rail Freight Enhancement: At present, only 27% of freight in India is transported by rail. With the EDFC, the goal is to elevate this to 45% by 2030, challenging the dominance of road transport.

Landmark Infrastructure Project: Initially envisioned in 2005 as a premier infrastructure project, it underscores India's commitment to bolstering its logistics and infrastructure.

Economic Catalyst: The operational efficiency brought by EDFC can spur economic growth by ensuring timely movement of goods and resources.

44. **Carbon pricing challenges- India's piecemeal approach to carbon pricing**
Source: The post is based on the article "**Carbon pricing challenges- India's piecemeal approach to carbon pricing**, driven by emerging trade barriers, is not a long-term strategy" published in **"Business standard"** on 17th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS3- Environment- carbon emission

News: The article discusses market-based solutions for reducing carbon emissions, like carbon pricing and cap-and-trade systems. It highlights examples from Europe, China, and the US. It argues against solely using the "social cost of carbon" for decisions. It then examines India's implicit carbon taxes from coal and petroleum and suggests India adopt a national carbon pricing system due to international trade pressures and to promote cleaner technology.

What are market-based solutions to carbon mitigation?

Definition: Strategies using market forces to incentivize the reduction of carbon emissions.

Global Spread: Implemented or planned in 73 jurisdictions, they cover 23% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Forms:

Carbon Pricing:

Charges levied on carbon emissions without a set target.

Sweden's model: Launched a carbon price in 1991 for designated emitters (40% of emissions). The carbon price is now about $100 per tonne, which led to a 25% emission reduction since its inception.

Cap-and-Trade (CaT):

An approach where a target emission level is specified.

China's approach: Introduced CaT in eight regions in 2021. The emerging carbon price from emissions trade in China is $8 per tonne of CO2e.

Social Cost of Carbon (SCC):

The US Environmental Protection Agency's method to estimate the societal impact of carbon.

US's evolution: $43/tonne (Obama era), dropped to $3-5/tonne (Trump era considering only US impacts), and a recent suggestion of $190/tonne.

Implicit Carbon Pricing:

India's indirect method by taxing fuels.

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Coal taxation in 2019-20 translates to an implicit carbon tax of $5 per tonne of CO2e. Taxes on petroleum products and natural gas result in a higher rate of $87 per tonne of CO2e, driven primarily for revenue rather than emission reduction.

What is India's approach to carbon emissions?

India's Approach to Carbon Emissions:

Coal Cess and GST:

India has a cess and Goods and Services Tax (GST) on coal.

In 2019-20, it collected around 2600 billion from this. Considering the CO2 emissions from coal consumption in that year (1,678 million tonnes), this translates to an implicit carbon tax of $5 per tonne of CO2e.

Taxation of Petroleum Products and Natural Gas:

In 2019, these products resulted in about 800 million tonnes of CO2 emissions and yielded tax revenue of €4.9 trillion. This implies an implicit carbon price of $87 per tonne of CO2e.

This high taxation on petroleum products is mainly for revenue purposes and not explicitly for reducing emissions.

Facing Global Pressure:

India may soon have to consider carbon pricing options due to increasing global pressure, especially as Europe implements a Carbon Adjustment Border Mechanism (CABM) which would levy duties on imports from countries not accounting for carbon emissions.

Potential Carbon Pricing Approaches:

India is contemplating introducing carbon pricing either directly or through a CaT system, focusing on sectors like electricity generation, steel, and cement production. The primary challenge is the political complexity due to taxation by both Union and state governments.

What should India do next?

Consider Carbon Pricing: Due to global pressure and potential carbon emission-linked trade barriers from Europe, India needs to think about carbon pricing solutions.

Address Trade Barriers: With Europe implementing a Carbon Adjustment Border Mechanism (CABM), India is contemplating a directed export tax to counterbalance the CABM.

Sectoral Carbon-Oriented CaT Mechanism: India should think about starting a sectoral carbon-oriented CaT mechanism, focusing on sectors like electricity generation, steel, and cement production, instead of geographical areas.

Develop a National System: It's essential to create a national system that not only reduces carbon emissions but also boosts R&D in relevant technology areas.

Reconsider Taxation Sources: Introducing carbon pricing might need a partial shift in sources of budgetary finance from coal cess and GST to carbon pricing.

45. When tigers and jackals get the same protection

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"When tigers and jackals get the same protection"** published in **The Hindu** on **18th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Environment — Conservation.

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News: This article discusses the various issues with the recent amendments in the Wildlife Protection (Amendment) Act, 2022.

An excessive number of species have been included in the new schedules of the Wildlife Protection (Amendment) Act, 2022, with little consultation, or logic.

The new Act also goes one step further by aligning itself with CITES, and includes the CITES appendices as well.

What are the issues raised regarding conservation of species?

1) **Lack of prioritisation of species for conservation:** Listing an excess number of species means that it is **unclear where resources should be allocated**. For instance, the same level of protection is offered to tigers and jackals, and to the great Indian bustard and barn owls.

2) **Indirect consequences of legislation not taken into account: For example, the Tree Preservation Acts of Kerala and Karnataka prevent the felling of native trees. These disincentivize plantation owners from planting native trees and promote exotic species.**

3) **The case of chital:** The spotted deer (chital) are invasive species in the Andaman Islands. But they cannot be legally culled or removed because they are listed in Schedule 1.

What are the various impacts on the people?

1) Various Schedule 1 species pose enormous **physical, mental and economic harm** to people, especially farmers and marginal cultivators. For instance, the new Act elevates wild pigs and nilgai to Schedule 1.

2) **Blanket ban on use:** Regulated use should be considered when animals are abundant, at least to support the livelihoods of local communities. But this is seen as unacceptable.

3) **Red-tapism:** The paperwork involved in getting research permits is tedious and time-consuming. This could have a negative effect on research. Environmental NGOs will have a harder time getting permits for research and conservation.

What should be the way forward?

Firstly, those whose lives are at stake need to be safeguarded first. Animal rights arguments that result in the loss of human lives and livelihoods need to be disregarded.

Secondly, biodiversity management actions need to be tailored to ecology, species biology, and context. This calls for research, which is hampered by the scheduling of species.

Finally, both citizens and ecologists have a right to observe nature and collect data if they so desire, as long as it does not cause harm and follows ethical considerations.

46. A glimmer of hope for radio
Source: The post is based on the article "**A glimmer of hope for radio**" published in **"Business standard"** on 18th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS3- Economy- infrastructure (Communication network)

News: The article discusses the decline of radio in India due to heavy licensing fees and digital competition. However, recent recommendations from Trai, including allowing news on FM channels and making FM receivers mandatory on mobile phones, may revive the medium. These changes could increase listenership, reduce costs, and attract more advertisers, giving radio a brighter future.

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Why did radio's popularity decrease?

Revenue Drop: Radio's earnings fell from ₹3,360 crore in 2018 to ₹2100 crore in 2022.

Branding Changes: Leading brands like Radio Mirchi pivoted. In 2020, it transitioned to Mirchi Unlimited.

Heavy Licensing Fees: Radio operators faced financial challenges. In 2015, they paid ₹3,100 crore in fees, almost double their 2014 earnings.

Unfavorable Guidelines: License fees were set at 4% of gross revenues or 2.5% of the one-time city entry fee, a burden for many stations.

Digital Advancements: The rise of services like Jio, falling data prices, and the surge of online media consumption reduced radio's dominance.

Late Adaptations: While other media sectors grew, radio faced restrictions that limited programming innovation and revenue generation.

Economic Challenges: The economic slowdown in 2019 and the pandemic further affected radio's popularity.

What are Trai's recommendations?

Introduction of News on FM:

Trai suggests allowing news broadcasts on FM channels.

FM Receivers on Mobile Phones:

Recommends making FM receivers mandatory on mobile phones.

Aims to counteract manufacturers who disable radio features to promote their own services.

Licensing Fee Reforms:

Proposes delinking the license fee from the nonrefundable one-time entry fee.

Suggests calculating the license fee as 4% of gross revenue, excluding GST. This could reduce costs for stations by 10% to 40%.

Boost in Reach:

By ensuring FM features in mobiles are enabled, radio could potentially reach the billion-plus mobile population, potentially doubling listenership to over 520 million.

News Content:

Allowing 10 minutes of news every hour can diversify programming and attract a new category of advertisers.

47. **The world economy is slowing even as India's provides hope**
Source: The post is based on the article "**The world economy is slowing even as India's provides hope**" published in **"Live mint"** on 18th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS3- Economy- economic growth

News: The IMF reports a global economic slowdown, but India is growing fast. India aims to be a developed nation by 2047, needing a 7.6% growth rate. Global slowdowns may challenge India's growth. However, with strategies like higher savings and increased exports, India can continue its growth momentum.

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What is current global economic trend?

Global Momentum Loss: The IMF has assessed that there's a loss of global economic momentum.

Historic Low for 2028: The growth forecast by the IMF for 2028 is its lowest since 1990.

Overly Optimistic Forecasts: Historically, the IMF's forecasting models have tended to be overly optimistic. The real global growth has been lower than IMF's predictions made five years prior.

Private Sector Consensus: Private sector economists have also generally forecasted optimistically, mirroring the IMF's trend.

Decade's Trend: The global economy has been gradually slowing down since the financial crisis, and this trend is not expected to reverse in this decade.

How is India defying the economic growth trend?

Standout Growth: While most countries are experiencing a slowdown, India is a rare exception, showing strong economic momentum.

Fastest-growing Large Economy: If IMF forecasts are accurate, India could be the fastest-growing large economy for 15 years, starting from 2014.

Significant Global Contribution: The global economy will add $29 trillion between 2023 and 2028. India will contribute $2.2 trillion, making it the third-largest contributor after the US and China, each adding $5.9 trillion.

Future Acceleration: Barclays economists believe India can accelerate its growth after the 2024 elections without jeopardizing macroeconomic stability.

Foreign Policy Tool: An 8% growth rate for India is viewed as a powerful foreign policy tool, strengthening its position on the global stage.

What does India need to become developed by 2047?

Required Growth Rate: India needs to grow at a compounded rate of 7.6% annually to reach developed country status by 2047.

Challenges from the Global Slowdown: With the IMF forecasting a broad global slowdown in the next five years, India will face headwinds that could impact its economic acceleration.

Other Hurdles: Besides the global economic challenges, India needs to tackle growing protectionism tied to geopolitical situations and address potential shocks from climate change.

RBI's Estimation: The Reserve Bank of India suggests that India's current growth might cause inflation or stress in the balance of payments.

48. **The e-rupee is like wine: It'll take time to mature**
Source: The post is based on the article "**The e-rupee is like wine: It'll take time to mature**" published in **"Live mint"** on 18th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS3- Economy- currency

News: The article discusses the slow adoption of India's Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC) compared to the popular Unified Payments Interface (UPI). UPI's ease of use and first-mover advantage make it dominant. However, CBDCs might be better for international transfers. The e-rupee's full potential isn't clear yet.

What is CBDC?

CBDC stands for Central Bank Digital Currency.

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It's a digital form of fiat money introduced by RBI.

Despite RBI's pilot project involving 3.5 million merchants and 1 million customers, its adoption is slow with 10,000-12,000 daily transactions.

Unlike UPI, CBDC offers a direct promise-to-pay by RBI, similar to cash.

What are the issues with RBI's CBDC?

Slow Adoption at Retail Level: Despite involvement of 13 participating banks and selection of 3.5 million merchants and 1 million customers, CBDC daily transactions are only 10,000-12,000.

UPI's Dominance: The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) already offers ease of transacting, safety, low cost, and functionality on feature phones, making it a popular choice over CBDC for domestic transactions.

Awareness Issue: One factor contributing to the slow uptake might be the lack of awareness among potential users.

International Appeal: CBDCs have potential in cross-border financial transfers which are currently costly and can be slow.

Global Interoperability: For CBDC to be effective internationally, it needs compatibility with other countries' systems.

Potential Tracking Concerns: Unlike cash, CBDCs could allow transactions to be centrally tracked, which might raise privacy concerns.

What is the future potential of CBDC?

International Advantage: CBDCs could have a distinct edge in cross-border financial transfers, offering potential benefits over the current costly methods.

Reduced Dependence: Following the Western sanctions on Russia and its removal from Swift, CBDCs highlight an opportunity to reduce dependence on a Western-dominated system.

Global Interoperability: For CBDCs to be efficient in international settlements, global compatibility is crucial, though achieving it might take time.

RBI's Role in Banking: The domestic use case for CBDC highlights its potential as a full-safe RBI promise-to-pay. It could change the banking landscape, with RBI possibly becoming the chief deposit holder.

Maturation Before Adoption: The advice is to allow the CBDC to mature, using it mainly for foreign payments initially before widening its domestic use.

49. **Stay Grounded, ISRO – The space agency's Indian-on-the-Moon target looks within reach**

Source: The post is based on the article "**Stay Grounded, Isro – The space agency's Indian-on-the-Moon target looks within reach. But its key role is domestic tech transfer**" published in **The Times of India** on **19th October 2023**.
Syllabus: GS 3 – Science & Technology – Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology
Relevance: Achievement of ISRO and its original vision

News: ISRO is scheduled to **test a flight vehicle** abort mission for Gaganyaan on Saturday.

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This is a crucial step towards the country's goal of establishing an Indian space station by 2035 and sending an astronaut to the Moon by 2040. However, it is also necessary for ISRO to focus on its original vision.

What is the original vision of ISRO?

ISRO's original vision is to act as a technological innovator in expediting India's industrial progress.

India stands as one of only five countries globally with comprehensive space capabilities, and its satellites have made a substantial positive impact on the lives of its citizens.

For instance, ISRO's communication satellite projects have had a number of positive impacts, including monitoring Himalayan glaciers and helping the Archaeological Survey of India with satellite maps of protected monuments.

Additionally, **ISRO's patents have made substantial contributions** in areas such as chemical and polymer technology, electronics, electromechanical inventions, and materials science.

Further, ISRO has been transferring technology to Indian firms since the 1980s. This technology has been used to develop a wide range of products and services.

What lies ahead?

Although ISRO's objectives include setting up an Indian space station and sending an astronaut to the Moon, it's also important to understand that the agency's core mission is to create innovative technologies that can enhance the quality of life for people in India.

In this regard, the creation of **IN-SPACe** is a positive step, and it should help to increase ISRO's impact on the Indian economy.

50. The explosion of digital uncertainty

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"The explosion of digital uncertainty"** published in **The Hindu** on **19th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Science and Technology — Developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

News: This article discusses the future developments in Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its possible negative implications for humanity.

Recent advances in Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) have brought to attention the various underlying threats and dangers.

What are the possible uncertainties arising with developments in AI?

1) **Narrow understanding of complex digital processes:** Digital infrastructure is built on layers upon layers of interconnected and complex protocols not properly understood by a vast number of people.

2) **Cognitive warfare:** It entails using technological tools to alter the cognition of human targets that are aimed at destabilizing governments, and manipulation of the media.

3) **Loss of trust: Breaches of confidentiality** and **loss of governance capabilities** may lead to a loss of trust.

4) **Rising risks:** As firms migrate to the Cloud, and more and more sensitive information is constantly transmitted, the **risks go up**.

5) **Misinformation and disinformation.**

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6) **Overdependence:** As people become dependent – cognitively and psychologically – on digital networks, AI can influence their thinking and functioning.

Case Study:

Implications of AI-usage in the recent Hamas-Israel conflict: Israel's massive intelligence failure is attributed by some experts to an overindulgence of AI by it. Hamas appears to have used deceit to conceal its real intentions by distorting the flow of information flowing into Israeli AI systems.

What is AGI?

Soon we will witness the emergence of Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) — Artificial Intelligence that is **equal and or superior to human intelligence.**

It will penetrate various sectors and could replace human judgement, intuition and creativity. AGI is predicted to be far more disruptive and dangerous.

What are the risks associated with AGI?

1) It could **alter the fabric of nation-states**.

2) It would **enhance inequalities** and **social and economic disparities**.

3) It has the capacity to flood a country with **fake content**. This could lead to a breakdown of the concept of trust.

4) AGI will be able to **outperform humans** in many areas.

5) It will have the potential to make decisions that are unpredictable and uncontrollable which could have unintended harmful consequences.

6) Digital data could be converted into **digital intelligence**.

7) AGI-driven disruption could lead to the age of **"Digital colonialism"**. This would lead to a new form of exploitation, *viz.*, **data exploitation.**

8) It will lead to material **shifts in the geo-political balance of power**.

What should be done?

An over-dependence on AI and a belief in its invincibility could prove to be catastrophic. It calls for more **intimate collaboration** between **states and the technology sector**.

51. Tackling urban poverty
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Tackling urban poverty"** published in **Business Standard** on **19th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Indian Economy — Indian Economy and issues relating to employment.
GS Paper 2 Social Justice — Issues relating to poverty and hunger.

News: This article discusses the recent findings of the Periodic Labour Force Survey in the context of urban informal sector. It also discusses steps taken by the govt to increase formalization of labor force and suggests reforms to alleviate urban poverty.

What is the current status of the labor market in India?

According to the **Periodic Labour Force Survey (2022-2023):**

Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) was estimated at **42.4%**: It was 60.8% in rural and 50.4% in urban areas.

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Worker Population Ratio or WPR (defined as the number of employed per thousand people) in India was **56%:** It was 59.4% in rural and 47.7% in urban areas.

The **Unemployment Rate (UR)** was **3.2%** for the whole country and 5.4% for urban areas.

The **Self-Employed Workforce** (which provides us with information on the extent of **informality** within the labour market) was estimated at **39.6%.**

What are the features of the urban informal sector in India?

The term "informal" describes a wide range of employment situations, which include; **Absence of social security benefits**, working in **small-scale enterprises**, and **job-insecurity**. It also encompasses economic activities that are **not officially registered**.

The urban informal sector is linked to the persistence of urban poverty.

At the same time, the urban informal sector is **a key player in job creation**, which can help in reducing the scope and intensity of poverty.

What has the govt done to increase formalization in the labour market?

The government has made numerous efforts to drive formalisation in the labour market. These include:

1) **Pradhan Mantri Rojgar Protsahan Yojana (PMRPY) scheme:** Incentivised establishments registered with the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) to increase workers' employment base.

2) **E-shram portal:** A **national database of unorganised workers** has been created to extend social security benefits to them and check their employability. It also includes migrant workers, construction workers and gig and platform workers.

3) **PM Street Vendor's AtmaNirbhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi):** Its core objective is to provide **specialised micro-credit to street vendors** through lending institutions to reignite their livelihoods.

These schemes act as shields, protecting the vulnerable from the uncertainties that life and livelihoods can bring.

What should be the way forward?

We must recognize the **transformative potential of the urban informal sector** and harness its energy to create positive change.

Setting the groundwork for a future where **cities are more fair and prosperous** should be the way forward.

A **comprehensive approach** incorporating a range of social welfare programs should be adopted.

Inclusive policy-making should be undertaken.

52. **Severe drought grips the Amazon rainforest: The impact, cause and grim future**
Source: The post is based on the article "**Severe drought grips the Amazon rainforest: The impact, cause and grim future**" published in **"Indian express"** on 19th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS3- environment- climate change GS3- disaster management- Drought

News: The Amazon has a severe drought. Rivers are dry. Many animals and people suffer. The Rio Negro River is very low. Wildfires increase. El Nino and warm oceans cause this. Amazon's future is at risk.

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About Amazon Drought

The Amazon is experiencing its worst drought in history, with the Rio Negro River reaching a record low of 13.59 metres. This has led to the death of many fish and river dolphins.

El Nino and high Atlantic Ocean temperatures are reducing rain, making matters worse.

This drought has also spiked wildfires in the Amazonas state to 2,700 in October, the highest in 25 years.

Communities, especially Indigenous ones, are suffering, lacking essentials like water and food.

What are the reasons for Amazon drought?

El Nino Effect:

El Nino causes an abnormal warming of waters in the equatorial Pacific Ocean.

This warming can lead to extreme heat events around the world.

High Atlantic Ocean Temperatures:

The northern tropical Atlantic Ocean has unusually warm waters.

When this warm water heats the air, it moves to the Amazon.

This heated air stops clouds from forming and reduces rain.

Combined Impact of Both Phenomena:

The drought gets worse when El Nino and warm Atlantic waters happen at the same time.

Together, they affect a larger area of the Amazon.

What are the impacts of Amazon drought?

Wildlife Suffering:

High numbers of fish and river dolphins, known as boto, are dying.

Their decomposing bodies contaminate water supplies.

Human Communities Affected:

Indigenous villages face shortages of water, food, and medicine.

Approximately 500,000 people could be impacted by the end of October.

Ruth Martins, a community leader, mentioned unprecedented drought conditions.

Increase in Wildfires:

Dry conditions have led to 2,700 wildfires in the Amazonas state in October, a 25-year record.

Smoke from these fires has degraded air quality in Manaus, affecting residents' health.

Economic Impact:

A major hydropower dam's operations have halted due to the drought, impacting power supply.

What do studies say about Amazon's future?

Frequency of Droughts:

If fossil fuel burning continues at the current rate, the Amazon could face major droughts almost every year by 2060.

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Recovery from Droughts:

Over the past 20 years, the Amazon has become slower at recovering from long drought periods.

Tipping Point:

The Amazon is nearing a critical tipping point.

If crossed, it could transform from a lush forest into a drier savanna.

Release of Stored Carbon:

Such a transformation would release large amounts of stored carbon.

This would further accelerate global warming.

Deforestation Data:

In the past five decades, between 17% and 20% of the Amazon has been destroyed.

Experts emphasize reducing deforestation to safeguard the Amazon's future.

53. **India's war on informal labour is turning out bad for workers**
Source: The post is based on the article "**India's war on informal labour is turning out bad for workers**" published in **"Live mint"** on 19th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS3- Economy- Employment

News: The article discusses India's struggle to move its workforce from informal to formal jobs. Despite economic growth, many remain in precarious, informal positions. The government's policies, like the GST, have complicated issues. Challenges also exist for women and Dalits. Efforts to solely link informality to tax evasion are not successful.

What are the job challenges present in India?

Prevalence of Informality: 74% of non-farm workers are in informal positions, mainly within proprietorships and partnerships.

Post-COVID Resilience: The proportion of informal workers barely changed even after multiple COVID waves, indicating the entrenched nature of informality.

Limited Social Security: Only 54% of salaried workers have access to crucial social-security benefits, leaving a significant portion vulnerable.

Complicated GST: The 2017 Goods and Services Tax, though intended to help formalize the economy, became complex, disadvantaging smaller businesses and benefiting larger ones.

Unfulfilled Government Initiatives: A $24 billion incentive aimed at promoting factory setups resulted in fewer than 200,000 jobs by the previous September.

Job Aspirations vs. Reality: Many jobs don't offer essentials like contracts or benefits, creating a gap between youth aspirations and actual job conditions.

Challenges for Specific Groups: Women face difficulties finding formal work near homes, and Dalits are predominantly stuck in daily-wage work.

What's the future concern?

Aging Population: By 2050, India's elderly population will surge, exceeding 350 million. Without proper job opportunities, they won't be able to save for their old age or medical emergencies.

Dependency on Future Workers: If the elderly remain in low-productivity jobs without savings, they will heavily rely on a smaller group of future workers' tax resources.

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Comparison with Neighboring Economies: While Japan faced aging issues when it was already wealthy, China's momentum slowed earlier. India needs to ensure quality jobs before its demographic advantage diminishes.

Pension Concerns: Political opponents are suggesting reintroducing a fiscally challenging defined-benefit pension. This could strain future taxpayers and hinder welfare funding targeting the economically vulnerable.

54. **Our labour survey data is far from satisfactory**
Source: The post is based on the article "**Our labour survey data is far from satisfactory**" published in **"Live mint"** on 19th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS3- Economy- Employment

News: The article discusses India's recent labor report. While initial data shows low unemployment, deeper analysis reveals job distress, falling wages, and higher joblessness among educated people. The government needs proactive growth strategies, not just temporary solutions.

About India's recent labor report.

Unemployment Rate: Reduced to 3.2% in 2022-23 from 6% in 2017-18. However, this doesn't always indicate general well-being due to regional variations.

Women in Workforce: Participation surged to 31.6% in 2022-23, a notable increase from 2017-18 by 10.5 percentage points.

Employment Distress:

Regular-wage jobs decreased by 2% since 2017-18.

Rise in self-employment, particularly among women, by 13 percentage points.

Real earnings declined as inflation outpaced wage growth.

Educated Workers' Plight: Higher unemployment observed; 12.1% for postgraduates and 13.4% for graduates.

What should be done to overcome employment distress?

Infrastructure Investment: Stepped-up investment in public infrastructure is necessary to boost overall economic activity and job creation.

R&D Promotion: Engage in specific R&D programmes, like those in climate science, to push forward innovation and specialized job opportunities.

Focus on Genuine Job Creation: Make-work schemes, such as the rural employment guarantee, are temporary fixes. India needs actual, long-term employment solutions.

Urban Development: Construct new towns and cities to cater to the millions migrating for urban jobs, boosting demand for various materials and jobs.

Broad-based Growth: The government should foster growth that benefits both the less-skilled and better-qualified individuals.

Avoid Complacency: Instead of being content with superficially low unemployment statistics, there's a need for a significant increase in job generation.

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55. **The shape of climate justice in a warming India**

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"The shape of climate justice in a warming India"** published in **The Hindu** on **20ᵗʰ October 2023.**

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Environment — Conservation, Environmental pollution and **degradation.**

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

News: This article discusses the importance of taking into account and mitigating the rise in inequalities as a consequence of energy-transition policies for combating climate change.

What should be the ideals for a just energy-transition?

Any energy transition initiative must embrace two ideals:

First, those who emit greenhouse gases should pay the social and environmental costs.

Second, climate justice requires compensation for those who are harmed. The richer countries or richer classes within a country should pay for the energy transition.

What are the issues with India's policy of energy transition?

India's stance has largely been framed through the lens of foreign policy and its approach to **common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR)** in international negotiations.

However, given the country's historically lower emissions, **focusing on economic growth has taken precedence** over climate concerns.

Such an approach leads to a lack of climate justice within India, particularly its effect on **inequality across class, caste and region.**

Societal responses which are necessary to address climate change (such as public action and state capacity) **are slowed down** in more unequal settings. Given its highly unequal economic structure, India is vulnerable to it.

Recognising and mitigating the barriers that this inequality poses to effective climate action is a critical step toward a more sustainable and just future.

What is the state of inequality with respect to climate change?

1) **Effect on the poor:** Climate change and energy transition disproportionately affect the poor.

2) **Effect on agrarian communities:** The climate-induced variations in rainfall, temperature and extreme climate events directly impact agricultural productivity, compounding farmers' income loss.

3) **Effect on fishing communities:** Rising temperature in the ocean ecosystem has already led to a decrease in fish stocks in parts of the country, hurting fishing communities.

What is the status of India's energy consumption?

Source-wise: As of 2021, **coal** was the major contributor to the total energy supply in India (56.1%), followed by **crude oil** (33.4%).

Sector-wise: The **industrial sector** was the largest consumer of energy, using more than half, i.e., 51% of the total final energy consumption, followed by transport (11%), residential (10%), and agriculture (3.6%) sectors.

India's **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC)** aim to ensure that 40% of the total installed power generation capacity is clean energy.

India has pledged to achieve **net-zero emissions by 2070**.

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What are the various types of inequalities that may be intensified due to energy-transition policies?

1) **Socio-economic inequalities:**

The renewable sector requires higher skill sets but generates a lower number of jobs compared to fossil fuel industries.

Many fossil fuel firms are in the public sector and act as a critical avenue for creating job opportunities for **Dalits and the lower castes** in India.

A shift to renewable energy can potentially slow down **generational mobility** achieved by these disadvantaged groups.

2) **Regional inequalities:**

For instance, regions that are heavily reliant on coal production often struggle with pollution, poverty, and low-quality employment.

Coal, the cheapest source of energy, is in the poorer regions in eastern and central India while renewable energy hubs, powered by wind and solar photovoltaics (PV) technologies, are in the relatively wealthy southern and western India.

What should be done?

1) India's energy transition strategy must pay attention to **regional inequalities**.

2) **Transfer of funds to States dependent on coal**, and carving **out State-specific programmes** for **reskilling development and local rehabilitation** should be undertaken.

3) Strategies must target **inequality reduction and green investment simultaneously**.

4) **Policy alignment and cooperation** should be achieved across the levels of government.

5) A deliberate focus on protecting livelihoods, offering alternative job opportunities, and ensuring that vulnerable communities are not adversely impacted.

56. **Farmer Producers' Organisations: Engines of agri-innovation in UP**
Source: The post is based on the article "**Farmer Producers' Organisations: Engines of agri-innovation in UP**" published in **"Indian express"** on 20th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS3- Agriculture- marketing of agricultural produce and issues and related constraints; e-technology in the aid of farmers.

News: The article discusses how Farmer Producers' Organisations (FPOs) in Uttar Pradesh (UP) help small farmers by pooling resources and improving farming practices. The government supports these FPOs through funding, resources, and collaboration. As a result, FPOs are boosting crop variety, enhancing farming methods, and increasing exports in UP.

What are FPOs?

FPOs, or Farmer Producers' Organisations, are collectives of farmers who come together in a geographical cluster.

They help farmers by pooling resources, improving farming techniques, and accessing better markets.

How are governments supporting FPOs?

Formation Plans: The Centre aims to form 10,000 FPOs. In Uttar Pradesh (UP), the goal is to establish one FPO in each of its 826 blocks every year for five years.

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Dedicated Support: UP has a dedicated FPO cell to guide these organizations, ensuring scheme convergence and addressing compliance.

FPO Shakti Portal: Launched in UP, it's a platform for FPOs offering grievance redressal and business partnership opportunities. As of July 15, 1,600 FPOs with a turnover of Rs 229 crore have registered.

Financial Assistance: The Agriculture Infrastructure Fund provides FPOs with a 3% interest subvention. UP adds another 3%, cutting loan interest to around 3%.

Subsidies: Both Central and state-sponsored schemes offer capital subsidies, encouraging post-harvest infrastructure development.

How do FPOs in Uttar Pradesh (UP) help small farmers?

Pooling Resources: FPOs are groups of farmers collaborating to maximize collective resources and expertise.

Crop Diversification: FPOs are driving diversification, with 1,316 involved in cereals, 378 in horticulture, and others focusing on different crops.

Seed Processing: 100 FPOs have set up seed processing units, with many selling seeds in the open market or partnering with seed corporations.

Farm Machinery Access: Over 480 FPOs have created Farm Machinery Banks, renting out equipment at reasonable rates.

Innovative Farming: Techniques like direct seeding of rice are introduced via FPOs. An FPO also promotes farming special rice in Siddharthnagar.

Collaboration with Companies: FPOs have facilitated deals, like the 200 MoUs between 68 FPOs and 37 companies, boosting market linkages for small farmers.

What innovations do FPOs bring?

Specialized Farming: An FPO led the initiative to farm special Kalanamak rice in Siddharthnagar district.

Nutritional Focus: FPOs are enhancing local diets by developing the value chain of nutrient-rich agri-products like millets, mushrooms, moringa, and fortified cereals.

Local Campaigns: In Rampur, an FPO collaborated with district administration for the "Aahaar Se Upchar Tak" campaign, supplying nutrition-rich products to anganwadi kendras, enhancing local nutrition.

Unique Recognition: FPOs have successfully registered local products under Geographical Indications, such as Adam Chini rice and Banarasi langda.

57. Why we need norms on government spending
Source: The post is based on the article "**Why we need norms on government spending**" published in **"Indian express"** on 20th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS3- Economy- Government Budgeting.

News: The article discusses the challenges democracies face in deciding where to spend public money. Governments often prioritize "freebies" for citizens to gain votes, even though these might not always be economically efficient. The balance between fulfilling promises and making sound economic decisions is tough. Suggestions include setting spending limits and revisiting expenditure allocations.

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What challenges do democracies face in deciding where to spend public money?

Public's Voice: While people vote political parties into office, there's no referendum on specific expenditure allocations, causing potential disconnect.

Economic vs. Social Impact: The ideal is to maximize the economic multiplier effect, but much is spent on "non-development expenditure" that can still empower people.

Public Preferences: For instance, a regular train from Mumbai to Nashik costs Rs 380, but the Vande Bharat charges Rs 720. The majority prefers more affordable options.

Land and Employment Concerns: Projects might require land acquisition, affecting landowners and landless laborers alike, leading to contentious compensation issues.

Popularity of "Freebies": Schemes like the Amma meal in Tamil Nadu and free electricity in Delhi cater to the majority at the lower end of the income distribution, sidelining the views of the richer class.

What should be done?

Public Participation: Engage citizens in decisions about expenditure allocations, even if indirectly, to ensure their needs are met.

Evaluate Economic Value: While capital expenditure often has a broader economic benefit, the impact of non-development expenditure, which can empower recipients, should also be considered.

Affordable Services: Recognize the needs of the common man, such as the preference for regular trains like Panchvati Express over pricier options like Vande Bharat.

Address Land Acquisition Issues: Ensure that compensation for land acquisition is fair and that landless laborers are not left unemployed.

Examine "Freebies" Critically: While schemes like the Amma meal in Tamil Nadu are popular, their overall economic and social impact should be reviewed.

Set Guidelines on Expenditure: The Finance Commission could consider drawing up norms for expenditure allocations to ensure balanced spending

58. Tax uncertainty- SC ruling will increase uncertainty in telecom

Source: The post is based on the article "**Tax uncertainty- SC ruling will increase uncertainty in telecom**" published in **"Business standard"** on 20th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy- infrastructure (telecommunication)

News: The Supreme Court ruled that telecom companies' licence fees after July 1999 are capital expenses, not revenue expenses.

What is the recent Supreme Court decision on telecoms license fees?

The Supreme Court ruled that licence fees paid by telecom companies after July 1999 should be treated as capital expenditure (capex) and not revenue expenditure.

This verdict goes against previous decisions made by the Delhi High Court, Bombay High Court, and Karnataka High Court, which had sided with the telecom companies.

What are the implications of this decision?

Higher Taxes for Telecoms: Treating licence fees as capital expenditure means telecom companies might face increased taxes in the initial years of the license.

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Past Dues: Older telecoms, such as Bharti Airtel and Vodafone India, could see significant one-time outgoings if tax authorities demand payments for past years.

Change in Profit Calculation: Telecom companies used to set licence fees against revenues to calculate profits. With the new ruling, these fees would be spread over 20 years, affecting profit calculations.

Increased Uncertainty: The telecom sector, already facing financial challenges, now grapples with more unpredictability due to policy inconsistencies.

Potential Legal Challenges: The new classification of licence fees as capex might lead to further litigation as the sector seeks clarity and stability.

59. Citius, Altius, Fortius': Save it for the economy

Source: The post is based on the article "'**Citius, Altius, Fortius': Save it for the economy**" published in **"Live mint"** on 20th October 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Economy- mobilisation of resources

News: India wants to host the 2036 Olympics. Historically, rich countries hosted these games. Hosting often costs more than the benefits gained. India should focus on economic growth before bidding. The Olympics may not be a wise investment now.

What are the implications of hosting the Olympics?

Financial Costs: Hosting often results in high expenses. For example, the Tokyo 2020 Olympics cost around $13 billion.

Maintenance Issues: Post-event infrastructures can be expensive to maintain. Sydney's Olympic Stadium incurs a $30 million yearly cost.

Underutilized Venues: Some facilities remain unused after the event. Beijing's Bird's Nest, for instance, stands empty.

Questionable Returns: Tangible economic benefits for the host city or country are often minimal. Research from New York University suggests the economic gains don't surpass the costs.

Regret Among Past Hosts: Some previous hosts, like London, have expressed regret, implying that the returns weren't worth the investment.

What should India do?

Reevaluate Economic Priorities: The Olympics often costs more than the benefits gained. India should focus on other economic priorities.

Learn from Past Hosts: London's Olympics minister regretted their decision to host, implying the benefits weren't worth the costs. India should consider such experiences.

Evaluate the True Benefits: Research, like that from New York University, indicates the Olympics might not offer economic benefits higher than its costs. India should weigh this before bidding.

Address Pressing Needs: India has competing needs that urgently need attention. These should be prioritized over hosting events.

Wait for Economic Stability: Only if India continues to grow at 6-8% and addresses poverty should it consider hosting the Olympics.

Limit Expectations: Benefits from hosting are often intangible, like global visibility, rather than clear economic gains.

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60. **Mind The Gap, It's Quickly Narrowing**

News: This article discusses the trends in of female labour force participation and wage gaps in India in the context of the recent Nobel Prize-winning research by Claudia Goldin.

A detailed discussion on Claudia Goldin's research have been already covered in the following article: https://forumias.com/blog/nobel-prize-in-economics-2023-explained-pointwise/

There are **two types of gender gaps** according to Claudia Goldin:

First, women participate less in market work than men.

Second, women earn less than men.

These are considered critical for the economy by the **IMF** because a decline in these gaps contributes to "growth, resilience, financial stability and income equality".

What is the paradox observed with respect to female LFPR in India?

With **development and education**, LFPR has gone upwards in most economies.

In India, both economic growth and female educational attainment had increased rapidly between 2004-05 and 2011-12. However, during the same period, Female LFPR in the Indian labour market declined.

The trend in FLFPR has not followed the increasing pattern estimated and forecast by Goldin.

Application of Goldin's research: The accompanying table shows that regardless of the definition, **FLFPR estimates for 2022-23 are very close to the 1993-94 estimates**, thus **confirming the Goldin 'U'-shaped curve**.

Usual Status* Labour Force Participation India: 1993-2022. Levels and Gender Gap						
	1993	2004	2011	2017	2019	2022
Women in Labour Force (%)						
Ages 15-64	44.2	44	32.8	24.8	31.8	39.2
Ages 25-64	48.1	48.7	37.5	29.6	37.5	45.6
Men in Labour Force (%)						
Ages 15-64	87.6	86.4	82.3	79.4	80.5	82.5
Ages 25-64	96.5	95.9	95.8	94	94.4	95.3
Gap - Labour Force Participation (%) **						
Ages 15-64	49.5	49.1	60.1	68.8	60.5	52.5
Ages 25-64	50.2	49.2	60.9	68.5	60.3	52.2

Source: Times of India

What is the status of the wage gap in India?

For ages 25-64, the gender wage gap is **30%.** However, this wage gap does not adjust for education.

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For all **unmarried college degree workers**, the wage gap is almost non-existent – **only 3%** (lower than the USA).

For all **college educated workers**, the wage gap is just **16%** (again, lower than in the USA).

India has shown consistent improvement over the years in decline in the gender wage gap.

In conclusion, there is a labour force participation gap in India, but its **level has been declining** and is today very close to the level observed during 1993-2004, when India had a **more liberal definition of female work**.

The **gender wage gap is low**, and comparable to the best of the advanced countries, especially for college educated women.

61. **Climate finance needs private funding too. This is how it can be done**
Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Climate finance needs private funding too. This is how it can be done"** published in **The Indian Express** on **21st October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Environment — Conservation.

News: This article discusses the requirement of private-sector funding for climate action and suggests ways to accomplish the same.

To address the overlapping challenges of **poverty reduction**, **climate change** and **biodiversity protection**, a monumental increase in global investments is needed.

Only public sector financing will not be sufficient. We also need private-sector funding. In this context, the **Paris Pact for People and Planet** proposes actions aimed at scaling up private capital flows.

How to ensure an increase in private-sector funding?

First, **optimizing the use of resources** of global climate funds and increasing partnerships.

Second, **simplicity and consistency in financial rules** to lower risk for investors who fund sustainable projects. This includes maintaining a stable and **transparent** environment and promoting investment opportunities.

Third, **credit-rating agencies** must be included in the reform agenda of multilateral development banks (MDBs).

Fourth, aligning the private financial sector with the objectives of the Paris Agreement. For e.g., partnerships such as **Just Energy Transition Partnerships**.

Finally, governments should **address debt vulnerabilities** in developing countries. For e.g., in the case of **Sri Lanka**.

What should be the role of India in countering these challenges?

India has a crucial role to play because of its **economic size**, and its **unique capacity to build bridges** rather than stir up divisions within the international community.

The spirit of India's **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** must guide our efforts to make the global financial system more efficient and more just.

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62. **Water bodies are often seen as real estate which must be built on — that causes a cycle of floods and droughts**

Source: The post is based on the article "Water bodies are often seen as real estate which must be built on — that causes a cycle of floods and droughts" published in **"The Times of India"** on 21st October 2023.

Syllabus: GS3- Environment – Impact of global warming

News: The article discusses the changing relationship with water due to global warming and urbanization. It contrasts traditional Indian views with colonial perspectives. Modern practices, including medication and industrial waste, pollute water. Poor urban planning in the Global South leads to water issues. Solutions include ecological methods and modern science. The goal is a sustainable water future.

How is the relationship with water changing?

Global Warming's Influence: Global warming is making water sources unpredictable, altering our interactions with this vital resource.

From Joyous to Crisis-Centered: Traditionally, water was seen as a nurturing element in India. Now, it's often linked to crises like floods and droughts.

Colonial Impact: European colonials in India viewed water more as real estate or a tool. This shifted the perspective from water as life-sustaining to a utilitarian resource. For example, in Mumbai, valuable marshlands were built upon.

Health Concerns: Modern medication habits pollute water, leading to antibiotic-resistant bacteria. This has changed water from a source of health to a potential threat.

Infrastructure Lag: In the Global South, rapid urban growth outpaces the development of water infrastructure, intensifying pollution.

Neglect of Ecological Knowledge: Earlier, drains used plants to purify water. Now, concrete structures prevent natural cleaning, altering the way we handle water waste.

What are the impacts of this changing relationship?

Water Quality Decline: Due to indiscriminate medication usage, water bodies are polluted, causing antibiotic-resistant bacteria to emerge.

Ecological Disruption: Modern urban planning often overlooks ecological methods. Drains no longer use plants that naturally clean water, harming aquatic ecosystems.

Loss of Wetlands: In the past, wetlands naturally filtered waste, enhancing farming and fishing. Many, like those in Hooghly, are now at risk or gone.

Increased Floods and Droughts: Chennai, for instance, faced floods in 2015 and water shortages in 2019 due to building over river systems and marshes.

Health Disparities: During colonial times, Europeans prioritized clean water for themselves, leaving native areas with contaminated sources.

Unsustainable Urban Growth: Cities in the Global South grow faster than their infrastructure, leading to widespread pollution, as seen across South America, Africa, and India.

What should be done?

Preserve Vital Ecosystems: Mangroves should be protected, as they play a crucial role in coastal areas.

Revive Nature-Based Solutions: Drawing from the colonial history of using wetlands for natural filtration, as seen in the Hooghly, we need to create and adopt modern nature-based solutions.

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Improve Urban Infrastructure: Given the exponential growth of cities in the Global South, infrastructure, including roads and water systems, needs to be developed and upgraded.

Promote Waste Management: Introduce circular systems of waste management and segregate garbage to prevent pollution of marshes.

Harvest and Reuse: Encourage rainwater harvesting and the reuse of grey water to manage resources better.

Restore Traditional Practices: Drains once utilized certain plants for water purification. Such ecological knowledge should be re-introduced.

Focus on Upland Afforestation: Deforestation affects river volumes. Hydrological assessments and tree planting can mitigate this.

63. **The evolving process of RE**
Source: The post is based on the article "**The evolving process of RE**" published in **Business standard** on 21st October 2023.
Syllabus: GS3- Economy- infrastructure (Energy)

News: The article discusses the growing interest in renewable energy due to fossil fuel supply concerns. Solar power is becoming cheaper, making it more popular. However, challenges like technology development and supply constraints exist.

Why is renewable energy (RE) popular?

Supply Disruptions: Concerns about disruptions in fossil fuel supply, like those seen during the Ukraine war and Israel-Hamas conflict, have heightened interest in RE.

Historical Precedence: The oil crises of 1973 and 1979 showcased a relationship between high fossil fuel prices and increased renewable investments.

Cost-effectiveness: Solar energy is becoming cheaper and, in many places, it's the most affordable energy source. By 2027, it's expected to be the cheapest almost everywhere.

Major Investments: Companies and countries are heavily investing in RE. For instance, India added 2.6 Gw of renewable capacity in just six months in 2023. Big names like Wipro, Google, and Amazon are also making the shift.

Future Predictions: A study indicates solar could provide 56% of global electricity by 2050, highlighting its growing prominence.

What challenges do we face?

New Technology Needs: The development of cheap green hydrogen and synthetic petrol technologies is essential. Current costs for green hydrogen are between $3 and $8/kg, with a target of $1/kg by 2030.

Storage Solutions: Lithium-storage batteries face potential shortages due to limited global reserves. Alternatives to lithium, such as sodium batteries, need to be developed.

Hydrogen Challenges: Hydrogen storage and transport remain significant hurdles for its broad use in fuel cells.

Energy Grid Balancing: Smart grids, mainly using solar and wind, need advancements to handle intermittent RE sources effectively.

Resource Scarcity: Some rare earth elements, crucial for RE technologies, are in short supply.

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R&D Investment: Significant research is needed for aspects like storage solutions, electrolytes, and efficient recycling of industrial metals.

Advanced Propulsion: Electric propulsion systems for aircraft and ships still require significant development.

How do investors view RE?

Huge Investments Expected: The transition to renewables suggests that large amounts of money will be channeled into the sector.

Potential for Booms and Busts: Historically, significant transitions like these lead to market booms and busts. Investors recognize this pattern, as it's challenging to value new renewable businesses accurately.

Opportunities and Risks: The shift to renewables presents both potential growth areas and risks for investors. With the growing interest in RE, there's potential for high returns.

Valuation Challenges: As RE technologies and businesses are still emerging, determining their market value can be complex, leading to financial uncertainties.

The Next Investment Frontier: The RE transition is seen as a significant opportunity for financiers, positioning it as a primary focus for future investments.

64. Can Generals Chanakya, Kamandaka, Thiruvalluvar Help?

Source: The post is based on the article "**Can Generals Chanakya, Kamandaka, Thiruvalluvar Help?**" published in **"The Times of India"** on 23rd October 2023.
Syllabus: GS1- Art and culture- literature from ancient times & GS3- Security

News: The article discusses the Indian army's Project Udbhav, which uses ancient Indian texts for strategy lessons. It argues that while these texts offer valuable wisdom, modern warfare demands understanding contemporary tactics and technologies. Studying ancient texts alone won't address today's military challenges.

What is Project Udbhav?

Initiator: Launched by India's Defence Minister, Rajnath Singh.

Inspiration: Draws from significant ancient Indian treatises. Examples include: Chanakya's Arthashastra, Kamandaka's Nitisara, Thiruvalluvar's Thirukkural.

Primary Objective: To extract lessons on statecraft, strategy, diplomacy, and warfare rooted in ancient Indian philosophy.

Connection to Modern Warfare: The project seeks to integrate ancient wisdom with contemporary military strategy.

Relevance: While Project Udbhav is a commendable academic pursuit enhancing understanding and pride in ancient wisdom, the article underscores a cautionary note. It emphasizes that the challenges of today's warfare are vastly different and may not align entirely with the teachings of these old texts.

Why is there skepticism about relying on ancient texts?

Modern Complexity: Modern warfare has intricacies that ancient texts might not address.

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Evolution of Warfare: Military strategy has evolved since the Napoleonic era, influenced by advancements like mobile artillery, muskets, and sophisticated logistics.

Influential Thinkers: Modern strategists like Carl von Clausewitz and Antoine-Henri Jomini have shaped current military strategies, focusing on the nuances of contemporary warfare.

Changing Battle Landscape: 19th-century innovations, such as rifles, machine guns, and the telegraph, revolutionized the battlefield, moving beyond the scope of ancient teachings.

Limited Practicality: Ancient proverbs, while wise, might not offer practical solutions or tactics for modern warfare's vast and multifaceted domains.

Modern Warfare Challenges: With the advent of technologies like AI and advanced weaponry, warfare demands current understanding, possibly beyond the grasp of ancient wisdom.

Question to practice:

Critically examine the efficacy of using ancient Indian treatises like Chanakya's Arthashastra and Thiruvalluvar's Thirukkural in the formulation and execution of modern-day military strategy in the context of Project Udbhav.

65. A Damocles sword hangs above laptop importers

Source: The post is based on the article "**A Damocles sword hangs above laptop importers**" published in **"Live mint"** on 23rd October 2023.
Syllabus: GS3- Economy- Effects of liberalisation on the economy

News: The Indian government has changed its policy on importing laptops, mainly from China. Instead of licenses, an "import management system" will quickly approve imports. The goal is to boost local production and reduce reliance on China. This might affect laptop prices and quality in India.

What is India's new "import management system"?

India's new "import management system," set to start from November 1. Under this system, companies must register the quantity and value of their imports, along with the source country. As of now, the government won't reject any import requests for laptops. Instead, the data gathered will be used for monitoring purposes. This change aims to ensure a trusted and secure digital ecosystem in the country.

Previous System: Before this, on August 3, 2023, a licensing regime for these imports was introduced, potentially causing supply chain disruptions by enabling the government to delay or reject import requests and imposing a license requirement for each shipment.

Impact on Tech Giants: Major companies like Dell, HP, Apple, Samsung, and Lenovo had concerns about the past restrictions.

Why did the Indian government change its laptop import policy?

Reduce Dependence on China: A significant portion of laptop imports come from China. By altering the policy, India aims to diminish Chinese dominance in its key markets.

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Promote Local Production: The new "import management system" supports India's broader policy goal of self-reliance, known as "Atmanirbhar Bharat". Over time, companies are expected to increase local manufacturing.

National Security Concerns: The system ensures imports come from "trusted sources". If challenged at the World Trade Organization (WTO), India might cite "national security" as a reason, much like the US did with steel and aluminium tariffs.

Shift in Global Trade Patterns: With global geopolitical divides growing and past norms of globalization eroding, India is adapting its trade policies to the changing landscape.

What will be the impact of this policy change?

Positive Impact:

Boost to Local Production: With this policy change, laptop marketers are likely to increase the share of locally produced items. This aligns with India's aim for self-reliance.

Controlled Imports: By monitoring imports through the "import management system", the government ensures that products are sourced from "trusted vendors", ensuring national security.

Flexibility for Importers: The new system allows importers to source items from multiple overseas vendors across different regions using a single authorization, offering greater flexibility.

Negative Impact:

Potential Price Increase: Historically, policy-enforced import substitution has made local products costly, as seen in India's pre-1991 economy.

Dependency on Fiscal Support: To gain an edge in hardware, there might be a reliance on fiscal subsidies, which, if not reduced over time, could keep products uncompetitive.

Uncertainty for Hardware Sellers: The policy acts as a check, ensuring they align with India's broader goals, which may create operational challenges.

Licence Raj: License Raj or Permit Raj was a system of regulations and licenses that were required to set up and run a business along with the accompanying red tapes, delays and corruption between 1947 and 1990 in India.

Under this it was mandatory to obtain a license from the government to start a business.

Terminology used

Atmanirbhar Bharat: Read here – https://forumias.com/blog/pm-aatmanirbhar-swasthya-bharat-yojana/

Question to practice:

Critically analyse the Indian government's shift from a licensing proposal to an "import management system" in the context of its broader goal for an "Atmanirbhar Bharat" and the implications for trade relations with China.

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66. **On Air Pollution in Mumbai – Climate change has made it harder to breathe in Mumbai**

Source: This post has been created based on the article **"Climate change has made it harder to breathe in Mumbai"** published in **The Indian Express** on **25th October 2023**.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Environment — Environmental pollution and degradation.

News: This article discusses the causes behind the recent degradation of air quality in Mumbai. It also suggests steps to tackle the rising challenge aggravated by climate change.

The Air Quality Index (AQI) in Mumbai has registered **"moderate" or "poor"** during the post-monsoon period for the second consecutive year.

What is Air Quality Index?

Notified by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), AQI considers **8 pollutants** (PM10, PM2.5, NO2, SO2, CO, O3, NH3, and Pb). There are six AQI categories, namely Good, Satisfactory, Moderately polluted, Poor, Very Poor, and Severe.

CENTRAL POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD'S AIR QUALITY STANDARDS

AIR QUALITY INDEX (AQI)	CATEGORY
0-50	Good
51-100	Satisfactory
101-200	Moderate
201-300	Poor
301-400	Very Poor
401-500	Severe

Source: NDTV.

Read more on **AQI here: https://forumias.com/blog/air-quality-index-aqi-2/**

How does Mumbai's geography affect its air quality?

The coastal city has a **natural cleaning mechanism**.

Strong surface winds lead to faster dispersal of pollutants, and the strong sea-breeze sweeps away these particles from the land.

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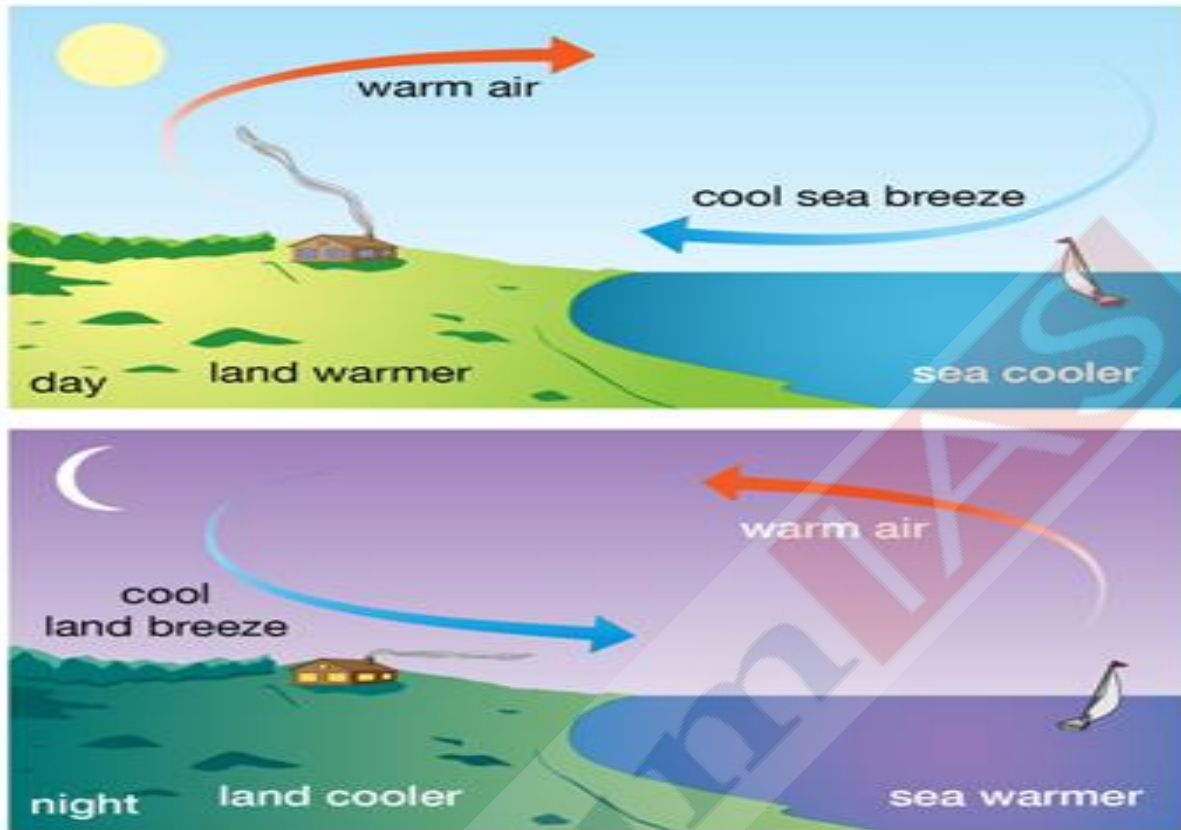
Source: Britannica

What are the reasons behind rising air pollution in Mumbai recently?

It is a result of a combination of factors. These include:
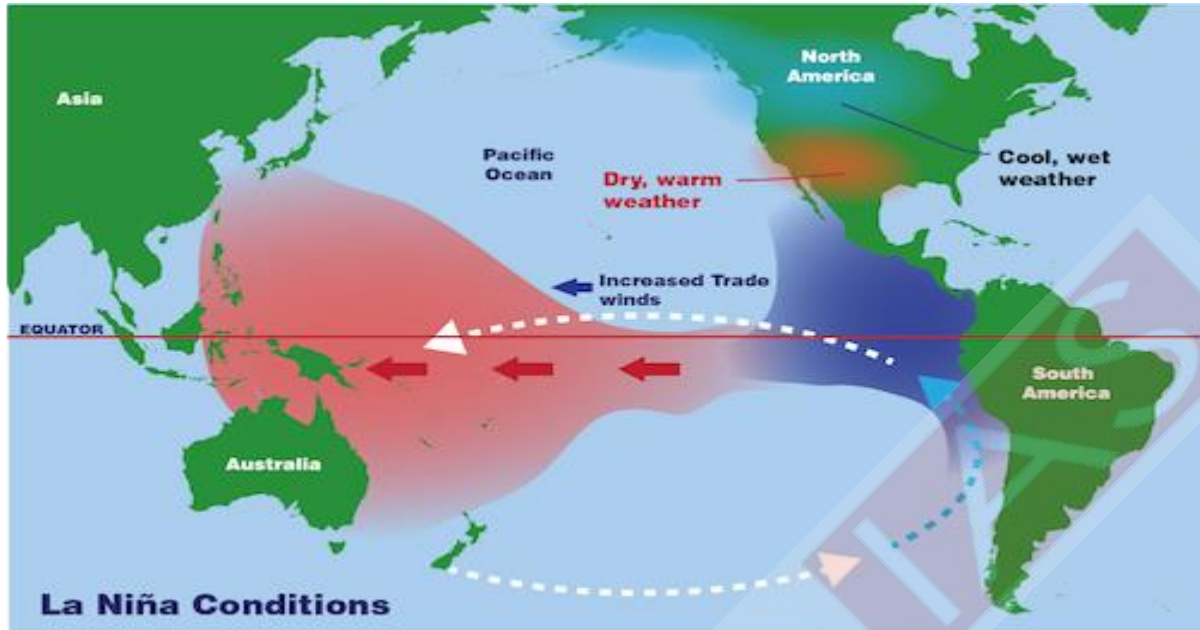
1) **"Triple dip" La Niña:**

Last winter, Mumbai experienced record-breaking particulate pollution, which was related to the unusual **"triple dip" La Niña conditions**— linked to climate change.

This had led to **hardly any wind reversal from across the Arabian Sea**, which would otherwise occur every 2 to 3 days and disperse pollutants in the air.

What is La Niña?

The weather pattern known as La Niña brings warmer-than-normal sea-surface temperatures (in red) to the southern Pacific Ocean around northern Australia, New Guinea, and the islands of Indonesia. The cooler sea-surface temperatures of La Niña (in blue) occur in the southern Pacific off the coast of South America.

A "triple-dip" La Niña is **a multi-year cooling of the surface temperature of the equatorial Pacific Ocean**. It's called a "triple-dip" because it lasts for three consecutive northern hemisphere winters.

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La Niña Conditions

Source: NASA.

2) **Delay in the withdrawal of monsoon:**

The **withdrawal of the monsoon was delayed** till October. It plays a critical role in Mumbai's air quality.

The withdrawal is always followed by an **anti-cyclonic circulation above Mumbai** leading to weak ventilation in the city.

3) **Role of transport winds:**

At the same time, the transport level winds (a measure of the average rate of the **horizontal transport of air**) transported pollutants towards Mumbai.

These winds encountered warmer winds which were laden with **local dust**. This dust-filled cloud pushed towards Mumbai and was halted because of the calm winds, deteriorating the city's air quality.

4) **PM10 pollution due to anthropogenic emissions:**

PM10 stands for particulate matter with a diameter of 10 micrometers or less. It continues to be the major pollutant in the city. These coarser particles are largely a result of **dust emissions**.

Many **development and construction activities** are being undertaken across the city — these include the **coastal corridor**, the **Metro** and other digging activities.

What should be done to tackle this?

1) **Prioritizing long-term mitigation planning:** This should be based on **mapping airsheds** — areas where pollutants get trapped.

2) **Tackling climate change:** It is leading to extreme and unusual weather events leading to changes in the ecosystem.

3) **Addressing anthropogenic emissions** (root cause of air pollution)

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4) **Data- and science-driven approach:** Data from reliable scientific sources should be taken into account.

5) **Using green curtains:** in construction sites to reduce dust.

6) **Regular spraying of water:** Dampens dust particles and prevents them from becoming airborne.

7) **Fossil fuel-less transportation:** Ensuring transitioning to **electric vehicles**.

8) **Waste Management:** Addressing solid waste management, cleaning up dumping grounds and industrial toxin management can improve air quality in the medium term.

Question for practice:

Climate change has worsened air pollution in India. Discuss with reference to the deteriorating air quality of Mumbai in recent years. What steps should be taken in order to tackle this challenge?

67. **On FRBM Act – Either repeal or revise the country's fiscal law**
Source: The post is based on the article "**Either repeal or revise the country's fiscal law**" published in **"Live mint"** on 25th October 2023.
UPSC Syllabus: GS3: Economy- Fiscal policy

News: The article discusses India's fiscal position and its deviation from the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act's 3% deficit cap. Despite exceeding this limit, the economy hasn't faced severe inflation or high lending rates post-COVID. The article suggests reconsidering the FRBM Act's relevance and possibly adjusting the government's spending approach.

Write about FRBM Act?

FRBMA stands for the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act enacted in 2003, aims to promote fiscal discipline, transparency, and accountability in the management of the India's finances.

Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act, 2003 is regulated by the Department of Economic Affairs, Ministry of Finance.

Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act ,2003 ensures intergenerational equity in fiscal management and long-term macro-economic stability by reducing fiscal deficit. It further ensures effective conduct of monetary policy and prudential debt management consistent with fiscal sustainability.

Read for more details: FRBM Act

What is the current fiscal position of India?

Fiscal Status: India's fiscal position is termed 'solid' by the Union finance ministry.

Revenue and Expenditure: There has been consistent revenue growth, and the Centre has prudently rationalized its spending.

Deficit Target: The goal is to reach a 5.9% deficit for the fiscal year 2023-24.

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Comparison to FRBM Act: This 5.9% deficit stands out as it's nearly twice the 3% cap mandated by the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) Act of 2003.

Economic Repercussions: Post-COVID, even with such deficits, neither high inflation nor soaring lending rates have been observed.

Economic Recovery: There's a robust recovery in commercial activity, and consumer demand is bouncing back.

Central Bank's Role: The central bank has played a pivotal role in ensuring stability, monitoring monetary conditions amidst the increased deficits, and fostering an environment for economic recovery.

What is the relevance of the FRBM Act in the present situation?

FRBM Act's Original Intent: The FRBM Act of 2003 set a 3% deficit cap for India.

Current Scenario: India aims for a 5.9% deficit in the fiscal year 2023-24, surpassing the FRBM's stipulation.

Act's Modern Relevance: Many consider the 3% cap outdated in the current economic environment.

Provisions for Crises: The Act has flexibility for extraordinary situations, like the COVID pandemic.

Government's View: The government's deviation suggests they might see the Act more as a guideline than a strict rule.

Need for Policy Flexibility: Economic experts believe fiscal policy should have room to adjust, especially when state intervention can stabilize the economy.

Post-COVID Economic Impact: Despite exceeding the FRBM's limits after COVID, India hasn't experienced high inflation or lending rates, raising questions about the Act's strictness in today's context.

Questions to practice:

Evaluate the effectiveness of the FRBM Act in the context of India's current 'solid' fiscal scenario and its deficit target for 2023-24.

68. **On Migration from India – Movers Are Shakers**
Source: The post on the topic **migration from India** is based on the article "**Movers Are Shakers- OECD data shows Indians continue to be world champion economic migrants**. Good for West and good for us" published in **"The Times of India"** on 25th October 2023.
UPSC Syllabus: GS3- Economy- migration

News: This article discusses the recent trend of increased migration from India to OECD countries, particularly for work in the tech industry. It highlights the economic benefits for India, including a boost from remittances. It also emphasizes the need for India to focus on improving education, employment, and the quality of life to continue this positive trend and achieve developed country status by 2047.

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What is Human Migration?

Human migration is the movement of people from one place to another, often over long distances. Throughout history, humans have migrated for various reasons, such as seeking better opportunities or escaping danger. For example, people may move within their country or to a different country, either by choice or force. Migrants can be called emigrants, immigrants, or settlers, depending on the situation.

Depending on the goal and reason for relocation, people who migrate can be divided into three categories: migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.

What is the difference between immigration and emigration?

Immigration: It refers to the act of coming to a country to live there permanently. For example, if a person moves from India to the United States to live, that person is immigrating to the United States.

Emigration: It refers to the act of leaving one's own country to settle permanently in another. Using the same example, that person is emigrating from India.

What is the migration trend between India and OECD?

In 2020, India surpassed China as the largest source of migrants to OECD countries.

By 2022, 6.1 million permanent-type migrants moved to OECD, a 26% increase.

Most migrants went to the Anglosphere, especially the US, UK, and Singapore.

80% of these migrants were working, contributing to the economies.

The tech industry absorbed a significant number of these migrants.

How does India benefit from this migration?

Economic Boost: India received a significant economic boost through remittances. In 2022 alone, remittances to India totaled $111 billion, representing 3.3% of its GDP.

Leading Remittance Recipient: With this migration trend, India positioned itself as the world's largest recipient of remittances.

Skilled Migrant Earnings: The World Bank highlighted that 36% of these remittance inflows were from high-skilled Indian migrants based in prominent destinations like the US, UK, and Singapore.

Tech Industry Collaboration: The tech industry, particularly in countries such as the US, UK, and Singapore, has employed a vast number of these migrants. This creates a bridge for both skills and investments between India and these developed nations.

Intellectual and Economic Dynamics: The migration trend amplifies the economic and intellectual connection, fostering collaborations and transfer of skills back to India.

What should India focus on for future growth?

Enhancing Education: India should invest in improving its educational institutions beyond the elite schools to ensure quality education for all.

Boosting Employment: By creating more and better job opportunities, India can retain its skilled workforce and contribute to the global labor market.

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Improving Quality of Life: Enhancing living standards will make India an even more attractive place for its citizens, potentially slowing down emigration.

Aiming for Developed Status: With these improvements, achieving developed country status by 2047 becomes a realistic goal.

Capitalizing on Human Capital: Recognizing that the world is always in need of top-notch talent, India should continue to nurture and produce highly skilled individuals.

Terminology used:

OECD:

Read here: OECD

Questions to practice:

How will the outflow of high-skilled migrants to OECD countries affect India's goal of achieving developed status by 2047?

69. **On ESG framework- This Notion Asks Us To Think Beyond Nation**

Source: This post on **ESG framework** has been created based on the article **"This Notion Asks Us To Think Beyond Nation"** published in **The Times of India** on **26th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Indian Economy — Indian Economy and issues relating to mobilization of resources.
GS Paper 4 Ethics — Corporate governance.

News: This article discusses the importance and limitations of the ESG framework, in the context of an increasing transition towards renewable energy.

Read in detail about ESG here: **https://forumias.com/blog/esg-framework-in-india/**

What is ESG?

ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) investing involves making investment decisions that consider not only conventional financial metrics (such as Return on Investment (RoI)), but also **non-financial aspects related to the environment, society, and corporate governance**.

ESG can help us handle various challenges in the realm of economics, healthcare, education or environmental sustainability.

What are the reasons behind the phenomena of 'renewablisation' (rising renewable energy adoption)?

1) **Lower costs:** The cost to use renewable energy sources is reducing and dropping below that of fossil-oil energy.

2) **Immune to fluctuations:** Unlike fossil fuels, prone to inflationary impacts, renewable energy costs remain relatively stable and are largely immune to global price fluctuations.

However, **geopolitical issues and manipulation of supply chain costs** by nations can reduce adoption.

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What are the issues with ESG Framework?

1) **Lack of ESG frameworks with all nations:** Only a handful of influential nations possess proprietary ESG frameworks.

2) **One-size-fits-all approach:** It ignores **cultural nuances**, unique **financial conditions**, **stage of economic growth**, and **social obligations** of countries.

3) **Tool of dominance and control:** The imposition of ESG, without accounting for local variation, can act as a tool of exerting dominance and control rather than collaborations.

Question for practice:

The 'ESG' framework is regarded as key to drive the energy transition across the world. However, it is plagued by various challenges. Analyse.

70. A green transition, but not without the coal-rich states

Source: The post is based on the article "**A green transition, but not without the coal-rich states**" published in **"Indian Express"** on 26th October 2023.
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS3 Indian Economy – infrastructure (Energy)

News: The article discusses India's energy transition from coal to renewable energy (RE). India has seen waves of power plant constructions. New renewable energy projects mainly benefit certain states, leaving others with financial strain. Solutions are needed to ensure all states benefit from the transition.

What is the history of the evolution of India's power sector?

First Wave (mid-1970s to mid-1990s):

Central Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) took the lead. Notable creations include: NTPC and Coal India.
Aimed to fix imbalances in state power supplies. The initial plants were strategically placed to serve multiple states.

Second Wave (2000-2015):

Triggered by the Electricity Act, 2003.
Private promoters played a major role.
New plants mostly located in central, western, and southern India.
Private investment in power centered around states with industrial demand and strong finances.

What is the significance of coal in India's energy mix?

Continued Use and Investment: Coal remains a significant part of India's energy landscape.

New Power Plants: The power minister has announced plans to build new coal power plants.

Addressing Peak Power Problems: The reliance on coal is evident in efforts to manage seasonal demand surges in electricity.

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What is Energy Transition?

In the present context, **Energy Transition** refers to the transformation of the energy sector from fossil-based systems of energy production and consumption to renewable energy sources. It involves a shift in the energy mix to reduce, if not eliminate, the carbon emissions (and other greenhouse gases).

Read here for more detail: **What is the meaning of Energy Transition?**

In India's context, by 2030, solar and wind could account for 51% of generation capacity. Solar and wind's contribution might rise from 8.3% in 2019 to 31% by 2030.

What are the implications of the renewable energy transition?

1) Regional disparities in distribution:

As of August 2023, eight states generated 92.5% of all renewable energy.
Mainly western and southern states are benefiting.

2) Challenges for RE-Poor States:

Coal royalties, a key revenue, will decrease.
Power procurement costs will rise for these states leading to budget deficit.

3) State vs. Union Tensions:

Disagreements over revenues, power operations, and transition costs.
State transmission companies bear the integration costs of RE projects.

What can ensure a balanced energy transition?

1) Support for RE-Poor States: States with less renewable energy need more involvement in the transition.

2) Financial Assistance: Offer preferential lending for RE projects in states with less renewable resources.

3) Increased Federal Negotiations: Give RE-poor states a bigger voice in power discussions, possibly by reviving institutions like the Inter-State Council.

Financial Transfers: The Finance Commission can provide explicit financial aid to RE-poor states.

Collaborative Policies: Implement a just transition mechanisms and collaborative industrial policies.

Equitable Green Policy: Ensure all states, not just the historically privileged ones, benefit from the green industrial policy.

Question for practice:

Critically examine the potential economic and fiscal disparities created by India's energy transition. How will this shape future regional development and centre-state relations?

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71. **There is no easy escape from the middle-income trap**

News: The article discusses the challenges of countries trying to move from middle-income to developed status. The World Bank's chief economist says it's harder now due to global trade and investment issues.

What defines a middle-income country?

The **World Bank** classifies Middle Income Countries (MICs) as those with a per capita gross national income ranging from $1,086 to $13,205 in 2022.

MICs play a significant role in various aspects, including financial stability, global trade, and the promotion of sustainable energy in response to climate change.

What is the middle-income trap?

According to the **World Bank**, the middle-income trap is a condition in which a middle-income country faces difficulties in moving towards becoming a high-income economy.

This challenge arises from **increasing costs and decreasing competitiveness**, leading to a **plateau in per capita income** and **a lack of progress or a decline in economic competitiveness**.

This leads to an **inability to attain the necessary levels of investment and innovation** required to advance to a high-income status.

Why is it now more challenging for countries attempting to transition from middle income to developed status?

1) Trade Environment: The current trade setting is more protectionist, affecting global business and development.

2) Decline in Investment: Foreign direct investment (FDI) is declining.

3) Global Economic Landscape: There's a rise in public debt and a drop in private investment, hindering economic growth.

4) Governance Concerns: Countries like China have unexpected changes in leadership, raising questions about stability.

5) Educational and Bureaucratic Issues: Countries like India face challenges in improving education and bureaucratic efficiency, critical for development.

6) Global Trade Slowdown: Trade is expected to grow by less than 2% this year, compared to an average growth of more than 10% in the early 2000s.

What actions should be taken by governments of middle-income countries?

Enhance Education: Prioritize improvement, especially in school education, to produce skills that match economic needs.

Efficient Bureaucracy: Speed up and make bureaucratic and judicial decisions more predictable. This can help businesses and the economy.

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Avoid Fiscal Temptations: Resist short-term fiscal populism that may seem attractive but can hinder long-term development.

Strengthen R&D: Invest in research and development to drive innovation and growth.

Good Governance: Ensure stable and transparent governance. For example, abrupt leadership changes in China raised concerns.

Resist Lobbyists: Avoid the influence of powerful lobbyists who might sway policies for personal interests, not national growth.

Focus on Trade and Investment: Given the decline in global trade and FDI, governments should create conducive environments to attract investments and boost trade.

Question for practice:

How are global trade challenges and internal governance affecting the transition of middle-income countries to a developed status?

72. **On Digital Lending – RBI should step up efforts to control illegal loan apps**
Source: The post on **Digital Lending** is based on the article "**RBI should step up efforts to control illegal loan apps**" published in **"Live mint"** on 27th October 2023.
Syllabus: GS Paper 3 Indian Economy – RBI and banking system.

News: The article discusses the problem of illegal loan apps in India. The government and RBI are trying to find ways to regulate them. RBI has proposed some solutions but hasn't implemented them all. Blockchain technology can help track valid lending partnerships.

What is digital lending?

Digital Lending refers to lending through web platforms or mobile apps by use of technology.

It utilizes automated technologies and algorithms for customer acquisition, credit evaluation, decision making, authentication, disbursements and recovery.

Not only does it lower costs but also ensures speedy disbursal.

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Source: Maharashtra Government.

Read here for more details: **Digital lending and its regulation**

What are the guidelines of RBI related to digital lending?

Digital Lending Definition: Even if some steps involve a physical interface, lending can still be categorized as 'Digital Lending'.

Lending Service Provider (LSP): Service providers are only designated as LSPs when the transaction falls under 'Digital Lending'.

Grievance Redressal: LSPs interacting with borrowers must have a Grievance Redressal Officer. REs, however, are responsible for resolving complaints tied to LSPs.

Credit Card EMI Programs: Specific EMI programs on credit cards don't fall under Digital Lending Guidelines, but other credit card loans do.

Third-party Control: No third party, including LSPs, should control the flow of funds in lending transactions.

Payment Aggregators: LSPs under Digital Lending Guidelines shouldn't handle funds. Pure Payment Aggregators are not under this scope.

Recovery for Delinquent Loans: For delinquent loans, cash recoveries bypass the direct repayment to RE's bank account requirement.

Salary-based Repayments: Loans repaid by employers deducting from salaries are allowed.

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How is India doing in digital finance overall?

Retail Payments Growth: India witnessed significant growth, with 16% of all global real-time payments in 2022 originating from the country.

Digital Lending Surge: The digital lending sector expanded rapidly, disbursing close to 73 million loans in 2022-23.

What's the issue with digital loan apps?

1) **Harmful Effects:** A BBC documentary revealed that aggressive recovery tactics of these apps have been linked to at least 60 suicides.

2) **Regulation Challenges:** MeitY has proposed additional KYC-like procedures for banks and finance companies, but a holistic approach might be more effective.

3) **RBI's Role:** Despite its nodal role in supervising digital finance, the RBI hasn't been proactive in direct supervision. They proposed the Digital India Trust Agency but never implemented it.

4) **App Store Burden:** App stores, like Google Play, face the immense task of filtering out unauthorized lenders, with the potential for errors in the process.

5) **Potential for Fraud:** With many banks and NBFCs, there's a vast scope for misrepresentation of lender-app partnerships. Simple KYC might not be enough to deter bad actors.

What should be done?

RBI's Role and Measures:

a.Direct Oversight: The RBI should assert a direct role in supervising digital lending.

b.Standardized Proof: Mandate a clear, standardized proof-of-partnership between digital lenders and regulated entities (REs).

c.Blockchain Utilization: Implement blockchain technology to validate and secure proofs of partnership, with REs issuing and tracking certificates.

Broader Perspective: Include state-level institutions and other relevant entities in the regulation process.

Consumer Awareness: Promote public education about the risks associated with unauthorized loan apps and the importance of responsible borrowing.

Strengthen Institutional Mechanisms: Collaborate with relevant stakeholders like app stores and public bodies to enhance app authenticity and safety.

Question for practice:

Enumerate and explain the guidelines issued by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) pertaining to digital lending. How do these guidelines aim to ensure consumer protection and maintain financial stability?

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73. **On Labour Productivity in India- NRN Gets It Wrong**
Source: The post **on labour productivity in India** is based on the article "**NRN Gets It Wrong- Working long hours doesn't increase productivity**" published in **"The Times of India"** on 28th October 2023.
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Indian Economy – Employment and labour productivity.

News: The article discusses India's low productivity as highlighted by Narayana Murthy. Despite Indians working about 48 hours weekly, their hourly output is low. The author also highlights how productivity isn't just about hours but also technology and education.

What is productivity?

Productivity measures how efficiently inputs like labor and capital are used to produce outputs, such as goods and services. On a country level, it affects living standards and economic growth.

What are the different kinds of productivity?

Labor Productivity: Measures the output produced per hour of work. For example, for a GDP of $1 trillion with its people working 20 billion hours, the labor productivity is $50 per hour. It is directly linked to increased wages, better living standards, and consumers' purchasing power.

Capital Productivity: Assesses output generated by using physical assets like machinery, buildings, and equipment.
It indicates how efficiently investments in physical assets are used, impacting profitability and competitiveness.

Total Factor Productivity (TFP): Accounts for growth in output not explained by labor or capital alone, often termed as "innovation-led growth".
It reflects efficiency improvements, technological progress, and innovation in an economy.

What is current labor productivity in India?

Working Duration: Indians average almost 48 hours a week, one of the highest globally.

Hourly Output: India's productivity rate is $8.47 per hour, despite the long work hours.

In comparison, Countries like France work fewer hours (about 30 weekly) but achieve higher productivity ($58.5 per hour).

What influences productivity?

1) **Role of Technology:** The level of technological diffusion in an economy positively impacts productivity.

2) **Human Capital:** The quality of human capital, or education and skills, directly relates to productivity. A well-educated workforce can produce more in less time.

3) **Impact of Agriculture:** A significant portion of the workforce in agriculture can lower a country's overall productivity.

Question for practice:

Evaluate how India's working-hours and technology-adoption impact productivity compared to countries like France.

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74. **Political misinformation is a problem. But asking WhatsApp to risk user privacy is the wrong solution**

Source: This post is based on the article "**Political misinformation is a problem. But asking WhatsApp to risk user privacy is the wrong solution**" published in "**Indian Express**" on 28th October 2023.

UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Internal Security – Challenges to internal security through communication networks, role of media and **social networking sites in internal security challenges**, basics of cyber security.

News: The article discusses the challenges of political misinformation, especially deep fakes. The central government wants to use Rule 4(2) of the 2021 IT Intermediary Guidelines to find the original sender of a message on platforms like WhatsApp which could compromise privacy and might not effectively address the issue.

What is Political Misinformation?

Political misinformation means having wrong political beliefs but holding them confidently. Its features include:

Different from being 'uninformed': Misinformed individuals have wrong beliefs, while uninformed individuals lack knowledge on the topic.

Impact: When many people share the same wrong beliefs, it can influence public opinion.

Different from 'rumors': While rumors are statements that lack solid evidence and might occasionally turn out to be true, misinformation is unequivocally false.

Connection with Conspiracy theories: Some conspiracy theories can be seen as a subtype of political misinformation.

Continued Influence Effect (CIE): Political misinformation falls under the broader psychological phenomenon of the persistence of false beliefs even after they have been debunked.

What initiatives have been taken to curb misinformation in India?

1) **Laws and Regulations:**

Indian Penal Code: Various sections (e.g., 153, 153A) address provocations, disharmony, and defamation.

Information Technology Act 2000: Section 66D pertains to fake news through fake accounts.

IT Rules 2021: Guidelines for regulating content on social media platforms and news portals. Platforms with over 50 lakh users face increased compliances.

Recent: The government plans to combat misinformation by using Rule 4(2) of the 2021 IT Intermediary Guidelines. This rule requires social media platforms to identify the original sender of a message (the source), especially on encrypted platforms like WhatsApp.

2) **Regulatory Bodies:**

Press Council of India: Addresses violations of journalistic ethics.

News Broadcasters Association (NBA) & Indian Broadcast Foundation (IBF): Handle complaints against electronic media content.

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Broadcasting Content Complaint Council (BCCC): Manages complaints against objectionable TV content and fake news.

3) **Private Initiatives:**

Facebook: Partnerships with third-party fact-checkers and banning false accounts.

WhatsApp: Restrictions on bulk messaging and a fact-checking hotline for users to flag messages.

What are the concerns regarding the government's plan to use Rule 4(2) of the 2021 IT Intermediary Guidelines?

1) **Privacy and Encryption:** The rule can compromise user privacy by tracing every message's origin. Platforms like WhatsApp use end-to-end encryption for user privacy. This rule challenges that security.

2) **Vague and Misleading Definitions:** "Public order" is open to interpretation, which might lead to misuse. The "first originator" isn't clearly defined, risking innocent users being wrongly targeted.

3) **Effectiveness and Misuse:** Sophisticated users can spoof identities, evading the rule's purpose. Tracking all messages affects everyone's privacy, not just wrongdoers.

4) **Legal and Real-world Implications:** The real-world analogy suggests a significant impact on individual freedom, like tagging every citizen when they step out.

How can misinformation impact elections?

Deep Fakes: Modern AI tools can create authentic-looking media of events that never occurred.

Targeting people through online platforms: Online services like WhatsApp, social media sites, YouTube, etc. mediate users' relationship with online information, making them crucial in the spread or control of misinformation.

Risk to Democracy: Misleading users through fake media can significantly influence election outcomes and distort democratic processes.

Election Integrity: Misinformation challenges the core principle of informed voting, jeopardizing the very foundation of democratic elections.

Question for practice:

Critically examine the potential impact of Rule 4(2) of the 2021 IT Intermediary Guidelines on individual privacy and its effectiveness in addressing political misinformation.

75. **On Inflation – No policy for troubled times**
Source: This post on inflation has been created based on the article **"No policy for troubled times"** published in **Business Standard** on **28th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Indian Economy and issues relating to planning.

News: This article discusses the various reasons which have led to the current inflation scenario in the world.

Read a detailed article on **Inflation Management in India here.**

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What is inflation?

Inflation refers to the rise in the prices of most goods and services of daily or common use such as food, clothing, housing, recreation, transport, consumer goods.

It measures the average price change in a basket of commodities and services over a period of time.

What is the current inflation scenario?

The target for inflation in most advanced economies is 2%. However, inflation in the USA is at 3.7%, in the Euro area at 5.6%, and in Britain at 6.8%.

In India, where inflation is typically much higher than in these advanced economies, it is hovering at 5%. India is not heavily indebted and showing good economic growth. This should give the RBI room to raise interest rates and aim for the 4% target.

What are the current global challenges with respect to inflation?

1) **Global Economic Situation:** The world is witnessing a global economic slowdown.

2) **Geopolitical conflicts:** It has led to inflation in the oil market, and also in various food and other commodity markets.

3) **Climate-change** imposes additional costs.

4) **Ineffectiveness of monetary policy:** Due to the above factors, prices will rise even if demand is weak. Monetary policy in this situation will not be as effective.

5) **Twin-Balance Sheet problem:** Banks and company balance sheets are getting stressed by debt becoming more costly.

6) **Lower Investments:** Investment will get hit because it would have to deliver higher returns to match the higher cost of capital.

Question for practice:

Inflation management has become a growing concern due to emerging challenges in the global economy. Explain.

76. On GI Tags – Is India sub-leveraging the advantages of GI tagging?
Source: This post on **GI Tags** has been created based on the article **"Is India sub-leveraging the advantages of GI tagging?"** published in **Business Standard** on **28th October 2023.**
UPSC Syllabus Topic: GS Paper 3 Science & Technology – Issues relating to Intellectual Property Rights.

News: This article discusses the implications of Geographic Indication or GI-Tag. It also highlights the issues with India's utilization of the GI-Tag.

What is a GI Tag?

According to the **World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO)**, a GI tag is a sign used on products that have a specific geographical origin and possess qualities or a reputation that is due to that origin.

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A GI right prevents its use by a third party whose product does not conform to the applicable standards.

However, a protected GI does not enable the holder to prevent someone from making a product using the same techniques as those set out in the standards for that indication.

GI tags in India are issued as per the **Geographical Indications of Goods (Registration and Protection) Act, of 1999.**

What is the importance of a GI Tag?

1) **Revenue generator**: Patents and copyright protection of products result in higher economic gains, fostering quality production and better distribution of profits.

2) **Global reach**: For e.g., Amazon's 'local to global' programme has taken Indian GI-tagged products to the global market.

3) **Passion economy and entrepreneurship**: It will convert talent into entrepreneurship and create a "passion" economy.

4) **Employment creation**: The labour-intensive nature of GI-tagged products can boost the employment in India.

5) **Women empowerment**: It can also increase India's low female labour force participation rate.

6) **Reverse urban migration**: it will conserve India's ancient crafts, culture and food and may also rejuvenate local MSMEs.

7) **Positive benefits for local communities**: It encourage the preservation of biodiversity, local know-how and natural resources.

8) **Soft power**: A strong GI ecosystem can be a source of soft power. For instance, French Champagne.

9) **Consumer rights**: GIs protects producers and their reputations and reassures consumers that a product is authentic.

10) **Preserve intellectual property**: They authenticate and symbolise an IPR owned collectively by producers in a region.

What are the challenges India is facing with respect to GI-Tags?

1) **Lack of a strategy for using the GI to commercial advantage**, especially in global markets.

2) Lack of organised effort — governmental or institutional — to **go beyond merely establishing distinctiveness**.

3) Lack of dedication to **quality control**, as opposed to a mere indication of source. For instance, in the case of **Alphonso Mango**.

4) Lack of **marketing, branding, advertising, and trade promotions**. For instance, with respect to Basmati **rice**.

What should be the way forward?

First, a required skill for GI producers is **digital literacy**. This should be a priority agenda item for NGOs and stakeholders like the DPIIT.

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Second, the Indian GI economy can showcase to the world a model for ethical capitalism, **social entrepreneurship**, **de-urbanisation**, and bringing **women to the workforce**.

Third, regular audits and consultations with the GI producers must be mandated.

Fourth, organised marketing and value creation to grow the **exclusivity** and **premiumness** attached to their products.

Question for practice:

Despite earning GI-Tags for a wide range of domestic products, India has failed to utilize the certification fully. Analyse.

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