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7 PM COMPILATION

December, 2023

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- ❖ Comprehensive coverage of a given current topic
- ❖ Provide you all the information you need to frame a good answer
- ❖ Critical analysis, comparative analysis, legal/constitutional provisions, current issues and challenges and best practices around the world
- ❖ Written in lucid language and point format
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[Kurukshetra November 2023 Summary] PM Vishwakarma Yojana- Explained Pointwise

The PM Vishwakarma Scheme, launched on the occasion of Vishwakarma Jayanti on 17th September 2023, aims to provide end-to-end support to traditional artisans and craftsmen or 'Vishwakarma' to grow their business. Rural India is home to a vast pool of untapped and traditional talent. The rural artisans and craftspeople possess exceptional skills in the traditional crafts like pottery, carpentry and metalwork. Artisanal activities form a significant part of rural economies, and these artistic expressions are integral to preserving India's rich cultural heritage.

Source- Yojana

What is the PM Vishwakarma Scheme?

1. **Aim of the Scheme-** PM Vishwakarma scheme aims at improving the quality as well as the reach of products and services of artisans and craftspeople. The scheme also aims to ensure that the 'Vishwakarmas' are integrated into the domestic and global value chains.

2. **Launch of the Scheme-** Prime Minister of India has launched the 'Prime Minister (PM) Vishwakarma Scheme' on the occasion of Vishwakarma Jayanti on 17th September 2023.

3. **Type of Scheme-** PM Vishwakarma will be implemented as a Central Sector Scheme, fully funded by the Government of India, with an initial outlay of Rs 13,000 crore.

4. **Implementing Ministries-**
a. The Scheme will be conjointly implemented by the Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME), the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship (MSDE) and the Department of Financial Services (DFS), the Ministry of Finance (MoF), the Government of India.
b. MSME will be the Nodal Ministry for the Scheme and the Additional Secretary & Development Commissioner (MSME) in the Ministry of MSME will be the focal point for all aspects of implementation and coordination.

5. **Trades Covered under the Scheme-** There are 18 traditional trades covered under the scheme. These are:

| Carpenter (Suthar/Badhai) | Boat Maker | Armourer | Goldsmith (Sonar) | Sculptor (Moortikar, stone |

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				carver) and Stonebreaker
Blacksmith (Lohar)	Hammer and Tool Kit Maker	Locksmith	Potter (Kumhaar)	Fishing Net Maker
Cobbler (Charmkar)/ Shoesmith/ Footwear artisan	Mason (Rajmistri)	Basket/Mat/ Broom Maker/Coir Weaver	Doll & Toy Maker (Traditional)	Barber (Naai)
Garland Maker (Malakaar)	Washerman (Dhobi)	Tailor (Darzi)		

6. **Eligibility Under the Scheme**

a. Minimum age of beneficiary should be 18 years.

b. The beneficiary should be engaged in the trade concerned.

c. Should not have availed loans under similar credit-based schemes of Central Government or State Government.

d. The registration and benefits under the Scheme shall be restricted to one member of the family.

7. **Exclusion under the Scheme**

Existing beneficiaries of the PM Employment Generation Programme are excluded while beneficiaries of PM Mudra Scheme or PM-Svanidhi can apply for credit only after repayment.

8. **Lending institutions-** Scheduled Commercial Banks, Regional Rural Banks, Cooperative Banks, NBFCs and Micro-Finance Institutions.

9. **Registration-** The Scheme will onboard the beneficiaries on Udyam Assist Platform as 'entrepreneurs'. Enrolment of beneficiaries shall be done through Common Service Centres with Aadhaar-based biometric authentication on PM Vishwakarma portal.

10. **Benefits under the Scheme-** Scheme intends to provide end-to-end support to artisans and craftspeople through the following six interventions-

Recognition	The Beneficiaries will get a PM Vishwakarma Certificate and ID card after they are registered and verified.
Skill Upgradation	Artisans will receive basic training of 5-7 days and advanced training of 15 days or more, along with a stipend of Rs. 500 per day as wage compensation. At the end of the basic training, an independent assessment will be conducted, and National Skill Qualification Framework (NSQF) certification will be provided to the successful candidate.
Toolkit Incentive	At the beginning of basic training, artisans and craftspeople will get toolkit incentive of up to Rs. 15,000 through e-RUPI/e-vouchers.
Credit Support	The government will provide collateral-free loans of up to Rs. 3 lakhs in two tranches of Rs. 1 lakh and Rs. 2 lakhs, according to their requirements. These loans can be paid back in 18 months and 30 months, respectively. Loan is provided at a concessional interest rate fixed at 5%, with the Government of India subvention to the extent of 8%.
Incentive for Digital Transaction	The scheme will encourage beneficiaries to adopt digital transactions. The beneficiaries of this scheme will be given cashback incentives every time they either sell or receive a digital transaction.

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Marketing Support	A marketing strategy has been prepared to promote the products and services of these artisans in both domestic and international markets.

What is the Significance of the PM Vishwakarma Scheme?

1. **Formalisation of the Informal Artisanal Industry-** With access to formal credit support, promotion of digital transactions and inclusion in the formal MSME ecosystem, the scheme will formalise the industry.

2. **Integration with Global Value Chains-** The marketing Support provided through this scheme will help to link the local artisanal industry with the global value chains and the niche foreign markets. For Ex- Promotion of brass metal works of India in Europe.

3. **Preservation of rich Indian heritage-** The support provided through this scheme to the artisans will lead to the preservation of cultural practices, rich heritage, generational skills, and guru-shishya parampara. It will provide a sense of Identity to the artisans. **For ex-** Bangle makers of Moradabad.

4. **Empowerment of Women-** The Scheme seeks to promote the empowerment of women belonging to the marginalized or under-served groups like the Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, OBCs, Specially Abled, Transgenders, residents of NER states, Island Territories, and Hilly Areas.

5. **Awareness about other Schemes-** Through this scheme, efforts will be made to increase awareness among the beneficiaries to avail social security benefits under the various schemes of the Government of India and State Governments such as Prime Minister Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, Prime Minister Suraksha Bima Yojana, Atal Pension Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-Dhan Yojana.

Read more- PM Vishwakarma Scheme

What are the Other Artisans related Schemes under Implementation In India?

Currently, there are about 20 central sector schemes that seek to support and empower artisans across the country. Some major Schemes are explained in brief below

The National Handicraft Development Programme	The schemes focus on handloom and handicrafts artisans by providing them with credit, marketing, tookits, skill training, and social security support
PM SVANidhi	The scheme provides for collateral-free working capital loans with interest subsidies and incentives for digital transactions support to street-vendors/hawkers vending in urban areas.
Upgrading Skills and Training in Traditional Arts/Crafts for Development (USTTAD)	The scheme being implemented by the Ministry of Minority Affairs provides support for the upgrading of skills and training.

Conclusion

Vishwakarmas in India are a diverse group of skilled craftsmen and artisans who have played a crucial role in the country's art, architecture, and cultural heritage. They continue to contribute to India's rich artistic and architectural traditions while adapting to the demands of the modern world. The Indian government and various organizations have recognized the importance of preserving traditional craftsmanship. PM Vishwakarma Scheme is an effort made to provide training, support, and platforms for Vishwakarma artisans to showcase their skills.

Read More- The Indian Express UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Government Schemes for the Vulnerable Sectors

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All India Judicial Service- Explained Pointwise

President Droupadi Murmu has called for an "All India Judicial Service" to recruit judges during her inaugural address at the Supreme Court's Constitution Day celebration on Sunday (November 26). The president said that it will help make the judiciary diverse by increasing representation from marginalised social groups. The President's comment has again reignited the debate on creation of All India Judicial Service (AIJS).

All India Judicial Service

» **All-India Judicial Service (AIJS)-** The creation of All India Judicial Service (AIJS) is a reform aimed to centralise the recruitment of judges at the level of additional district judges and district judges for all states.

» **Constitutional Provisions for AIJS-** Article 312 provides the basis for the creation of AIJS on the resolution passed by Rajya Sabha by two-third majority.

» **Current System of Recruitment of District Judges-** Under Articles 233, district judges are appointed by the Governor of the State in consultation with the High Court exercising jurisdiction in relation to such State.

Need For All India Judicial Service

» Huge vacancy of judges and delay in recruitment

» Dearth of good quality judicial officers

» Lack of finances with state governments

» Lack of specialized state training institutions for adjudication

» Subjectivity in the recruitment process

Benefits

» Attract Fresh legal talents

» Accountability, transparency and objectivity in judicial recruitment process

» Representation to deprived sections and women

» Increase the Judge-to-Population ratio

» Uniformity of adjudication across the country

For detailed Reading- 7 PM Link

Objections

» Dilution of separation of power by involvement of executive in judicial appointment. It also affronts the federal structure.

» Local language, laws and customs can create challenges of effective dispensation of justice

» Possibility of misuse by the elites and might become discriminatory for weaker sections.

» Restricted promotional avenues for already appointed State officers

» State minorities and backward groups will lose out on reservation benefits if the reservation is provided based on a central list

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What is the All-India Judicial Service?

All-India Judicial Service- The creation of AIJS is a reform aimed to centralise the recruitment of judges at the level of additional district judges and district judges for all states. Like the UPSC conducts a central recruitment

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process for bureaucrats and assigns successful candidates to state cadres, AIJS will also centrally recruit judges and assign them to states.

Constitutional Provisions for the All-India Judicial Service

a. Article 312 of the Constitution, as amended by the 42nd Amendment, 1976, provides for the creation of an AIJS. The Rajya Sabha has to adopt a resolution, mentioning the necessity to create an All India Judicial Service in national interest, with a two-thirds majority present and voting. The parliament can then create the All India Judicial Service by passing a parliamentary law to that effect.

b. However, Article 312 (3) states that the AIJS cannot include any post inferior to that of a district judge, as defined in Article 236. A district judge can include a city civil court judge, additional district judge, joint district judge, assistant district judge, chief judge of a small cause court, chief presidency magistrate, additional chief presidency magistrate, sessions judge, additional sessions judge, and assistant sessions judge.

Current system of Recruitment of Judges in the lower Judiciary

1) Under Articles 233, district judges are appointed by the Governor of the State in consultation with the High Court exercising jurisdiction in relation to such State.

2) As per Article 234, appointments of persons other than district judges to the judicial service of a State is made by the Governor of the State in accordance with rules made by him in that behalf after consultation with the State Public Service Commission and with the High Court exercising jurisdiction in relation to such State.

A Brief Timeline of the Demand for AIJS

AIJS recommendations	SC's Stand on AIJS	Centre's Action
1958- The law commission first proposed a 'Centralised Judicial Service'.	**1992-** The SC directed the centre to establish AIJS (All India Judge's Association vs Union of India).	**2012**– Centre came up with a "comprehensive proposal for AIJS", which was approved by the Committee of Secretaries.
1978- The Law commission again proposed the idea of All India Judicial Service to clear the case backlogs and delays in Judicial appointment.	**1993-** The Supreme Court permitted the Centre to initiate the creation of AIJS independently.	**2013-** AIJS was included in the agenda of the Conference of Chief Ministers and Chief Justices of the High Court. No consensus could be reached on the issue of AIJS.
2006- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Personnel, Public Grievances, Law, and Justice supported the idea of a pan-Indian judicial service and prepared a draft bill.	**2017-** The Supreme Court suggested a "Central Selection Mechanism" for District Judges Appointment.	**2017-** AIJS was discussed in the Chief Justices Conference. However, it was decided that the respective HCs would evolve appropriate methods within the existing system to fill up the vacancies for appointing district judges.

What is the need for All India Judicial Service?

1. **Huge vacancy of judges and delay in recruitment-** There are large vacancies in the posts in lower judiciary across the country and a huge pendency of about 2.78crore cases in lower judiciary. One of the primary reasons is the inordinate delay in holding regular judicial recruitment exams by the states.

2. **Dearth of good quality judicial officers-** The ever continuing decline in quality of selected judicial officers through the current recruitment system have delayed delivery of justice, increased pendency of cases and

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impaired the quality of judgments. This also has a resultant effect on the competence of higher judiciary (High Courts and Supreme Court).

3. **Lack of finances with state governments-** State judicial services are not attractive for 'best talents' due to low salaries, rewards and compensations awarded by the state governments.

4. **Lack of specialized state training institutions-** Adjudication is a specialization which requires state of the art training institutes and professors. State institutes lack the capacity to allow such adjudication exposure to the selected candidates.

5. **Subjectivity in the recruitment process –** The Current judicial appointments at the lower level and upper levels suffer from subjectivity, corruption and nepotism. Hence, there is a need to reflect the social reality and diversity of the country by establishing a neutral and impartial system of recruitment.

What are the benefits of the All India Judicial Service?

1. **Attracting Fresh talent-** AIJS will ensure a transparent and efficient method of recruitment to attract the best talent in India's legal profession. A national service for judges, not inferior to the post of district judges, with a superannuation age of 60, will be an attractive proposition for young lawyers to apply for it.

2. **Accountability, transparency and objectivity in recruitment process-** Open competitive exam would bring accountability, transparency and objectivity in the recruitment process of judiciary by reducing discretion of selection panel.

3. **Representation to deprived sections-** AIJS will improve the judiciary's representative character by drafting in trained officers from deprived sections of society, especially women and SC/STs.

4. **Increasing the Judge-to-Population ratio and checking the pendency of cases-** In India, there are about 19 judges per 10 lakh population, against the Law Commission's recommendation of at least 50 per 10 lakh people. AIJS will ensure swift filling up of vacancies and ramping up of recruitment to the lower judiciary.

5. **Uniformity across the country-** Quality of adjudication and the dispensation of justice would attain uniformity across the country by ironing out state level differences in laws, practices and standards.

What are the objections to the creation of All-India Judicial Service?

1. **Dilutes separation of power-** The creation of AIJS will transfer control over state judiciary to Union government, by removing control of High Court on recruitment process. It would undermine the independence of judiciary and dilute the separation of power mandated under Article 50. 13 HCs are in disagreement with the All India Judicial Service.

2. **Against India's Federal structure-** A centralised recruitment process is seen as an affront to federalism and an encroachment on the powers of states granted by the Constitution.

3. **Local language problem-** Courts up to District and Sessions Judge transact their business in State language. AIJS officers would find it difficult to acclimatize themselves with local language, thus hampering dispensation of justice.

4. **Local laws and customs problem-** AIJS does not take into account the problem of wide variation in the local laws, practices and customs across States.

5. **Discriminatory for weaker sections and Possibility of elitism-** Candidates from elite legal schools and large cities may benefit from the centralised recruitment. This could be discriminatory for people from less fortunate homes and smaller communities.

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6. **Exclusion of state minorities and backward groups-** State minorities and backward groups will lose out on reservation benefits if the eservation based on a central list.

7. **Restricted promotional avenues for State officers-** The AIJS would limit the promotional avenues for the already selected officers through the current system.

8. **Uncertainty on Career Progression-** AIJS may be rendered unattractive on account of lower number of district judges elevation to the HCs as compared to the Bar.

9. **Mismanaged legal education problem-** Barring a few National Law Universities, the Curriculum followed by law universities lacks effective standards, which results into low quality legal research and scholars. This problem of lack of quality of good legal education will be unaddressed by AIJS.

Read More- Judicial Service

Conclusion and Way Forward

Before the implementation of AIJS by the Parliament, there is a need to build consensus among various associated stakeholders. NITI Aayog has proposed the creation of the All India Judicial Service and has provided the following recommendations-

1. Independence- The AIJS cadre should report to the Chief Justice of every high court to maintain judicial independence.

2. Regular examination- The AIJS examinations must be held regularly and the recruitment process must be completed in a time bound manner.

3. Use of Technology- Implementing video-conferencing to expedite justice and reduce logistical issues.

The competence and quality of the lower judiciary is crucial for revitalizing the entire edifice of Indian judiciary. All India Judicial Service is the right step in this direction.

Read More- The Indian Express
UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Issues related to Judiciary

[November 2023 Kurukshetra Summary] Sustainability of Rural Enterprises- Explained Pointwise+ Inforgraphic

Sustainability of rural enterprises is a crucial aspect of India's economic growth and development. Rural enterprises are business entities that promote revenue generation and act as agents of social change at the grassroots level. According to official data released on April 30, 2022, India has more than 63 million MSMEs, out of which about 94% are micro-enterprises. Most of these micro-enterprises are rural enterprises.

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Sustainability of Rural Enterprises

» **Rural Enterprise-** The enterprise set up by a group of people with common economic interests like Farmers, Fisherfolk, ago-processors, tour guides, craft makers, etc. The rural enterprises are legally recognized organizations to carry out business activities.

» **Constitutional Provisions for Rural enterprises-** Article 43 of the constitution provides that the state must undertake measures to promote rural cottage based enterprises and cooperative societies.

» **Estimated Numbers of Rural enterprises-** India has more than 63 million MSMEs, out of which about 94% are micro-enterprises. Most of these micro-enterprises are located in rural areas.

Importance of Rural Enterprises

» Rural enterprises foster the appropriate utilization of local resources like raw materials and labour. Ex- Rural enterprises based on coconut.

» Rural industrialisation can solve the dual problem of unemployment and under-employment in the rural areas. Ex- ID Fresh company which produces dosa and Idly batter, employs 1,100 employees

» Social empowerment of Women and other marginalised sections. Ex-Lijjat papad enterprise provides employment to over 40,000 women

» Promotion of Rural artistic activities and conservation of Indian Heritage. Ex- Rural enterprises based on Madhubani Paintings

» Keeps a check on Social Evils like Rurban migration, unsymmetrical growth of cities and environmental pollution.

Challenges

» Inconsistent market linkages. Ex- Difficulties of FPOs in rural areas in marketing their produce.

» Prevalent societal and gender-based biases. Ex- Social Boycott of shops run by the lower castes in villages.

» Severe competition from urban markets. Ex- Local snacks maker's inability to compete with brands like Haldiram.

For detailed Reading- 7 PM Link

Way Forward

» Ensure better access to capital, infrastructure and mentoring of these enterprises by industry experts like Ratan Tata of TATA Group.

» Skilling and Entrepreneurship Development through the establishment of rural incubation centres

» Civil society groups like the NGOs, SHGs, charities, etc can further help in promoting rural entrepreneurship

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What are the types of Rural Enterprises?

Rural Enterprise means a group of people with common economic interests who have formed a legally recognized organization to carry out business activities. For example- Farmers, Fisherfolk, ago-processors, tour guides, craft makers, etc. Article 43 of the constitution provides that the state must undertake measures to promote rural and cottage based enterprises.

There are two types of Rural enterprises-

1. **Proprietial ownership**– The enterprises are run by an individual.
2. **Group entrepreneurship-** The enterprises are run by the Self Help Groups (SHGs), Cooperatives, and Producer companies.

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What is the Importance of Rural Enterprises/Entrepreneurship in India?

The Rural enterprises have the following advantages due to which they become extremely important in India:

1. **Resource Utilization-** Rural enterprises foster the appropriate utilization of local resources like raw materials and labour for productive purposes. **For ex-** Rural Farmer Producer Companies engaged in production of coconut milk, coconut oil in Southern India.

2. **Employment Generation-** Rural industries create large-scale employment openings for rural people. Rural industrialisation can solve the dual problem of unemployment and under-employment in the rural areas. **For ex-** ID Fresh company which produces dosa and Idly batter, employs 1,100 employees and produces 50,000 packets a day.

3. **Reduction in the Migration of Rural Population:** Rural entrepreneurship provides gainful and productive employment opportunities for the rural people in their own areas. It discourages rural people to migrate from rural areas to urban areas in search of jobs.

4. **Promotion of Artistic Activities-** The rich heritage of rural India is conserved by protecting and promoting handicrafts and art through entrepreneurship. **For ex-** Rural enterprises engaged in the making of Madhubani Painting's for customers.

5. **Keeps a check on Social Evils-** The growth of rural enterprises abates the unsymmetrical growth of cities, increase of slums, social tensions, social issues, environmental pollutions.

6. **Encouragement of the Rural Youth-** Rural entrepreneurship can promote the rural youth and expose them to several paths to adopting entrepreneurship and promoting it as a career.

7. **Social empowerment of Women and other marginalised sections-** The rural industries promote the empowerment of women and other marginalised sections of the society by providing them with gainful employment and securing financial independence. **For ex-** Lijjat papad enterprise provides employment to over 40,000 women.

What are the challenges faced by Rural Entrepreneurs?

1. **Inconsistent market linkages-** The rural enterprises lack the infrastructural and logistical facilities to market their products. **For ex-** Difficulties of FPOs in rural areas in marketing their produce.

2. **Lack of skill and understanding of enterprise entrepreneurship-** The rural entrepreneurs often lack the necessary enterprising skill to upgrade their businesses.

3. **Severe competition from urban markets-** The rural businesses face adverse competition from their urban counterparts which have better availability of working capital, access to latest technology and ability to transform their product range. **For ex-** Local snacks maker's inability to compete with brands like Haldiram.

4. **Prevalent societal and gender-based biases-** The rural enterprises run by the marginalised communities and women are subjected to the biases prevalent in the society and are often discriminated. **For ex-** Social Boycott of shops run by the lower castes in villages.

5. **Inadequate understanding of the government support mechanism-** Low awareness about the Government of India schemes regarding the promotion of rural enterprises is also a major bottleneck in the growth of the rural enterprises.

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What are the Government's initiatives to promote rural entrepreneurship?

Government has been undertaking several initiatives to promote rural entrepreneurship in the country. Some of these are mentioned below

Start-up Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP)	It has been initiated with the purpose of assisting entrepreneurs to establish their business enterprises in rural India. The scheme supports existing enterprises as well as new enterprises with their unit establishment at the village level.
Rural Self Employment Training Institutes (RSETIs)	It provides skill and entrepreneurship development training programmes to the rural unemployed youth, assisting them in commencing their own business units.
Pradhan Mantri- YUVA initiative	Ministry of Skill Development and entrepreneurship is implementing this scheme. The main of the scheme is to capitalise on mentoring prospective entrepreneurs and help in expansion of the existing enterprises.
PM Vishwakarma Yojana	Read More- PM Vishwakarma Yojana

Conclusion and way forward

Developing rural entrepreneurship is essential for India's progress, as it augments economic and employment growth. It is fundamental to ensure that manpower, money, material, machinery, and understanding of market are complete for the development of a viable business model to better support aspiring rural entrepreneurs.

1. **Better access to capital, infrastructure and marketing-** The government must target to provide the rural industries the same facilities of easy access to manpower, material and money as their urban counterparts.

2. **Mentoring by Industry experts-** The government can work with the industry experts like TATA group's Ratan Tata to mentor these rural enterprises to scale up their operations.

3. **Skilling and Entrepreneurship Development through Project Mode-** Entrepreneurs should be selected based on their existing skills, geographic locations, and demographic traits. Post selection, the participants should be provided with skill training and handheld into scaling up of their enterprises.

4. **Establishment of incubation centres-** Ideation hackathon and establishment of rural incubation centres can promote skill development in the rural areas.

5. **Active participation of civil societies-** The civil society groups like the NGOs, SHGs, charities, etc can further help in promoting rural entrepreneurship.

> Read More- The Times of India
> Syllabus- GS 3- Industrial development policies, inclusive growth

Female Labour Force Participation Rate- Explained Pointwise + Infographic

India's Low Female Labour Force Participation rate is a big threat to India's Demographic Dividend. India still has not cracked the code of getting women to work in time. Any further delay in improving the female labour force participation in productive sector, will be detrimental to India's dream of becoming a developed nation by 2047.

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Female Labour Force Participation Rate

» Female Labour Force Participation Rate is a ratio of the number of women who are part of the labour force to the number of women in the working age (greater than 15 years of age). A woman is considered to be a part of the labour force if she/he is either employed or actively looking for work.

» Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) is consistently increasing in India over the years. It has increased from 24.5% in 2018-19 to 37% in 2022-23.

» However, according to the World Bank, Indian women's participation in the formal economy is among the lowest in the world. India needs to improve it's low FLFPR to reap its rich demographic Dividend

⬇% Reasons for low FLFPR

» The High Degree of Informalisation discourages women from participating in the labour force. 95% of India's working women are informal workers (ILO).

» Missing Manufacturing sector jobs and limited number of jobs in services for women.

» Gender Pay Gap and Glass ceiling. India has one of the largest gender gap in median earnings of full-time employees (ES 18)

» Pinkification of Jobs limit the role of women to specific job profiles like nursing, teaching, gynaecologist.

» Unpaid care, child care and domestic chores, has hindered women's ability to participate in the labour force

» Educated Unemployment phenomenon- Unavailability of jobs that match the high female education levels

» Safety Concerns like violence against women and sexual harrasment at workplace

For detailed Reading- 7 PM Link

Advantages of 📈 FLFPR

» Economic Boost- Gender parity in the workforce can improve India's GDP by 27% (IMF).

» Tackle the phenomenon of feminisation of poverty which is a result of informalised women workforce

» Improvement in Social Indicators like the MMR and IMR

» Enables women to play a greater role in decision-making like family planning

» Fulfilment of Global Commitments like SDG-1, SDG-5, SDG-8

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What is Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR)?

Female Labour Force Participation Rate is a ratio of the number of women who are part of the labour force to the number of women in the working age (greater than 15 years of age). A woman is considered to be a part of the labour force if she/he is either employed or actively looking for work.

FLFPR trend in India
1. Female Labour Force Participation Rate (FLFPR) is consistently increasing in India. However, it is still very less compared to the developed nations.

2022-23	37%
2021-22	32.8%

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2020-21	32.5%
2019-20	30%
2018-19	24.5%

2. The simple average of the FLFPR of the five southern Indian states (Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Kerala) is 13% lower than the five northern states of Himachal Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand. This defies the conventional belief that southern states, with high literacy and women empowerment indices, will have high FLFPR.

3. There are only four states (Assam, Bihar, Haryana and Delhi) with an FLFPR of less than 25%. Delhi has the lowest at 14.8%.

4. According to the World Bank, Indian women's participation in the formal economy is among the lowest in the world. Only some parts of the Arab world perform worse than India in terms of FLFPR.

What are the reasons for low Female Labour Force Participation rate in India?

1. **High Degree of Informalisation**– According to a 2018 study by the International Labour Organisation (ILO), more than 95% of India's working women are informal workers. The absence of social security net in the informal sector discourages women from participating in the labour force.

2. **Missing manufacturing-** Lack of alternative employment opportunities in manufacturing and the limited number of jobs in services for women, has also suppressed FLFPR in India.

3. **Gender Pay Gap and Glass ceiling-** According to the Economic Survey 2018, India has one of the largest gender gap in median earnings of full-time employees. Such discriminatory practices at workplace adversely affects FLFPR.

4. **Pink Jobs-** The societal notions about 'gendered occupations' limit the role of women to specific job profiles like nursing, teaching, gynaecologist etc. There are tangible and intangible barriers to entry of women in multiple professions like heavy engineering, law enforcement, armed forces etc.

5. **Cultural practices-** Unpaid care, child care and domestic chores, has hindered women's ability to participate in the labour force. In a patriarchal society, many women are not allowed to work after marriage.

6. **Increase in Household Income-** The rise in household incomes in both the rural and urban areas has provided women the choice to not take up jobs.

7. **Safety Concerns-** High incidents of violence against women discourages women to work in the night like their male counterparts. Further, instances of sexual harassment at workplace induces women to opt out of labour force.

8. **Educated Unemployment-** Women are going for higher education, as seen in Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) of secondary education. The lack of availability of jobs that match the high female education levels also contributes to the low FLFPR.

9. **Legally sanctioned restrictions-** Many States continue to restrict women's participation in hazardous jobs in factories and commercial establishments. For ex- women are not allowed to work on stone-cutting machines, shop floor of boilers, etc.

10. **Political Vacuum-** The current Lok Sabha has only 14.4% women, despite women constituting around 50% of Indian population. The lack of gender perspectives inhibits formulation of a comprehensive policy that encourages women participation in economic activities.

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What is the significance of enhancing Female Labour Force Participation?

1. **Economic Boost-** According to the IMF, gender parity in the workforce can improve India's GDP by 27%.

2. **Tackling poverty-** It helps to tackle the phenomenon of feminisation of poverty, which is a result of highly informalised work performed by women.

3. **Improvement in Social Indicators-** Encouraging more women to enter the formal workforce will improve indicators like Infant Mortality Rate (IMR), Maternal Mortality Rate (MMR).

4. **Self Confidence and Dignity-** Financial independence enables women to play a greater role in decision-making like family planning.

5. **Global Commitments-** Improving FLFPR is related to achievements of SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) and SDG 10 (Reduced inequalities).

Read More- Female Labour Force Participation Rate

What steps have been taken by the Government to enhance Female Labour Force Participation?

Maternity Benefit (Amendment) Act, 2017	The Act more than doubled the duration of paid maternity leave for women employees to 26 weeks. It proposed an option to work from home after this period, on mutual agreement with the employer. It made crèche facilities mandatory for establishments employing 50 or more women.
Anganwadi centres under the ICDS	They provide maternal and child nutritional security, a clean and safe environment, and early childhood education. Thus, they facilitate the ability of women to re-enter work post-childbirth.
National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013	Apart from providing affordable food, it entitles pregnant and lactating mothers to a cash transfer of at least INR 6,000. This is done to break the compulsion for early returning to work.
Stand up India	The scheme facilitates bank loans for setting up a new enterprise in manufacturing, services, agri-allied activities, or the trading sector by SC/ST/Women entrepreneurs. It provides bank loans between INR 10 lakh and up to 1 crore.
The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace Act, 2013	It is a legislative act in India that seeks to protect women from sexual harassment at their place of work

Conclusion and Way Forward

1. **Child Care Subsidies-** Child-care subsidies should be provided to free up mothers' time to enter the labour force, which would have significant implications in increasing female employment.

2. **Comprehensive approach to improve women labour force participation-** A comprehensive approach aimed at improving skill development, access to child care, maternity protection, and provision of safe and accessible transport, is needed.

3. **Removal of the legally sanctioned legislation-** States should review legislations like the Factory Act, Shops and Establishment Act etc. and liberalise the restrictions on women. The best practices from well performing States can be adopted across all States. For ex- Andhra Pradesh and Telangana are the only two states that allow women to work in all processes in all establishments.

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4. **Creation of Self Help Groups-** The focus should be on creation of more Self Help Groups. They are of immense reliance and drastically enhance women participation as seen in case of Kudumbashree model of Kerala.

5. **Use of innovative solutions to enhance female retention in industries-** Public crèches can be operated at worksite clusters such as near industrial areas, markets, dense low-income residential areas, and labour nakas. This model has been tested successfully by Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA) Sangini in some Indian cities.

6. **Accounting for Care economy-** We need to account for care economy in the GDP calculations.

Conclusion

There is a need to take multiple steps to augment the female labour force participation in India in order to realise the numerous social and economic benefits that accrue from greater presence of women in the workforce. It can help India move from women-centric development to women-led development.

> Read More- Livemint
> UPSC Syllabus- GS 3 Inclusive Growth, GS 1 Women empowerment, GS 2 Vulnerable sections of the society

The UN Treaty on Plastic Pollution – Explained Pointwise+ Infographic

The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) has been formed under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to develop an internationally legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution worldwide. Under the UN Environment Assembly Resolution 5/14, the INC is responsible for delivering a global plastics treaty by 2025. The INC met in Nairobi from November 13 to 19 for its third round of negotiations (INC-3).

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UN Treaty on Plastic Pollution

» UN Treaty on Plastic Pollution- Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) has been formed under UNEP to develop an internationally legally binding instrument to end plastic pollution worldwide.

» Plastic pollution is a global problem. According to UNEP, approximately 7 billion of the 9.2 billion tonnes of plastic produced from 1950-2017 became plastic waste, ending up in landfills or dumped. Plastic accounts for 85% of all marine litter.

» INC-3 held in Nairobi focussed on the substantive contents of the treaty and debated on the zero draft of the treaty. However, several disagreements have emerged on the Zero Draft of the treaty.

Disagreements over Treaty

» Disagreement on the objective and scope under UNEA Resolution 5/14

» Some states have contended that reduction of plastic production is out of the scope of the UNEA resolution 5/14.

» Reduction in the production of primary polymers and harmful chemicals used of production of plastics

» Opposition to the imposition of a plastic-pollution fee to be paid by plastic polymer producers

» No consensus was reached with the rules of procedure of the treaty

Need for the Treaty

» Grave impacts of plastic pollution on human health and environment

» Plastic pollution transcends national boundaries which end up in oceans which are global commons

» Need for a Collaborative Effort. For ex- India may ban single-use plastics, but single-use plastic materials can still enter India through imports.

» Plastic Pollution contributes to Global Warming and Climate Change. This necessitates collective effort, just like the UNFCCC framework.

Way Forward

» Build consensus to end plastic production

» Evolve a Financial Mechanism to compensate for plastic pollution

» Ban the polymers and chemicals of concern

» Early Finalisation of the treaty by fine-tuning the definitions, targets and adoption year

For detailed Reading- 7 PM Link

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What has been the progress on the UN Treaty on Plastic Pollution?

1. The UNEA had passed the resolution 5/14 in March 2022 to formulate an international legally-binding. The INC was established to negotiate the treaty. Its first meeting was held from November 28, 2022 to December 02, 2022 in Punta Del Este, Uruguay.
2. INC-2, held in Paris IN 2023, was not a success as the entire meeting debated on the rules of procedure.
3. INC-3 held in Nairobi focussed on the substantive contents of the treaty and debated on the zero draft of the treaty.

Zero Draft Discussions- Key Takeaways

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Zero draft as prepared by the secretariat contained strong options for an international legally binding treaty to end plastic pollution.

1. Member states managed to water down their core obligations as mandated in the Zero Draft of the Treaty.

2. Some states disagreed on the objective and scope under UNEA Resolution 5/14.

3. Reduction in the production of primary polymers was a major bone of contention. The fossil fuel and chemical sector lobbyists argued that reduction of plastic production was out of the scope of the UNEA resolution 5/14.

4. The financial mechanism for the implementation of the treaty was another point of divergence. Some member states opposed the imposition of a plastic-pollution fee to be paid by plastic polymer producers.

5. The move to reduce fossil-fuel subsidies and investments in environmentally disadvantageous technologies such as incineration and waste-to-energy plants was also blocked.

6. The ban on trade in polymers, chemicals, plastic products, and waste, which was not covered by the Basel treaty, was also blocked. The bloc contended that it impinged on the freedom and sovereignty of nations.

7. No consensus was reached with the rules of procedure to be followed for the adoption of this treaty.

What is the extent of Plastic Pollution?

1. Plastic pollution is a global problem. According to UNEP, approximately 7 billion of the 9.2 billion tonnes of plastic produced from 1950-2017 became plastic waste, ending up in landfills or dumped.

2. Plastic accounts for 85% of all marine litter. Plastic debris affects 86% of all sea turtle species, 44% of all seabird species, and 43% of all marine mammal species. For Ex- Great Pacific Garbage Patch, which is a collection of marine debris in the North Pacific Ocean.

3. According to CPCB reports, plastic contributes to 8% of the total solid waste in India. Only 60% of the total plastic waste is recycled in India.

Read More- Plastic Pollution in India: An Overview

What is the need for the UN Treaty on Plastic Pollution?

1. **Grave impacts of plastic pollution on human health and environment-** Plastic pollution is threatening land- and marine-based ecosystems. Exposure to plastics harm human health leading to fertility, hormonal, metabolic and neurological problems.

2. **Rise in global plastic production-** Plastic manufacturing has become a global industry valued at US$ 522 billion, and is expected to double in capacity by 2040. This will further damage the environment.

3. **Plastic pollution transcends national boundaries-** A major chunk of plastic waste ends up in oceans, which are part of global commons and beyond individual jurisdictions. Microplastics have been found in pristine environments of Antarctica.

4. **Need for a Collaborative Effort-** In an increasing integrated world, actions by individual countries are rendered ineffective in the absence of commensurate efforts by other countries. For ex- India may ban single-use plastics but single-use plastic materials can still enter India through imports.

5. **Contributes to Global Warming and Climate Change-** Plastics ending up in landfills are known to contribute to Greenhouse Gases (GHGs) which lead to global warming and climate change. This necessitates collective effort, just like the UNFCCC framework.

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6. **Targeted action-** Legally binding framework, with measurable targets and periodic reviews, will force the countries to take action.

What Should be the Way Forward?

1. **Build consensus to end plastic production-** The INC-4 meeting must try to build consensus to end both plastic pollution and plastic production.

2. **Evolve a Financial Mechanism-** A consensus must be built to impose plastic production fee to compensate for the damage caused by plastic production.

3. **Finalisation of the treaty-** INC-4 must hammer down and fine tune the details related to the definitions, targets, and timelines in the treaty.

4. **Ban the polymers and chemicals of concern-** A ban on the polymers and chemicals of concern must be envisaged to stop the production of the harmful plastics.

5. **Bioplastics as Alternative-** Bioplastics produced from different biodegradable and non-biodegradable materials including weeds, hemp, plant oil, potato starch, cellulose, corn starch etc. These must be promoted as alternative to the plastics in the treaty.

Plastic pollution is perhaps the biggest threat faced by the planet after climate change. UNFCCC has provided a systematic framework for collective action to address climate change. The UN Treaty on Plastic Pollution can provide a similar mechanism to combat plastic pollution. The earliest adoption of the treaty must be our imminent target.

> Read More- The Hindu
> Syllabus- Syllabus: GS III, Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation.

Urban Planning and Development- Explained Pointwise+Infographic

The India Infrastructure Report 2023 on Urban Planning and Development was recently released. The report covers various complex issues related to urban planning and development in India.

India is experiencing rapid economic growth. Economic development is often accompanied by urbanisation. According to the 2011 Census, the urbanisation rate in India was 31.2%, which is expected to increase to 43.2% by 2035 (UN Habitat World Cities Report). This rapid increase in the rate of urbanisation in India, has necessitated proper urban planning and development in India.

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Urban Development and Planning

» India is experiencing rapid economic growth. This rapid economic growth has been accompanied by rapid urbanisation.

» According to the 2011 Census, the urbanisation rate in India was 31.2%, which is expected to increase to 43.2% by 2035 (UN Habitat World Cities Report). This rapid increase in the rate of urbanisation in India, has necessitated proper urban planning and development in India.

Need

» Urban centres as propellents of economic growth. Urban areas occupy just 3% of the land but contribute to ~60% of the GDP. Ex- Bangalore- IT hub, Mumbai-Financial Hub

» Rapid growth in Urban population, which is expected to cross 50% of the total population within the next two decades

» Planning for the large number of urban poor to stop the growth of unabated slums and shanties. For ex- Slums of Dharavi

» Improvement of the quality of urban life by ensuring access to basic services such as water and sanitation

» Enhancement of environmental sustainability by green spaces, energy-efficient buildings.

Challenges

» Uneven distribution of urban centres and lack of uniformity of pace of urbanisation across the country.

» ~50% of India's statutory towns are expanding without any master plan to guide their growth and infrastructure. (NITI Aayog)

» Local government lacks funds, functions and functionality. Ex- Reliance on grants from Centre.

» Sub Optimal Utilisation of Urban Land with paradox of congested land parcels co-existing with parcels of under-utilized lands

» Increasing Risk of Water Scarcity in Cities like Day-Zero in Bangalore

Way Forward

» Planning for optimum utilisation of urban land

» Empowerment of Local bodies by ramping up human resources

» Involvement of Citizens in Planning like 'Citizen Outreach Campaign'

» Enhanced Role of Private Sector by empanelling private sector consultancies

For detailed Reading- 7 PM Link

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What is the need for Urban Planning and Development in India?

Proper urban planning and development is key to achieving India's dream of being a Vikshit Bharat by 2047 due to the following reasons-

1. **Urban centres as propellents of economic growth-** Urban cities in India occupy just 3% of the land but contribute to ~60% of the GDP. Urban centres are economic hubs which contribute to the rapid economic development of the country. **For Ex**– Bangalore, Hyderabad, Gurugram- IT hubs, Mumbai-Financial Hub.

2. **Rapid growth in Urban population-** India is the second-largest urban system in the world, with almost 11% of the total global urban population living in Indian cities. India's urban population is expected to cross 50% of the total population within the next two decades, necessitating proper planning to ensure ease of living.

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3. **Planning for the large number of urban poor-** According to the Ministry of Finance, one in-three poor people lives in urban areas. This figure was about one-in-eight in the early 1950s. Hence, proper urban planning is necessary to stop the growth of unabated slums and shanties. **For ex-** Slums of Dharavi near the financial hub of BKC in Mumbai.

4. **Improving the quality of urban life-** Proper Urban planning ensures access to basic services such as water, sanitation, and healthcare. It also creates livable and walkable neighbourhoods that are safer and more pleasant to live in.

5. **Enhancement of environmental sustainability-** Urban planning ensures that cities are designed in a way to minimize their impact on the environment through measures such as green spaces, energy-efficient buildings, and sustainable transportation options.

What are the Challenges to Urbanisation in India?

1. **Uneven urbanisation-** There is uneven distribution of urban centres and lack of uniformity of pace of urbanisation across the country. States such as Bihar, Odisha, Assam, and Uttar Pradesh lag in urbanisation rates while states like Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra are leading. This makes it difficult to implement a uniform policy for urban planning and development.

2. **Statutory Towns Growing Without 'Master Plans'-** According to the NITI Aayog Report ~50% of India's statutory towns are expanding without any master plan to guide their growth and infrastructure.

> A Statutory Town is one with a municipality, corporation, cantonment board or notified town area committee. As per 2011 Census, there are 4,041 Statutory Towns.

3. **Lack of Capability of Local Governments-** The local government lacks funds, functions and functionality for planned urban infrastructural development and service delivery. **For Ex-** reliance on grants from Centre and State for their functioning

4. **Sub Optimal Utilisation of Urban Land-** Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) has noted the paradox of congested land parcels of high population densities co-existing with vast parcels of under-utilized lands. Multiple public sector organizations/agencies (ports, railways, ULBs, etc.) own land under their jurisdictions. This hinders holistic urban planning and development.

5. **Magnitude of Population Living in Slums-** According to Census 2011, 17.3% of the total urban population is living in slums. Lack of affordable housing is contributing to creation and expansion of slums.

6. **Increasing Risk of Water Scarcity in Cities-** Indian cities dominate current and future lists of global cities with the highest overall water risk (The World Wide Fund for Nature India 2020). **For Ex-** the looming fear of 'Day Zero' in Bangalore

7. **Lack of Planning for Disaster Mitigation-** The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Home Affairs in its report has observed that the encroachment of lakes and riverbeds had played a major role in urban flooding in Chennai.

> Read More- Not going to down-urbanisation in India

What steps can be taken to improve the process of Urban Planning and Development in India?

NITI Aayog has provided recommendations in the 'Reforms in Urban Planning In India' Report to improve the urban planning and development in India.

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1. **Programmatic intervention for planning of healthy cities-** NITI Aayog has recommended a central sector scheme '500 Healthy Cities Programme', for a period of 5 years to ensure holistic socio-economic development of Indian cities.

2. **Planning for optimum utilisation of urban land-** All the cities/towns under the proposed 'Healthy Cities Programme' should strengthen regulations to maximize the efficiency of urban land (or planning area). There must be regular review of town and country planning or urban and regional development acts.

3. **Empowerment of Local bodies-** The local bodies must be empowered by proper devolution of funds, functions and functionalities. The NITI Aayog has also recommended ramping up of human resources of local bodies by adopting the following measures-
(a) Expediting the filling up of vacant positions of town planners.
(b) Lateral entry of town planners for positions for a minimum period of 3 years and a maximum of 5 years to close the gaps.
(c) Existing centres of excellence established by MoHUA and State-level training institutions need to be further strengthened to regularly build the skills and expertise of urban functionaries.

4. **Involvement of Citizens in Planning-** NITI Aayog has recommended a 'Citizen Outreach Campaign' for making the process of urban planning more inclusive and accessible.

5. **Enhanced Role of Private Sector-** The role of private sector must be enhanced in urban planning and development, like the empanelment of private sector consultancies.

Read More- The Indian Express, India Infrastructure Report 2023
UPSC Syllabus- GS I, Urbanization, their problems and their remedies; GS III, Infrastructure

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Regulation of AI- Explained Pointwise

Calls for regulation of Artificial Intelligence has emerged stronger than ever with the recent rise in the cases of misuse of AI like proliferation of deepfakes. With the rapid advancement of AI and its potential impact on society, there is a growing consensus among experts that regulation is necessary to ensure responsible and ethical use of AI technology.

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Regulation of AI

» The global artificial intelligence market size was valued at USD 136.55 billion in 2022 and is projected to expand at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 37.3% from 2023 to 2030.

» Calls for regulation of Artificial Intelligence has emerged stronger than ever with the recent rise in the cases of misuse of AI like proliferation of deepfakes. With the rapid advancement of AI and its potential impact on society, there is a growing consensus among experts for regulation of AI.

Need

» Bias and discrimination- Facial recognition algorithms have been shown to have higher error rates for women and people with darker skin tones.

» Concerns about privacy and data protection. For ex- Lawsuits against Silicon Valley giants for data and privacy breach.

» Vulnerable to cybersecurity threats and attacks. For ex- Adversarial attacks can manipulate AI models posing risks to autonomous vehicles or healthcare.

» Artificial General Intelligence can go beyond human intelligence, which raises concerns of predictability and security.

» Challenges associated with Deepfakes like women safety (pornographic material), liar's dividend (an undesirable truth is dismissed as fake news) etc.

Way Forward

» Universal adoption of the Bletchley Declaration

» Establish comprehensive and flexible regulatory framework

» Foster international cooperation

» Invest in AI research and education

» Encourage industry self-regulation

Challenges

» Rapid technological advancement makes it challenging for regulators to keep up with the latest developments

» Increase in compliance costs may push small business and startups out of the market.

» Determination of responsibility and liability when AI systems cause harm or make erroneous decisions

» Developing consensus among different countries with varying interests and priorities is a complex task.

For detailed Reading- 7 PM Link

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What is the need for regulation of AI?

1. **Bias and discrimination**: AI systems can inherit biases from the data they are trained on, leading to discriminatory outcomes. **For ex-** Facial recognition algorithms have been shown to have higher error rates for women and people with darker skin tones.

2. **Lack of transparency-** Many AI algorithms operate as black boxes, making it difficult to understand how they reach their decisions. **For ex-** Medical AI system recommending a specific medical treatment but cannot explain its reasoning.

3. **Privacy and data protection-** AI systems rely on vast amounts of personal data, raising concerns about privacy and data protection. **For ex-** Lawsuits against Silicon Valley giants for data and privacy breach in their AI systems.

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4. **Security risks-** AI systems can be vulnerable to cybersecurity threats and attacks. **For ex-** Adversarial attacks can manipulate AI models posing risks in critical domains such as autonomous vehicles or healthcare.

5. **Ethical considerations-** AI raises ethical questions related to the impact on jobs, social inequality, and concentration of power. **For ex-** automated decision-making in hiring processes have shown to perpetuate existing biases and result in unfair outcomes.

6. **Artificial General Intelligence–** AGI can self-learn and go beyond human intelligence, raising concerns of predictability and security.

7. **Autonomous Weapons Development-** These machines have the potential to make life-and-death decisions without direct human intervention, leading to ethical dilemma regarding the value of human life.

8. **Mass State Surveillance:** AI, equipped to conduct facial recognition and analyze extensive data, will empower governments to maintain round-the-clock profiles of citizens. This will make dissenting against governments difficult.

9. **Challenges associated with Deepfakes generated using AI-** There are concerns about women safety (morphed pornographic material), liar's dividend (an undesirable truth is dismissed as fake news) and fuelling radicalisation and violence (Fake videos showing armed forces committing 'crimes in conflict areas').

> Read More- Deepfakes- Explained Pointwise

What are the challenges in regulation of AI?

1. **Rapid technological advancement-** AI is evolving at a rapid pace, making it challenging for regulators to keep up with the latest developments and effectively regulate a technology that is constantly evolving.

2. **Complexity and development-** Creating effective regulations that address the intricacies of AI systems and keep pace with technological advancements is a considerable challenge.

3. **Increased costs and competition-** Compliance with regulations may impose additional costs on businesses. This disproportionately effects smaller companies and startups, limiting their ability to compete in the AI market.

4. **Accountability and liability-** Determination of responsibility and liability when AI systems cause harm or make erroneous decisions is also a considerable challenge.

5. **International cooperation-** Developing consensus among different countries with varying interests and priorities is a complex task.

What is the status of regulation of AI in India and across the globe?

India

a. **Digital India Framework-** India is developing a comprehensive Digital India Framework that will include provisions for regulating AI. The framework aims to protect digital citizens and ensure the safe and trusted use of AI.

b. **National AI programme-** India has established a National AI Programme to promote the efficient and responsible use of AI.

c. **National Data Governance Framework Policy-** India has implemented a National Data Governance Framework Policy to govern the collection, storage, and usage of data, including data used in AI systems. This policy will help ensure the ethical and responsible handling of data in the AI ecosystem.

d. **Draft Digital India Act-** The Ministry of Information Technology and Electronics (MeitY) is working on framing the draft Digital India Act, which will replace the existing IT Act. The new act will have a specific

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chapter dedicated to emerging technologies, particularly AI, and how to regulate them to protect users from harm.

Rest of the World

1. **European Union-** The European Union is working on the draft Artificial Intelligence Act (AI Act) to regulate AI from the top down.

2. **United States-** The White House Office of Science and Technology Policy has published a non-binding Blueprint for the Development, Use, and Deployment of Automated Systems (Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights), listing principles to minimize potential harm from AI.

3. **Japan-** Japan's approach to regulating AI is guided by the Society 5.0 project, aiming to address social problems with innovation.

4. **China-** China has established the "Next Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan" and published ethical guidelines for AI. It has also introduced specific laws related to AI applications, such as the management of algorithmic recommendations.

What should be the way forward?

1. **Universal adoption of the Bletchley Declaration-** The push must be made towards universal adoption of the Bletchley Declaration by all the countries.

Read More- Bletchley Declaration

2. **Establish comprehensive and flexible regulatory framework-**: The governments should develop clear guidelines and laws that address various aspects of AI, including data privacy, algorithmic transparency, accountability, and potential biases.

3. **Foster international cooperation-** Given the global nature of AI and its potential impact, collaboration among countries is essential. International standards and agreements should be developed to promote ethical practices and ensure consistency in regulation across borders. In this respect, the **G7 Hiroshima AI Process** (HAP) could facilitate discussions.

4. **Encourage industry self-regulation-** Companies involved in AI development should take responsibility for ensuring the ethical and responsible use of their technologies.

5. **Invest in AI research and education-** Governments, academic institutions, and industry stakeholders should allocate resources to R&D, and education in the field of AI. This will help create a well-informed workforce capable of addressing regulatory challenges and ensuring the safe and responsible deployment of AI technologies.

Read More- Indian Express
UPSC Syllabus- GS 3: Science and Technology – developments and their applications and effects in everyday life

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Cyclone disaster management in India- Explained Pointwise + Infographics

Cyclone Michaung has barrelled through India's southern coast and has left Chennai city flooded and struggling to return to normal. India witnesses several cyclones throughout the year, which necessitates adequate disaster management measures to minimise the damage. 8% of the geographical area in 13 Coastal States and Union Territories (UTs) of India are affected by severe tropical cyclones year after year.

Cyclone disaster management in India

» Cyclone Michaung has barrelled through India's southern coast and has left Chennai city flooded and struggling to return to normal. India witnesses several cyclones throughout the year, which necessitates adequate disaster management measures to minimise the damage.

» There has been a 52% increase in the number of cyclonic storms over the Arabian Sea (2001-2019), compared to the previous period (1982-2000).

Need

» Loss of life and displacement. For ex- The 1999 Odisha cyclone claimed over 10,000 lives

» Damage to infrastructure. For ex- Cyclone Tauktae in 2021 caused widespread damage to roads, bridges and buildings in Gujarat and MH

» High economic losses. For ex- Cyclone Fani, which hit Odisha in 2019, resulted in losses estimated at $1.81 billion.

» Impacts on livelihood. For ex- Cyclone Amphan (2020) in WB disrupted the livelihoods causing an estimated $13 billion in damage.

» Effects on public health and Education. For ex- Outbreak of Cholera after Amphan.

Challenges

» Excessive Focus on management rather than prior mitigation measures

» Ignorance of cyclone warnings. For ex- During Ockhi, cyclone disaster warnings were ignored by local bodies.

» Incapacity of State disaster management forces renders golden hour response ineffective.

» Insufficient post-disaster response. For ex- During Cyclone Jawad, many farmers resorted to distress selling and premature harvesting.

Way Forward

» Strengthen early warning systems
» Improve communication and information dissemination
» Enhance preparedness and response planning
» Strengthen infrastructure and resilience
» Enhanced Community engagement and capacity building

For detailed Reading- 7 PM Link

**Forum** LEARNING CENTRE

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About Cyclones in India

India's North Indian Ocean (NIO) region, which encompasses the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea, witnesses high frequency of cyclones. This poses significant threat to the Indian 7,500 km coastline, along with Lakshadweep and the Andaman and Nicobar Islands.

Cyclones from the Bay of Bengal- The Bay of Bengal has experienced an 8% decrease in cyclonic storms in the recent period (2001-2019), compared to the previous period (1982-2000). However, it still dominates in terms of cyclone frequency and intensity compared to the Arabian Sea. These cyclones often originate on the eastern side of the North Indian Ocean (NIO) Basin and initially move in a west-northwesterly direction.

Cyclones from the Arabian Sea- Cyclones in the Arabian Sea are less frequent but no less dangerous. However, there has been a 52% increase in the number of cyclonic storms over the Arabian Sea (2001-2019), compared to the previous period (1982-2000).

What are the cyclone-prone regions of India?
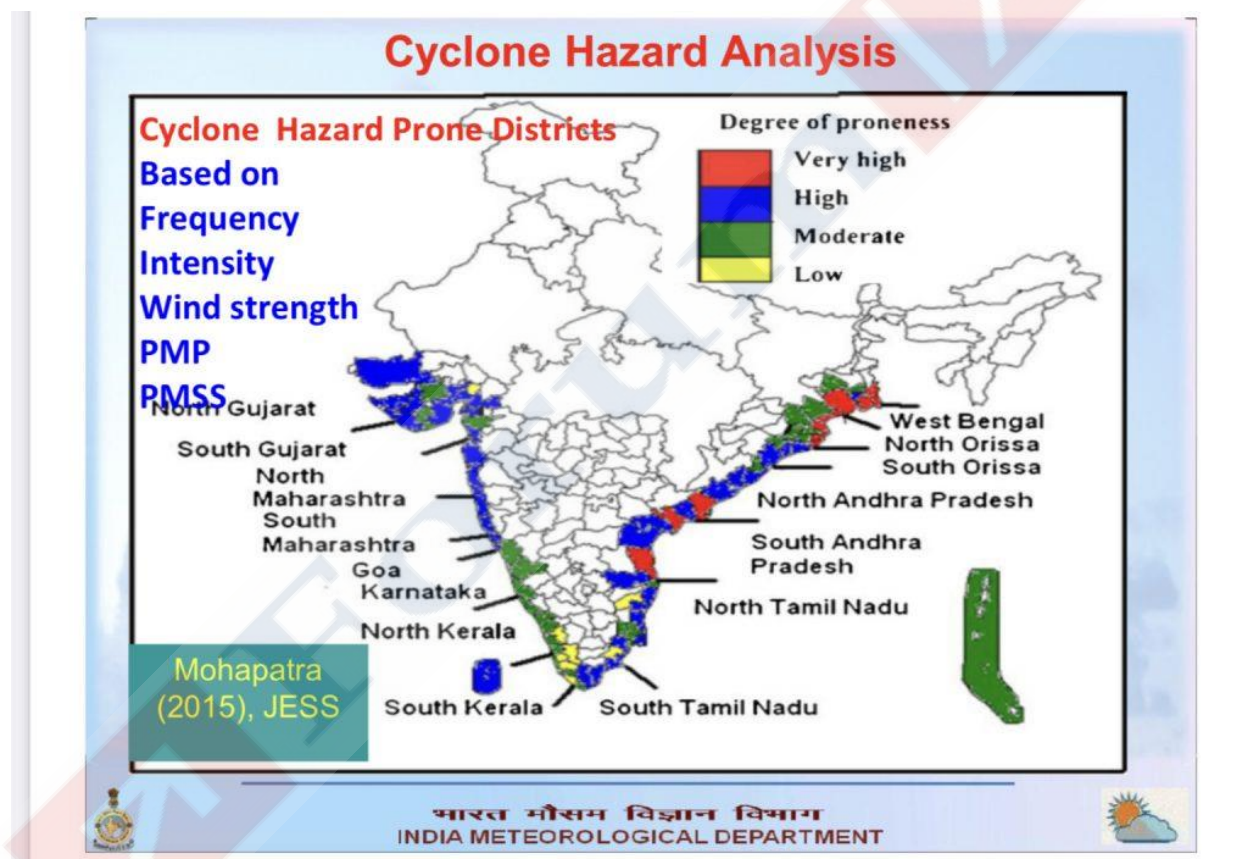
Source- IMD

What are the socio-economic impacts of cyclones in India?

Cyclones in India wreak significant havoc, leading to catastrophic socio-economic impacts. These impacts are not only direct, such as property damage and loss of life, but also indirect, affecting long-term economic development and societal well-being.

1. **Loss of life and displacement-** Historically, cyclones in India have resulted in substantial loss of life. Cyclones also often lead to mass displacement, as people are forced to evacuate their homes due to the

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imminent danger, leading to social disruption. **For ex-** the 1999 Odisha cyclone claimed over 10,000 lives. The cyclone also resulted in Mass Displacement of people.

2. **Damage to infrastructure-** Cyclones cause significant infrastructure damage. This impacts transportation, communication, electricity, and water supply. **For Ex-** Cyclone Tauktae in 2021 caused widespread damage to roads, bridges and buildings in Gujarat and Maharashtra.

3. **High economic losses-** The economic impact extends to sectors like agriculture, fisheries, and tourism, affecting the country's GDP. **For Ex-** Cyclone Fani, which hit Odisha in 2019, resulted in losses estimated at $1.81 billion.

4. **Impacts on livelihoods-** Cyclones also negatively impact livelihoods, particularly for fishermen and farmers. **For Ex-** Cyclone Amphan (2020) in West Bengal disrupted the livelihoods of millions, causing an estimated $13 billion in damage.

5. **Effects on public health-** Post-cyclone conditions can lead to the spread of waterborne diseases, creating a public health crisis. **For Ex-** Outbreak of Cholera after Amphan.

6. **Impact on education-** Cyclones often result in the closure of schools, causing educational disruption. The schools are often used as shelter homes during the cyclones.

7. **Long-term economic development-** The high cost of post-disaster recovery diverts resources from other areas of economic development. This slows down the overall economic progress of the region.

What are the Cyclone disaster management mitigation and preparedness measures in India?

1. **Early warning systems-** India Meteorological Department (IMD) early warning system help in the early detection of cyclones. This helps in issuing timely warnings that help evacuate people and limit damage.

2. **National Cyclone Risk Mitigation Project (NCRMP)-** NCRMP, supported by the World Bank, aims to enhance the preparedness and resilience of coastal communities. This is achieved through the construction of cyclone shelters, infrastructure development, and improved access routes for effective evacuation.

3. **Coastal Protection Initiatives-** Natural barriers have been created like mangrove plantations and artificial barriers like sea walls and embankments to reduce the impact of cyclones.

4. **Infrastructure Retrofitting-** Indian government has initiated a retrofitting program to strengthen cyclone shelters in vulnerable areas.

5. **Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) Project-** This initiative is designed to enhance the resilience of coastal areas through sustainable environmental practices. The project includes mapping vulnerable zones, promoting conservation, and implementing sustainable livelihood strategies for local communities.

6. **Colour-coding of cyclones By IMD-** The well-known colour-coding of natural disasters seeks to alert people to the risks' potential severity in advance. Green, yellow, orange, and red are the colours that IMD uses.

7. **Community-based disaster management-** These programs are implemented to raise awareness and train communities for cyclone preparedness. For ex- In Odisha, locals have been trained to effectively respond during cyclones.

8. **Use of technology-** Technology, such as Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping, have been used to help identify vulnerable zones and plan evacuation routes. This technology was notably used during Cyclone Fani in 2019.

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9. **Coordinated efforts-** Effective disaster management requires coordinated efforts among various agencies, such as the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), State Disaster Management Authorities (SDMAs), IMD and local administrations.

10. **Evacuation planning-** Comprehensive evacuation plans are developed for vulnerable regions. **For Ex-** During Cyclone Amphan in 2020, these plans facilitated the evacuation of over two million people in West Bengal and Bangladesh.

> Read More- El Nino: Concept and impacts

What are the issues with Cyclone disaster management In India?

India has made considerable progress in managing cyclone disasters, especially in terms of evacuation and early warning systems. However, several challenges persist that need to be addressed for a more effective cyclone disaster management system.

1. **Excessive Focus on management-** Disaster management in India is more focused on management than prevention.

2. **Ignorance of cyclone warnings-** One-third of the population of India which lives in the coastal area is poor and marginalized, rendering it ill-prepared and unable to cope with a disaster. On a few occasions, the warnings were not taken seriously by the local communities, thereby making it more disastrous. For ex- During Ockhi cyclone disaster warnings were ignored by local bodies.

3. **Incapacity of State disaster management forces-** State disaster response forces lack the capacity and preparedness to effectively respond to disasters. As they are ill-prepared to respond, the onus of response always falls on the NDRF rendering golden hour response unavailable.

4. **Insufficient post-disaster response-** There is a noticeable lack of attention given to post-disaster response in India. **For ex-** During Cyclone Jawad, many farmers resorted to distress selling and premature harvesting.

5. **Inadequate infrastructure-** Many buildings, including cyclone shelters, lack the capacity to withstand the impact of a severe cyclone with high storm surges.

6. **Communication barriers-** Language barriers, illiteracy, and the lack of access to communication tools in rural and marginalized communities hinders the effective dissemination of early warnings and instructions.

What should be done to ensure proper cyclone disaster management in India?

To ensure effective cyclone disaster management in India, several measures and actions can be taken. Here are some key steps that can be implemented:

1. **Strengthen early warning systems-** Strengthen early warning systems by investing in advanced technologies, such as weather radar systems and satellite imagery, to improve cyclone tracking and prediction.

2. **Improve communication and dissemination-** Multiple mediums, including mobile networks, radio, television, and social media, should be used to ensure widespread dissemination. **For Ex-** Odisha Disaster Management.

3. **Enhance preparedness and response planning-** Regular drills and exercises must be conducted to test the effectiveness of response mechanisms. Coordination among various stakeholders, including government agencies, civil society organizations, and the public must be improved.

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4. **Strengthen infrastructure and resilience –** Investment in the construction and retrofitting of cyclone-resistant infrastructure, including cyclone shelters, coastal embankments, and resilient housing must be increased.

5. **Community engagement and capacity building –** Regular training programs and workshops to build the capacity of communities, local leaders, and volunteers in disaster management techniques must be conducted.

6. **Integration of technology –** technological advancements, such as remote sensing, geospatial mapping, and early warning systems must be leveraged, to enhance cyclone monitoring, forecasting, and response.

Read More- Indian Express
UPSC Syllabus- GS 3: Disaster Management: Disaster and disaster management.

75 Years of Universal Declaration of Human Rights- Explained Pointwise+ Infographics

Seventy-five years ago, on 10th December 1948, the UN General Assembly approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights at a meeting in Paris. This laid one of the foundation stones of the international order that emerged following the horrors of World War II.

The declaration was proclaimed as "a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations." However, in practice, it has not turned out the way it was conceived.

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Universal Declaration of Human Rights

» The UN General Assembly approved the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, on 10th December 1948, at a meeting in Paris. This year marks the Seventy-five years of UDHR.

» It is a document that acts like a global road map for freedom and equality. It protects the rights of every individual, everywhere.

» The declaration is not a treaty and is not legally binding in itself. The principles set out in the Declaration have been incorporated into many countries' laws. It is viewed as the basis for international human rights law.

Significance

» Inspiration for different Freedom Movements. For ex- Decolonisation movements in Africa and South East Asia.

» Inspiration for new social movements like anti-apartheid movement, LGBTIQ+ movement and the anti-racism movements. For ex- Civil Right movement in the USA

» Apolitical and secular document that transcends all barriers based on culture, gender, religion and political ideologies

» Introduction of "Rule of Law"

» Foundation of fundamental rights in constitutions. For Ex- Fundamental rights part in the Indian constitution.

Challenges

» Recent geopolitical conflicts like Israel-Hamas War, Russia's war in Ukraine.

» Misuse and exploitation for political gain. For ex- Rwandan Genocide.

» Abuse of Human rights of women. For ex- Invasive vaginal examinations In Afghanistan

» Abuse of Right to live with dignity. For ex- Manual Scavenging, Rag picking.

» Corruption in Governance. For ex- Misuse of anti-terror laws.

Way Forward

» Focus on Human rights abuse in Underdeveloped and Developing Countries

» Alignment of territorial laws with UDHR. For ex- Public flogging in the Middle East.

» Active Role of UNSC in protection of Human Rights. For ex- Torture of Uighurs in China.

» Enactment of domestic human rights law and domestic human rights institutions. For ex- NHRC in India

For detailed Reading- 7 PM Link

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What is the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

It for the first time asserted universal protection of human rights. The UDHR was discussed by all members of the UN Commission on Human Rights and finally adopted by the General Assembly in 1948. It is a document that acts like a global road map for freedom and equality. It protects the rights of every individual, everywhere.

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Source- HRE USA

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Read More- State of Human Rights in India -Explained, Pointwise

What is the Significance of Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

1. **Gave fillip to the different Freedom Movements-** The UDHR supported the decolonisation movement by enunciating the ideals of basic human dignity and freedom. **For Ex-** Decolonisation movements in Africa and South East Asia.

2. **Foundation of fundamental rights in constitutions-** The human rights declaration has become the foundation for fundamental rights and individual liberty in different national constitutions and regional and multilateral agreements. **For ex-** Fundamental rights part in the Indian constitution.

3. Inspiration for new social movements- The Universal Declaration of Human Rights also inspired the anti-apartheid movement, LGBTIQ+ movement and the anti-racism movements across the globe. **For Ex-** Civil Right movement in the USA.

4. **Apolitical and Secular Document-** It is an apolitical and secular document that transcends all barriers based on culture, gender, religion and political ideologies.

5. **Introduction of "Rule of Law"-** The widely used phrase "rule of law" was first used in the document of UDHR. According to the principle of rule of law, human beings are equal in the eyes of the law irrespective of territorial, jurisdiction and political ideologies.

What are the Challenges to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights?

1. **Geopolitical conflicts-** The recent geopolitical conflicts like Israel-Hamas War, Russia's war in Ukraine, internal conflicts in Myanmar and Sudan, have emerged as major challenge to Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

2. **Misuse and Abuse-** The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has been misused and exploited for political gain. **For Ex-** Rwandan Genocide (instigated by the military coup in Rwanda under the garb of protection of human rights).

3. **Abuse of Human rights of women-** Women are considered weak in our society and are often denied basic human rights. They are subjected to violence in society whether it is within four walls of the house or at workplace. **For Ex-** Invasive vaginal examinations in Afghanistan.

4. **Abuse of Right to live with dignity-** The right to live with dignity has been challenged by the socio-economic malpractices like manual scavenging, rag picking etc.

5. **Corruption in Governance-** Corruption threatens the rule of law, democracy and human rights and undermines good governance. **For Ex-** Misuse of anti-terror laws.

6. **Non-enforceable nature of the Declaration**– As the UDHR is a non-binding document, it renders it ineffective in checking human rights violations.

What should be the way forward?

1. **Alignment of territorial laws with UDHR**– The existing legislations and provisions should be aligned according to the UDHR. **For Ex-** Public flogging in the Middle East.

2. **Active Role of UNSC-** The UNSC must rise over partisan interests and play an active role in the protection of the UDHR principles. **For Ex-** Torture of Uighurs in China.

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3. **Enforcement of Domestic Human Rights Law-** Countries must enact human rights laws in consonance with the UDHR principles and establish institutions for effective monitoring of violation of human rights. **For Ex-** NHRC in India.

4. **Ethical Importance of Human Rights-** Human rights are inalienable to human existence. Abuse of human rights is an abuse to humanity. Ethical considerations of human rights protection must be the guiding light for ethical governance.

John F Kennedy once said that "**The rights of every man are diminished when the rights of one man are threatened**". So the governments have to understand that and ensure proper enforcement of human rights. After all, denying human rights is a challenge to humanity itself.

Read More- Business Standard
UPSC Syllabus- Important International Institutions, agencies and fora- their Structure, Mandate

SC Verdict on Article 370- Explained Pointwise+ Infographic

The Supreme Court in a 5-0 unanimous ruling upheld the Centre's abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution. Chief Justice of India (CJI) D Y Chandrachud presided over the Bench, which also comprised the four other most senior judges of the court- Justices S K Kaul, Sanjeev Khanna, B R Gavai, and Surya Kant.

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SC Verdict on abrogation of Art 370 Explained

SC Verdict

» **On the sovereignty of Jammu and Kashmir**- The SC held that merger of J&K with India was the same as the other princely states in India. The state of Jammu and Kashmir didn't enjoy any internal sovereignty.

SC Rationale
1. SC cited that Karan Singh's proclamation, issued by the son of the J&K's then ruler Hari Singh, on November 25, 1949, accepted the supremacy of the Indian Constitution and surrendered the J&K sovereignty to it.
2. SC also cited that Section 3 of the J&K constitution held J&K as an integral part of India. Section 147 of the J&K Constitution prohibited any amendment to Section 3.

» **On whether Art 370 is temporary or permanent**- SC held Art 370 that Article 370 was a temporary provision.

SC Rationale
1. SC contended that Art 370 as an interim arrangement until the Constituent Assembly of the State was formed. Art 370 served as a temporary legal bridge between J&K and India.
2. The provision was adopted because of the special circumstances in the state, which was experiencing war conditions at that time.

» **On the legality of the abrogation of Article 370**- SC upheld the legality of presidential proclamations CO 272 and CO 273 used to abrogate Article 370.

SC Rationale
SC clarified that, after the Constituent Assembly of the state ceased to exist, the President could have always unilaterally abrogated Article 370.

» **On the action that was taken under President's rule**- SC upheld the action of state reorganisation of J&K during president's rule.

SC Rationale
SC held that the decision taken during the President's rule to bifurcate the state of Jammu and Kashmir and to convert it into UT, was not malafide. Hence no judicial review of the decision was required.

For detailed Reading- 7 PM Link

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What is Article 370 of the Indian Constitution?

Article 370- Article 370, was added to the Indian constitution, as a 'temporary provision', on October 17, 1949. It permitted the state of J&K to draft its own Constitution. The Constituent Assembly of Jammu & Kashmir was empowered to recommend which articles of the Indian Constitution should apply to the state. It restricted the Indian Parliament's legislative powers in the state.

Article 35A- Clause 3 of the article 370 gave the President of India the power to amend its provisions and scope. Article 35A stemmed from Article 370 and was introduced through a Presidential Order in 1954, on the recommendation of the J&K Constituent Assembly. Article 35A empowered the Jammu & Kashmir legislature to define the permanent residents of the state, and their special rights and privileges.

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Presidential Proclamation Abrogating Article 370- On 5th August 2019, President of India in the exercise of the powers conferred by Clause (1) of Article 370 of the Constitution had issued the Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019. The laws of the Parliament will now be applicable to the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

What will be the benefits of the SC judgement on Article 370?

1. **Promotion of National Integration-** Allowing a separate constitution, flag and powers to Jammu and Kashmir had created a sense of separate identity among the people of the state. This had been used to misguide youth and create a demand of separatism among them. The verdict paves a way for the National Integration of J&K with rest of India.

2. Aid in the fight against Terrorism- Owing to cross border terrorism, around 42 thousand people have lost lives in the state. The special status was considered an impediment in fight against terrorism. The verdict has bolstered the powers of the central government in its fight against terrorism in the valley by allowing the application of stringent anti-terror laws like UAPA.

3. **Reduction of Corruption and graft-** Article 370 resulted in poor anti-graft architecture in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Anti-corruption agencies could not enter the state, which resulted in massive corruption, money laundering and hawala transactions. With the SC seal on the abrogation of Article 370, the PMLA and FEMA act can be stringently applied.

4. **Promotion of economic development-** Due to the application of Article 370, the land in the state could only be sold and bought by the permanent residents of the state. As a result, large businesses houses did not invest in the region owing to land concerns. The final stamp of SC, on Article 370, will attract greater investment in the state of J&K.

5. **Effective implementation of affirmative policies-** Various affirmative legislations such as Right to Education, Right to Information were not available to the citizens of Jammu and Kashmir. Also, the reservations benefits, to OBCs, SCs, STs were not available to the marginalised sections of the state. The SC Verdict will help in effective implementation of these affirmative policies.

> Read More- Impact of abrogation of Article 370 in India

What challenges can emerge with the SC verdict on Art 370?

1. **Misuse of the President Rule-** The majoritarian governments at the centre can misuse the President's rule to bring irrevocable changes to the states like bifurcation of the state without consulting the state legislative assemblies. The president's rule was imposed and the Parliament used its power to bifurcate of the state of J&K into two UTs of J&K and Ladakh, without consulting the state legislative assembly.

2. **Undermine the federal principles-** The Parliament can use its amending powers to undermine federalism and democratic processes. **For ex-** A backdoor amendment to an article of the Constitution by amending another article. Article 367 was amended to give effect to abrogation of Art 370.

3. **Threat to Regional Identity-** One of the primary rationales behind Article 370 was to respect and preserve the unique identity, history, and culture of the state of Jammu and Kashmir. This can raise insecurity among the regional communities being accorded special treatment or protection

4. **Harmonious Relations-** The provision was intended to promote harmonious relations between the region of Jammu and Kashmir and the rest of India. The separatist elements can use this verdict to fuel separatism and radicalism in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

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5. **Against the principle of Asymmetric federalism-** Asymmetric federalism is enshrined in the Indian constitution, with some special provisions granted to certain states like North-Eastern States and Socio-economically backward states (Art 371). The Verdict has impinged upon the settled principle of asymmetric federalism.

What Should be the Way Forward?

Since Art 370 has become a thing of the past, with SC upholding the abrogation of Art 370, we must look forward to restoring normalcy in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

1. **Set up Truth and Reconciliation Commission-** The government of India must set up the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, as directed by the SC, to look into alleged violations of human rights by both state and non-state actors in J&K. It should be based on a dialogue and not become a criminal court.

2. **Conduct Elections and restore the statehood of J&K-** The Central government must ensure normalcy in the Valley for peaceful conduction of democratic elections and restoration of the statehood of J&K.

3. **De-radicalization-** More aggressive attempts must be made towards de-radicalization of youth in the valley.

4. **Check the misuse of AFSPA-** AFSPA provisions must be withdrawn in a phase bound manner from the areas which attain normalcy.

5. **Focus on Development-** The imminent focus of the government must be on promoting inclusive economic development of the region by effective implementation of the affirmative policies of the government.

> Read More- Indian Express
> UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Indian Constitution—Historical Underpinnings, Evolution, Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions and Basic Structure.

India and Global South- Explained Pointwise + Infographic

Right from India's independence in 1947 to its presidency of the G20 in 2023, India shared a vision of being the voice of the Global South. India ensured to walk the talk with its focus on raising concerns of the Global South. The issues of Global South remain unaddressed as the countries of Global South are under-represented in the global forums.

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India and Global South

» The **Global South** refers to countries often characterized as developing, less developed, or underdeveloped, primarily located in Africa, Asia, and Latin America. These nations have higher levels of poverty, income inequality, and challenging living conditions compared to the wealthier nations of the Global North.

» Throughout its presidency of the G20, India shared a vision of being the voice of the Global South. India ensured to walk the talk with its focus on raising concerns of the Global South.

» The **issues of Global South remain unaddressed** as the countries of Global South are under-represented in the global forums.

India's Historical Relations

» India played an active role in **establishment of NAM.** NAM represented the socio-economic and political priorities of the Global South.

» India also played a key leadership role in the **establishment of G-77**, to present a single voice of the Global South at the UNGA, and all UN committees.

» India's key leadership role in the **Stockholm conference 1972**, led to the evolution of the principles of Sustainable Development & CBDR

However, with the end of the Cold War and a domestic economic crisis, India started placing it's own national economic and security interests above the ideals of justice and equity for Global South

Brandt line

Current Developments

» **New Delhi Declaration of G-20** inlcuded the issues of the Global South

» India's push for **expansion of G-20** by inclusion of African Union.

» Regular **Voice of Global South Summit** by India to build solidarity among the Global South countries

» **Vaccine Maitri** of India saved the lives of many in the Global South Countries by supplying free vaccine

» India's leadership role in climate negotiations to promote the interests of Global South. For ex- **Loss and Damage Fund at COP 28.**

Challenges

» India's **neglect of NAM and G-77**

» **Conflict in UNSC Membership** with the coffee club consisting of Global South opposing India's membership

» **Locking horns with China** to emerge as the leader of Global South.

» After launching summits with regions of Africa and Indo-Pacific, India has **failed to engage** with them on a constant basis

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What is Global South?

1) The Global South refers to countries often characterized as developing, less developed, or underdeveloped, primarily located in Africa, Asia, and Latin America.

2) These nations have higher levels of poverty, income inequality, and challenging living conditions compared to the wealthier nations of the Global North.

3) The Global North are richer nations that are located mostly in North America and Europe, with some additions in Oceania and elsewhere.

The Brandt Line divides the countries of Global North and the Global South

1) The Brandt Line was proposed by Willy Brandt in the 1980s.

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2) It is an imaginary line that divides the world into richer countries (mainly in the Northern Hemisphere) and poorer countries (mostly in the Southern Hemisphere).

3) The line basically shows the socio-economic divide between northern countries and southern countries.

Figure 1Source- Wikipedia

Read More- Fallacy, fantasy, Global South

What is India's Historical Association with Global South?

India shared its roots of colonial struggles and underdevelopment with the countries of Global South. Hence, under the leadership of PM Nehru, the newly Independent India took a leadership role in putting across the issues of the Global South.

1. **Establishment of Non Alignment Movement**– India played an active role in establishment of NAM. It represented the socio-economic and political priorities of the Global South. India also played a leadership role in drafting the NAM's agenda of New International Economic Order to counter the dominance of Bretton Woods organisations.

2. **Establishment of G-77-** India also played a key leadership role in the establishment of G-77, which is a coalition of 134 developing nations at the UN. The main aim of G-77 was to present a single voice of the Global South at the UNGA, and all UN committees.

3. **Stockholm Conference of 1972-** India played a key role in voicing the concerns of Global South against Climate Change. India's key leadership role in the conference led to the evolution of the principles of Sustainable Development (Brundtland Report), Common But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) and the Polluters Pay Principles.

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However, with the end of the Cold War and a domestic economic crisis, a new-found pragmatism began to emerge in the Indian foreign policy. India placed it's own national economic and security interests above the ideals of justice and equity for Global South. This is indicated by the following examples-

1. **Neglect of NAM after the Cold War-** India sent NAM into a state of abeyance. In recent years, India's engagement at NAM Summit has not been at the highest political level, with the Indian PM choosing to skip the 18th NAM Summit in 2019.

2. **Deeper strategic relations with Global North-** India has started developing closer strategic ties with the countries of Global North like US, EU, Japan. **For Ex-** India-US Civil Nuclear Deal.

3. **New Multilateral Forum-** India deepened its engagement with new multilateral fora like BRICS, SCO, ASEAN at the cost of G-77 and NAM.

However, with the growing economic and geopolitical heft of India, it has emerged as the Voice of Global South Once again.

How is India becoming the Voice of the Global South?

1. **New Delhi Declaration-** India used the G-20 presidency to build consensus among the G-20 members to include the issues of the Global South like debt financing, climate justice and gender equality in the New Delhi Declaration.

2. **Expansion of G-20-** India played a key role in giving Voice to Global South Members at the high table of G-20 by inclusion of African Union.

3. **Voice of Global South Summit-** India has been conducting the Voice of Global South Summit to build solidarity among the Global South countries, amidst the unprecedented challenges these countries are facing.

4. **Vaccine Maitri-** In the wake of COVID-19, India has played a key role in saving the lives of many in the Global South Countries by supplying free vaccine and medicines.

5. **More representative multilateral fora-** India has also played a key role in making other multilateral fora like BRICS, SCO more representative by inclusion of countries from the Global South. **For Ex-** BRICS transforming into BRICS PLUS.

6. **Climate Justice-** India has been playing a key leadership role in climate negotiations to promote the interests of Global South. **For Ex-** Recently established Loss and Damage Fund at COP28.

What are the headwinds which inhibit India from becoming a leader of the Global South?

1. **UNSC Membership-** India's campaign for a permanent seat at UNSC as part of the G-4 group is opposed by the Coffee Club members which consist of Global south countries from Africa and Asia.

2. **India's neglect of NAM and G-77-** India has been neglecting the oldest grouping of Global South, which has often caused breakdown of effective communication between the countries of Global South.

3. **China Factor-** China with its deep pockets has been splurging economic aid and developmental assistance to the countries of Global South. India has been locking horns with China to emerge as the leader of Global South.

4. **Lack of Consistent Engagement-** After launching summits with regions of Africa and Indo-Pacific, India has failed to engage with them on a constant basis. **For Ex-** No India-Africa Summit has been held since the three summits from 2015-2018. India also failed to show up at the Pacific Island Summit in Papua New Guinea in 2023.

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5. **Big Brother Attitude-** India has been accused of meddling in domestic politics of the countries of Global South. This has attracted mistrust among these countries regarding India's leadership role. **For Ex-** 'India Out Campaign' in the Maldives.

6. **Delays in Project Implementation-** India's aim to become the 'Voice of the Global South' is also challenged by India's incapacity to deliver on the development projects within the agreed time frame. **For Ex-** delays in Kaladan Project, Asia Africa Growth Corridor, etc.

What Should be the way Forward?

1. **India's own Development Bank-** India must establish its own Development bank to provide development assistance to the Global South and emerge as an alternative to China.

2. **Revival of NAM-** India must revive the NAM forum in the post COVID world, which is seeing increased ideological divide & geopolitical conflicts like Ukraine-Russia War and Israel-Hamas wars.

3. **Improved capacity to deliver projects-** India must invest its energy and resources to improve the quality and timely delivery of its purported projects.

4. **Shed the big brother attitude-** India must shed its big brother attitude and build ties based on mutual trust and respect with the countries of Global South.

5. **Continued summits-** India must engage with the African nations and the Indo-Pacific nations by regularising the Indo-Africa summit.

> **Read More-** Indian Express
>
> **UPSC Syllabus- GS 2**- Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

COP 28 Outcomes and Shortcomings- Explained Pointwise+ Infographics

Recently, Conference of Parties 28 (COP 28) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was concluded in Dubai, UAE. The COP 28 climate meeting delivered some important outcomes. However, like all previous COPs, it still remained an underachiever, particularly in galvanising more ambitious climate action in the immediate term.

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COP 28 - Important Outcomes

Major COP Outcomes Explained

» **Transition Away From Fossil-Fuel-** Nearly 200 countries agreed to "transition away from fossil fuels in energy systems" at the COP28. The agreement is the first time countries have made this pledge.

» **Global Renewables and Energy Efficiency Pledge-** Signatory countries to work together to triple the world's installed renewable energy generation capacity to at least 11,000 GW by 2030. The countries must collectively double the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements from around 2% to over 4% every year until 2030.

» **Loss and Damage Fund-** Operationalization of the Loss and Damage (L&D) fund aimed at compensating countries grappling with climate change impacts. Commitments worth about US$ 800 million had been made to the Fund. The World Bank will be the "interim host" of the fund for four years.

» **Global Goal on Adaptation-** The draft text on the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA) was introduced at COP 28. It aims to enhance climate change adaptation by increasing awareness and funding towards countries' adaptation needs in the context of the 1.5/2°C goal of the Paris Agreement

» **The Global Cooling Pledge-** 66 national government signatories committed to working together to reduce cooling-related emissions across all sectors by at least 68% globally relative to 2022 levels by 2050.

» **Declaration to Triple Nuclear Energy-** The declaration launched at COP28 aims to triple global nuclear energy capacity by 2050. It was endorsed by 22 National Governments.

» **Coal Transition Accelerator-** France, in collaboration with various countries and organizations, introduced the Coal Transition Accelerator. The initiative aims to leverage best practices and lessons learned for effective coal transition policies.

» **CHAMP Initiative-** Coalition for High Ambition Multilevel Partnership (CHAMP) for Climate Action was launched at COP 28. This initiative aims at efficient planning, financing, implementation, and monitoring of climate strategies

» **Climate Finance-** Under the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for climate finance, wealthy nations owe developing countries USD 500 billion in 2025.

India Led Initiative at COP 28

» **Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA)-** The GRCA is a unique alliance covering 275+ global river-cities in 11 countries. GRCA highlights India's role in sustainable river-centric development.

» **Green Credit Initiative-** Global platform for exchange of innovative environmental programs related to water conservation and afforestation.

For detailed Reading- 7 PM Link

What have been the Positive Outcomes of COP-28?

1. **Global Climate Stocktake-** Based on the global stocktake review at COP28, countries would be required to submit raised emissions reduction targets by mid-2025 for finalisation at COP30. This stocktake can guide our future climate action.

2. **Operationalisation of Loss and Damage Fund-** The operationalisation of the fund will help in ensuring climate justice to the developing and underdeveloped countries which have suffered tremendous loss and damage due to climate change.

3. **Fossil fuel role in Climate Change-** In COP-28, the role of fossil fuels in causing global warming has been formally acknowledged for the first time. Fossil fuels which contribute to 75% of all greenhouse gases and about 90% of global carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions, took centre stage at COP28. This marks the beginning of the end of fossil fuel usage in the world.

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4. **Phase-down of coal-** The COP-28 document singles out coal amongst other fossil fuels by calling for phase down.

5. **Emission reduction with enhanced focus on renewable energy-** The Global Renewables and Energy Efficiency Pledge, adopted at COP 28, has the potential to avoid emissions of about 7 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent between now and 2030. This reduction of emissions will be more than the combined emission reduction due to all the other climate actions being currently taken.

6. **Increased Focus on Adaptation-** COP 28 resulted in the identification of some common adaptation goals, which are important for the entire world. Before COP 28, adaptation measures had largely been a local endeavour.

7. **Need for enhanced Climate Finance-** The COP 28 conference also highlighted the need for enhanced climate finance to combat the climate change consequences. According to the report by UNCTAD, wealthy nations owe developing countries USD 500 billion in 2025 under the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) for climate finance.

8. **Diverse participation-** The COP 28 saw the participation of activist groups, indigenous groups, big and small business, consultancies, traders and media. These diverse groups enhance the transparency of the Climate change negotiations.

> Read More- Loss and Damage Fund- Explained Pointwise

What are the Shortcomings of COP 28?

1. **Lack of Ambitious Climate Action-** Despite the various pledges, no binding ambitious climate action was launched.

2. **Issues with the Fossil Fuel Pledge-** No time schedules and targets have been fixed for the phase out of fossil fuel.

3. **Issues with the Renewable Energy Pledge-** Under the pledge, tripling of global renewable energy has been made a global target. However, there is no clarity as to how this would be achieved as no binding individual targets were made.

4. **Issue with Phase Down of Coal Usage-** COP 28 failed to resolve the impasse over the proposal that no new coal-fired power plants could be opened without an in-built carbon capture and storage facility.

5. **Impasse over Methane Emission Cuts-** Several countries, including India, are extremely opposed to any binding commitment to cut methane emissions. Cutting methane emissions could involve tweaking agricultural patterns, which could pose concerns for food security in developing countries like India.

6. **Lack of Financing Mechanism-** COP 28 has failed to set up a financial mechanism to finance the Global Goal on Adaptation. The Draft of COP 28, did not express any concern over the failure of commitment on developed nations to provide $100 bn climate finance per year by 2020. The loss and Damage funding has been made voluntary.

7. **Misuse of the loose definitions in the COP 28 Draft-** The inclusion of the terms like "low-carbon fuels", "low-emission" technologies, "low-carbon hydrogen", and "transitional fuels", can be misused by the EU and US as they use these terms to describe natural gas. Natural gas is a major fossil fuel and contributes to global warming and climate change.

8. **No mention of CBDR-** The term Collective But Differentiated Responsibilities (CBDR) and Polluter's pay principle have been missing from the draft of the COP 28.

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What Should be the Way Forward?

Though the COP-28 has introduced new goals and pledges, substantial follow-up actions need to be undertaken to fulfil these goals.

1. **Introduction of New Indicators-** New tangible indicators need to be identified to measure progress on each of the global goals established at COP 28.

2. **Establishment of Financial Mechanism-** Financial mechanism to raise $500 bn as estimated by the UNCTAD must be established at the earliest. Developed nations must not be given leeway to cut down on their financial obligation.

3. **Binding commitments**– Efforts must be taken to make the renewable energy pledges binding on all the member countries.

4. **Clarity on phase down of Fossil Fuel-** Clarity on the timeline and targets for fossil fuel phase down must be on the highest agenda of the future COPs.

5. **Climate Justice-** Common but Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR) must remain the guiding light in upcoming climate negotiations.

> **Read More-** Indian Express
> **UPSC Syllabus- GS 3-** Climate Action and Climate Change, Conservation

Climate Negotiations and India- Explained Pointwise+Infographic

India has generally been at the forefront in the Climate Change negotiations like the Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). India has also taken several initiatives and pledges over the years for ensuring Climate Justice. However, with a long development path ahead, India has adopted a cautious approach in the recent climate change negotiations at the COP 28 to protect its own national interest.

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Climate Change Negotiations and India

» India has generally been at the forefront in the Climate change negotiations at the Conference of Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). India has taken several initiatives and pledges over the years for ensuring Climate Justice.

» However, with a long development path ahead, India has adopted a cautious approach in the recent climate change negotiations like the COP 28 to protect its own national interest.

🏆 Leadership Role

» The ambitious INDC targets adopted by India has nudged developed nations to take up more ambitious targets. For ex- Mission Life of India

» Indian initiatives to address the vulnerability of the agricultural sector to climate change impacts. For ex- Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA) and Green Credit Initiative (GCI).

» India has enhanced its renewable energy targets to 500 GW by 2030. This has inspired the "Global Renewables and Energy Efficiency Pledge" at COP 28.

» The International Solar Alliance (ISA), Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA) showcase India's proactive role in fostering international cooperation for sustainable energy solutions.

🛣 Way Forward

» Decoupling economy from fossil fuel. For ex- Shift from coal to EV Battery manufacturing.

» Technology transfer to the smaller developing countries. For ex- IIT-Madras campus in Zanzibar

» Transition of its role from a drawer to contributor of the Loss and Damage Fund

» India must ensure that CBDR remains the guiding light in upcoming climate negotiations.

⚠ Cautious Approach

» India has been against the phase out of coal usage as it is a major source of revenue and energy needs.

» India has been concerned about the phase down of fossil fuel as it is inextricably linked to its economic growth.

» India is opposed to any binding commitment to cut methane emissions as it could involve tweaking agri-production patterns and cause food insecurity.

» India has not committed any contribution to the Loss and Damage Fund (LDF).

» India has been against any mandatory emission reduction, which is a demand of developed contries.

For detailed Reading- 7 PM Link

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What has been the positive role of India in the climate change negotiations over the years?

India's leadership in global climate change negotiations has been marked by a distinctive blend of environmental responsibility and a steadfast commitment to inclusive development. Several tangible examples underscore India's leadership role in shaping the discourse on climate change-

1. **Ambitious INDC targets-** India's Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) under the Paris Agreement emphasize a reduction in emissions intensity while allowing for economic growth. The ambitious targets adopted by India has nudged developed nations to take up more ambitious targets.

2. **Commitment to the Principles of Climate Justice-** India has consistently advocated for the principles of "common but differentiated responsibilities, polluters pay principle, compensation for loss and damage" to be the guiding light in all climate change negotiations. India's stance has aimed for equity in sharing the burden of climate action.

3. **Renewable Energy Leadership-** Renewable energy, if tripled, has the potential to avoid emissions of about 7 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent. Recognizing this, India has enhanced its renewable energy targets to 500 GW by 2030, three times of the current renewable energy capacity of 177 GW.

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4. **Innovative Policy Initiatives-** The International Solar Alliance (ISA), Global Biofuel Alliance (GBA), Green Credit Initiative (GCI), showcase India's proactive role in fostering international cooperation for sustainable energy solutions.

5. **Active role in COP Meetings-** Through diplomatic efforts at the COPs, India has sought to bridge the gap between developed and developing nations. It has advocated for a consensus on critical issues such as finance, technology transfer, and adaptation. **For Ex-** Loss and Damage Fund established at COP28.

6. **Nudging Pro-Climate Lifestyle-** India launched Mission LiFe during COP26 as a global mass movement to nudge individual and community actions to protect and preserve the environment.

What is the inward looking stance of India at the recent Climate Change Negotiations?

1. **Against Phase out of Coal-** India has been against the policy of phase down of coal usage as it is a major source of revenue and energy needs. The developed countries have proposed that no new coal-fired power plants could be opened without an in-built carbon capture and storage facility. India has opposed the proposal.

2. **Phase Down of Fossil Fuel-** India has been concerned about the phase down of fossil fuel as it is inextricably linked to its economic growth.

3. **Methane emission cuts-** India is opposed to any binding commitment to cut methane emissions. Cutting methane emissions could involve tweaking agricultural patterns, which could pose concerns for food security in developing countries like India.

4. **Mandatory emission reduction-** India has been against any mandatory emission reduction which is being demanded by the developed countries.

5. **No Contribution to LDF-** India has not committed any contribution to the Loss and Damage Fund (LDF). The expectations of Pacific nations and other vulnerable island countries has been that India, which will soon be a $3 trillion economy, must contribute to the Loss and Damage Fund.

6. **Refusal to sign Pledges at COP28-** India has not signed The Global Renewables and Energy Efficiency Pledge as well as the Declaration on Climate and Health at the recently concluded COP28. It has claimed that the pledges go against India's developmental interests by focusing on de-carbonisation of crucial sectors.

Read More- COP 28 Outcomes and Shortcomings- Explained Pointwise

What Should be the Way Forward?

India must take up the following route to become the true leader of Climate Change negotiations and actions.

1. **Decoupling economy from fossil fuel-** India must decouple its economic growth and livelihood from the fossil fuel and coal usage. Alternative employment opportunities must be created in the renewable energy sector. **For ex-** EV Battery manufacturing.

2. **Technology transfer to the smaller developing countries-** India must ensure that it is able to transfer its learnings to other economies. **For ex-** IIT-Madras campus in Zanzibar.

3. **Contribution to LDF-** India must ensure that it transitions its role from a drawer to contributor of the Loss and Damage Fund.

4. **Use of the NDMA expertise-** The National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) expertise can be used for capacity building of the vulnerable island nations and make them climate resilient.

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5. **Ensure Climate Justice-** India must ensure that Common but Differentiated Responsibility (CBDR) remains **the guiding light in upcoming climate negotiations.**

Read More- The Hindu
UPSC Syllabus- GS III- Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment

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Asymmetric Federalism- Explained Pointwise+ Infographics

The recent SC verdict on abrogation of Art 370 (Special provision with respect to J&K) has highlighted the nature of asymmetric federalism existing in India. The proponents of Art 370 argued that the provision was a part of the asymmetric federalism envisaged by our constitutional forefathers.

Asymmetric Federalism In India

» **Asymmetric federalism** is based on unequal powers and relationships in political, administrative, and fiscal arrangement spheres between the federal units constituting a federation.

» Asymmetric federalism can be both due to the constitutional provisions and due to the various conventions practised in the federation.

Type of Asymmetric Federalism

Vertical Asymmetry (Centre and States)	Horizontal Asymmetry (Between States/UT's)	Fiscal Asymmetry
Article 3- The Centre can unilaterally alter the state names and boundaries. Article 352 & 356- Provisions related to imposition of National Emergency and President's rule. Article 248- Residuary powers of legislation rests with the parliament. Single citizenship- In India, only single citizenship is available to citizens. They cannot be citizens of the state as well. Governor's appointment- The governor of a state acts as the centre's representative in the state.	Art 371A-371J- Special position, powers, and protection enjoyed by north-eastern states. Schedule 5- The administration and control of Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes residing in any State other than Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. Schedule 6- The administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram.	Vertical asymmetry- As per the recommendations of the 15th FC, the share of states in the central taxes for the 2021-26 period is recommended to be 41%. Devolution among states (Horizontal asymmetry)- Criteria like income distance, demographic performance, forest and ecology, etc., are used for devolution among the states. Centrally sponsored schemes (CSS)- For special category status states, the Centre pays 90% of the funds required in a CSS, as against 60% in the case of normal category states.

Significance

» Helps in **protecting fundamental rights** and compensates for initial inequalities in the social system.

» **Ensuring Social justice** for extremely disadvantaged group

» **Accommodation and integration** of regional aspirations by providing self rule within a system of shared rule.

» **More power and autonomy** to the minorities to protect their interests.

» **Addresses state-specific issues** by giving them more resources and attention.

» **Strengthens federalism** by ensuring decentralisation of power and democratic decision-making.

Challenges in the implementation of Asymmetric Federalism

» **Selective application based on political considerations** resulting in differential treatment.

» **Economic disparities and regional imbalances** by preferential funding or fiscal arrangements .

» **Disparities** in the promotion and protection of **cultural and linguistic protections.**

For detailed Reading- 7 PM Link

What is Asymmetric Federalism? What are the Relevant Constitutional Provisions?

Federalism- Federalism is a system of government in which powers have been divided between the centre and its constituent parts such as states or provinces

Asymmetric Federalism- Asymmetric federalism is based on unequal powers and relationships in political, administrative, and fiscal arrangement spheres between the federal units constituting a federation.

Asymmetric federalism can be both vertical (between centre and states) and horizontal (among the states). It is promoted by the various constitutional provisions and conventions practised in the federation.

Types of Asymmetric Federalism with Constitutional Provisions

Vertical Asymmetry (Centre and States)	Horizontal Asymmetry (Between States/UT's)	Fiscal Asymmetry
Article 3- The Centre can unilaterally alter the state names and boundaries. **Article 352 & 356-** Provisions related to imposition of National Emergency and President's rule. **Article 248-** Residuary powers of legislation rests with the parliament. **Single citizenship-** In India, only single citizenship is available to citizens. They cannot be citizens of the state as well. **Governor's appointment-** The governor of a state acts as the Centre's representative in the state.	**Art 371-371J-** Special position, powers, and protection enjoyed by some states. **Schedule 5-** The administration and control of tribal areas in 10 states other than Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. **Schedule 6-** The administration of tribal areas in Assam, Meghalaya, Tripura, and Mizoram. **Article 239AA-** Delhi has a unique status among the UTs by having a state legislature.	**Vertical asymmetry-** As per the recommendations of the 15th FC, the share of states in the central taxes for the 2021-26 period is recommended to be 41%. **Devolution among states (Horizontal asymmetry)-** Criteria like income distance, demographic performance, forest and ecology, etc., are used for differential devolution among the states. **Centrally sponsored schemes (CSS)-** For special category status states, the Centre pays 90% of the funds required in a CSS, as against 60% in the case of normal category states.

What is the Significance of Asymmetric Federalism in India?

1. **Securing rights-** Asymmetric Federalism helps in protecting fundamental rights and compensates for initial inequalities in the social system.

2. **Ensuring Internal security-** The border states of India have been given larger autonomy for management of Internal security by ensuring administrative convenience. **For ex-** Inner line permit.

3. **Accommodation and integration-** Asymmetrical federalism allows for self-rule within the framework of shared rule, and it follows the principle of weighted and differentiated equality.

4. **Protection of minorities-** Asymmetrical federalism ensures that minorities are not marginalised by giving more power and autonomy to regions where certain minority groups are concentrated.

5. **Addressing State-specific issues-** Asymmetrical federalism ensures that the state-specific issues are given the attention and resources they need.

6. **Strengthening Federalism-** Asymmetric Federalism strengthens federalism by ensuring decentralisation of power and decision-making as per requirements of the federal units.

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Read More- Special provisions to other states

What are the Challenges with the Asymmetric Federalism in India?

1. **Promotes Regionalism and separatism-** Special statuses sow seeds of regionalism and separatism and it impacts 'national integration.'

2. **Unequal Distribution of Powers-** Asymmetric federalism creates imbalances in decision-making and resource-allocation, leading to perceptions of favouritism and discrimination.

3. **Varying levels of cultural and linguistic protections-** There is difference in the level of cultural and linguistic protections granted by the application of asymmetric federal principles. This leads to disparities in the promotion and protection of cultural and linguistic protections.

4. **Financial arrangements-** Some regions benefit from preferential funding or fiscal arrangements, while others may receive fewer resources, resulting in economic disparities and regional imbalances.

5. **Selective application based on political considerations-** The application of these asymmetric federal principles may be influenced by political factors, resulting in inconsistent treatment.

Conclusion

India's founding fathers recognized the need for a salad bowl approach to governance, which recognizes the distinctive cultural differences in the country and permits self-rule within the scheme of a shared rule. This led to the unique governance model of India, as highlighted by the asymmetric federalism.

However, due to political considerations and in the name of greater autonomy, these special provisions are being misused, leading to dissatisfaction among the constituent units. Our aim must be to protect these principles, which would in turn strengthen our federation.

Read More- The Hindu
UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Federalism

Food vs Fuel (Food Security vs Energy Security) – Explained Pointwise

Recently, the Government lifted the ban on using sugarcane juice for ethanol production. This has brought to focus the effects of India's biofuel policy, which includes its implications on India's food security.

Initially, there were high expectations surrounding biofuels (such as Ethanol, Biodiesel) as a resource that could potentially **mitigate global climate change**, **contribute to energy security** and **support agricultural producers**. However, serious questions have been raised regarding the impact of biofuel production on food security.

What are Biofuels?

According to the **FAO**, biofuels are energy carriers that store the energy derived from biomass. A wide range of biomass sources can be used to produce bioenergy. These include – fibre and wood residues from the industrial sector, food and non-food crops, agricultural wastes, algae, etc.

Ethanol:

Ethanol-based biofuels are often considered a preferable alternative to fossil fuels due to their lower emissions due to less carbon dioxide emissions than conventional fuels.

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It is produced from grains, their stalks, rotten potatoes, sugarcane juice, sugarcane molasses, and agricultural and industrial waste. When ethanol is produced directly from crops such as rice, maize, and sugarcane, the technology is referred to as **1G (1st Generation)**. When crop waste, non-food crops, industrial waste, and lignocellulosic (plant dry matter) feedstocks are used, the technology is **2G (2nd Generation)**.

What are some of the biofuel initiatives being undertaken by India?

National Biofuel Policy 2018:
Read about it **here**.

Ethanol Blending Programme: It involves producing bioethanol that would be blended with petrol. As per the policy, India was to achieve 10% blending rate (E10) by 2021-22 and 20% (E20) by 2025-26. It has led to the average ethanol blending in petrol rising from 1.6 to 11.8% between 2013-14 and 2022-23. Read a detailed article on **Ethanol Blending here**.

Pradhan Mantri JI-VAN Yojana, 2019: To create an ecosystem for setting up commercial projects and to boost Research and Development in 2G Ethanol sector.

GOBAR (Galvanizing Organic Bio-Agro Resources) DHAN scheme: It focuses on managing and converting cattle dung and solid waste in farms to useful compost, biogas and bio-CNG, thus keeping villages clean and increasing the income of rural households.

Why is India promoting Biofuel production?

Read about the **Significance of Biofuels here**.

1) **Enhancing India's energy security:** By diversifying its energy sources, India can build a more resilient energy infrastructure, lessening its reliance on a single energy type and promoting a mix of renewable resources.

2) **Import Substitution:** India heavily relies on imports to meet its energy requirements (around 80% of its oil requirement is imported). Biofuels can help strategically reduce the dependence on imported fossil fuels and conserve foreign exchange reserves.
For instance, India's crude oil import bill will fall annually by about **$4 billion** under E20 (**NITI Aayog**).

3) **Negate Crude Oil Price Hikes:** Can significantly offset negative economic impacts of moderate oil price hikes.

4) **Addressing Environmental concerns:** As per **NITI Aayog**, petrol blended with 20% ethanol would **reduce carbon monoxide emissions by 50%** in two-wheelers and **30%** in four-wheelers.

5) **Boosting the domestic agricultural industry:** Biofuel production can lead to investment and innovation in agricultural practices. This can help achieve the target of **'Doubling farmer's income'**.

6) **Job Creation:** It can generate about 18 million rural jobs (as per the **Asian Development Bank**).

However, the push for ethanol as a fuel in India is not without its challenges, particularly in the area of food security.

How can India's biofuel policies harm food security of India?

According to the **FAO**, **crop diversion to biofuels** and climate change are the most significant threats to long-term food security.

India's biofuel policies can impact food security in several ways:

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1) **Diversion of Food Crops:** Most ethanol (for blending) in the country is produced using 1G as 2G remains commercially unviable in India. The diversion of food crops such as rice – to ethanol – will hamper India's nutritional   security   ambitions.
For instance, in 2022, close to 1 million metric tonnes of rice fit for human consumption from FCI's stocks was sold at subsidised prices to produce ethanol.

2) **Diversion of Agricultural Land:** It can lead to the conversion of agricultural land used for growing food crops to cultivating biofuel feedstocks like sugarcane, corn, or oilseeds. This reduces the land available for growing essential food crops, potentially decreasing overall food production.

3) **Adverse impact on small and marginal farmers:** Increased demand for biofuel crops might compete with food crops for resources such as water, fertilizers, and agricultural infrastructure. This competition can lead to price hikes for these resources, affecting small-scale farmers.

4) **Rise in Food Prices:** A decrease in land availability for growing food crops can lead to an increase in food prices (due to lesser production).
For instance, the Centre has capped the use of 'sugacane juice and sugar syrup' for ethanol production in the 2023-24 supply year due to concerns over sugar price rising.

5) **Disincentivises Crop Diversification:** Farmers may prefer to grow more sugarcane and rice due to price support schemes. This would push farmers away from crop diversification strategy of growing more pulses and oilseeds.

6) **Impact on Soil Health:** The practices of **monocropping** for biofuel feedstock crops (such as rice, sugarcane) will deplete the nutrients in the soil and make it infertile.

7) **Impact on Water Availability:** Incentives for ethanol blending might encourage increased sugarcane and rice cultivation — **water-gruzzling crops**.
Producing a kilogram of sugar requires 1,500-2,000 litres of water — making it an unsustainable option.

8) **Climate Change Induced Vulnerability:** Biofuel production might contribute to **monoculture farming**. This can increase vulnerability to climate change-related risks such as pests, diseases, and extreme weather events.

However, biofuel production may also have a positive impact on India's food security.

How can India's fuel policy enhance food security in the longer term?

1) **Raise Agricultural Income:** For instance, biodiesel could help raise farm income by providing an additional market for oilseed crops. Farmers can grow oilseed crops in rotation with food crops such as wheat.

2) **Nutritional Security:** Biofuel production can create new income streams, generate jobs and lead to infrastructural development in rural areas. The resultant improvement in socio-economic indicators can enhance nutrient absorption by individuals, promoting nutritional security.

3) **Increased Farm Productivity:** Investment in biofuel technology can stimulate R&D in the agricultural sector. This can lead to technological advancements and increased farm productivity.

4) **Raise Private Investment in Agriculture:** Assistance to farmers for growing biofuel feedstocks can also encourage private investment in the agriculture sector.

Way Forward:

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1) **Investment in R&D:** Investment in R&D on **2G (Non-food sources)**, **3G (Non-food, non-plant sources such as algae)** as well as **4G (Genetically engineered) Biofuels** could significantly enhance the future role of biofuels without compromising food security.

2) **Safety Nets:** Social security nets such as the National Food Security Act are needed to protect vulnerable people from high food prices and ensure access to adequate food.

3) **Focus on 2G sources such as molasses-based ethanol:** If cultivated on wastelands with judicious water usage, it would not have major adverse impacts on food security.

4) **Proper Land Use Management:** Land use mapping and allocation studies as well as provisions to make wasteland available for biodiesel production should be undertaken.

5) **Optimising Incentives:** It is necessary to design a combination of tax, subsidy, and regulatory measures to ensure that the incentives given to the biodiesel sector do not lead to expansion of biodiesel cultivation into arable lands.

6) **Exploring Alternatives:** To achieve the goal of energy security as well as emissions reduction, alternative mechanisms – EVs, other renewable sources (such as solar, wind), etc. – need to be explored.

India, like many countries, faces the challenge of balancing its energy needs with other priorities such as agriculture and food security. Policies aimed at sustainable energy advancement, optimizing resource use, and coordinated planning can reduce the conflict between clean energy objectives and food security priorities.

India's Polar Expeditions in Arctic and Antarctic – Explained Pointwise

India's polar expeditions into the Arctic and Antarctic signify the nation's dedication to scientific research, environmental studies, and geopolitical interests in these remote regions. However, they encounter formidable challenges— such as extreme climates and logistical hurdles. Despite these obstacles, India has shown resolve in advancing polar research, fostering innovative technologies, international collaborations, and gathering deep insights into these critical ecosystems.

For instance, recently India sent off its first winter expedition of scientists to the Himadri Research Station in the Arctic, which will now remain operational throughout the year.

What are India's initiatives in the field of Polar Research in the Arctic and Antarctic?

Arctic Region	Antarctic Region
1) **India's Arctic Policy** was released in **2022:** It is built on six central pillars: Science and research, Environmental protection, Economic and human development, Transportation and connectivity, Governance and international cooperation, and National capacity building. 2) **Arctic Council:** India holds one of the 13 positions as the **Observer** in the Arctic Council (a forum of countries that decides on managing the region's resources and popular livelihood).	1) India's **first expedition to Antarctica** was in 1981. 2) In 1983, India signed the **Antarctic Treaty**. 3) India built its first research base, **Dakshin Gangotri**, in 1983-84. It was excavated in 1989 and now operates as a supply base and transit camp. 4) The **Maitri Base** superseded Dakshin Gangotri in 1989. It is located atop the Schirmacher Oasis. India is rebuilding it to make it bigger and last for at least 30 more years.

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3) In 2008, India opened a research base **Himadri** in Svalbard, Norway. It is India's first permanent Arctic research station.

4) India also has one underwater Arctic observation station, set up in 2015, called **IndARC**.

5) **Bharati Base** was established in 2012, located next to Larsmann Hill.

6) **Sagar Nidhi:** In 2008, India commissioned the Sagar Nidhi ice-class vessel for research. It can cut through thin ice and is the first Indian vessel to navigate Antarctic waters.
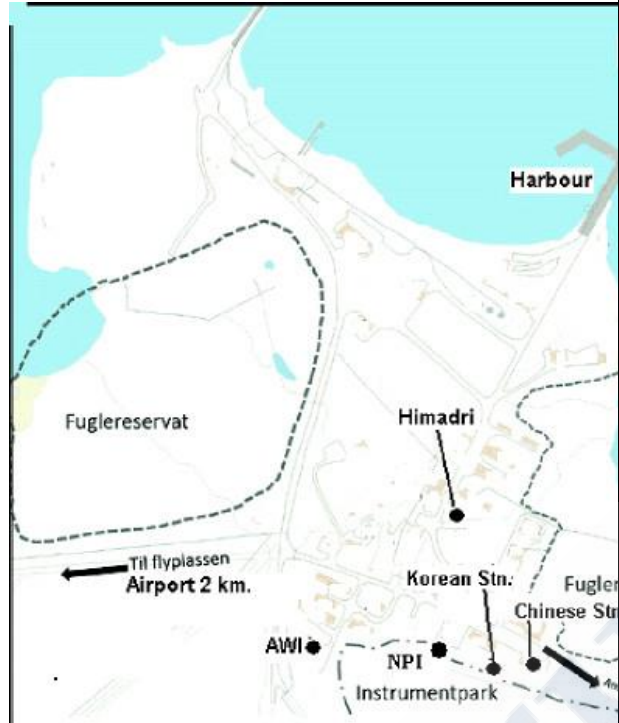
Map of Svalbard in the Arctic. Inset shows the 'Himadri' station. Source: CG Deshpande, ResearchGate.

Source: NCPOR

7) The **Indian Antarctic Bill** was passed in 2022, giving effect to the Antarctic Treaty.

Apart from the above:

1. **National Centre for Polar and Ocean Research:** It is an autonomous R&D institution of the Ministry of Earth Sciences. It is the **nodal agency** for India's polar explorations. It is responsible for planning, promotion, coordination and execution of India's entire Polar and Southern Ocean scientific research.

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2. **Polar Science and Cryosphere (PACER) Scheme:** It encompasses the following components: a) Construction of polar research vessel. b) Construction of the third research base in Antarctica. c) Indian scientific endeavours in the Arctic. d) Polar expeditions-Antarctica. e) Southern Ocean Expedition.

What is the significance of India conducting research in the Arctic and Antarctic region?

India's research endeavors in the Arctic and Antarctic regions hold several significant implications:

1) **Scientific Exploration:** These regions are critical for understanding global climate patterns, biodiversity, biological, geological, glaciological and earth sciences research. The polar regions offer a pure environment for this.

2) **Climate Change Study:** Since these regions are disproportionately more affected by climate change (for e.g. **Arctic Amplification**), they can provide deeper insights into the effects of climate change, such as melting ice caps and rising sea levels.

3) **Geopolitical Significance Interests:** The region holds huge geopolitical importance.
For instance, the Arctic is projected to be **ice-free by 2050** which will lead to a race to exploit the region's natural resources and shipping routes (for e.g. **Northern Sea Route (NSR)**).
India's research allows it to have a stake in discussions related to resource management, shipping routes, and geopolitical interests.

4) **Resource Exploration:** For instance, the Arctic region is estimated to hold over **40% of the current global reserves of oil and gas** and could hold significant reserves of **coal, zinc and silver**.

5) **Studying the Impact on Monsoons:** Understanding changes in polar ice caps can have implications for India's monsoon patterns. Melting ice caps can influence global ocean currents, potentially affecting the Indian monsoon system, which is vital for agriculture and the economy.

6) **Studying the Himalayan Cryosphere:** The Himalayas are considered as a **"third pole"**. Because of its similarities with the Polar regions, polar research findings could be applied to understanding the Himalayan region.

7) **Technological Advancement:** Conducting research in such extreme environments requires developing cutting-edge technology and infrastructure. This can lead to technological advancement in other sectors of the economy as well.

8) **Fosters Global Partnerships:** Participating in research initiatives in these regions strengthens India's collaborations with other nations. It fosters international cooperation and allows for the sharing of expertise, resources, and data. For e.g. **Arctic Council, Antarctic Treaty**.

What are the challenges in pursuing research in the Arctic and Antarctic region?

India faces several challenges in pursuing research in the Arctic and Antarctic regions:

1) **Harsh Environmental Conditions:** The extreme cold, remoteness, and harsh weather conditions in these regions pose significant logistical and operational challenges.
Accessibility to these regions is limited, leaving researchers with a small window of time to conduct studies.

2) **High Operational Costs:** Operating in the Arctic and Antarctic is expensive due to transportation, equipment, and logistical needs. Long-term research programs can strain India's financial resources.

3) **International Competition**: India may face challenges in securing its position for conducting research in the polar regions due to rising competition between countries for the region's resources.

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4) **Technological Challenges:** Developing and deploying technology suitable for extreme polar conditions is a challenge. Equipment needs to withstand low temperatures, high winds, and other harsh environmental factors.

5) **Limited Human Resources:** India may face a shortage of specialized personnel, including scientists, engineers, and support staff, with expertise in polar research.
Also, managing the physical and mental well-being of personnel in isolation are significant challenges.

6) **Legal-Regulatory Issues:** Adhering to national and international regulations and agreements related to polar research, environmental protection, and resource utilization poses legal challenges. Compliance with various treaties and protocols while conducting research can be a challenge.

Way Forward:

For India to advance its research in the Arctic and Antarctic regions, the following steps can be undertaken:

1) **Investment in Infrastructure:** Allocate funds for establishing and maintaining research stations, laboratories, and specialized facilities in these polar regions.

2) **Capacity Building and Training:** Invest in training programs and educational initiatives to build a skilled workforce specializing in polar research. Encourage collaboration between academia, research institutions, and industry to foster expertise in relevant fields.

3) **International Collaboration:** Strengthen partnerships with other nations engaged in polar research. Promote open access to data and information collected from other polar researchers.

4) **Long-term Commitment and Funding:** Ensure sustained financial support for polar research programs, acknowledging the long-term nature of scientific exploration in these regions.

5) **Remote Sensing and Satellite Technology:** Leverage advancements in remote sensing and satellite technology to monitor polar environments.

6) **Public-Private Partnerships:** Foster collaborations between government entities, research institutions, and private industries to leverage resources, expertise, and technology for polar research initiatives.

7) **Policy Advocacy and Diplomacy:** Actively engage in international forums to advocate for policies supporting sustainable and responsible polar research. Strengthen diplomatic ties to facilitate collaborative research agreements and resource-sharing initiatives.

By adopting a multifaceted approach that combines investment in infrastructure, human capital, technology, collaboration, and policy support, India can advance its research efforts in the Arctic and Antarctic regions.

Telecommunications Bill, 2023 – Explained Pointwise

On December 18, the Centre introduced the **Telecommunications Bill, 2023**. The proposed law attempts to bring in structural changes to the current regulatory mechanisms in the **telecom sector**. The Union government has ushered in a series of reforms through this legislation.

It seeks to replace the **Indian Telegraph Act of 1885**, the **Indian Wireless Telegraphy Act of 1933**, and the **Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act of 1950**.

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What are the key provisions of the Telecommunications Bill 2023?

1) **Authorization for Telecom-related Activities:** Obtaining **prior approval from the central government is mandatory** for (i) providing telecom services, (ii) establishing, operating, or expanding telecom networks, or (iii) possessing radio equipment.
The Bill allows the government to take back the spectrum that is unutilised, and also allow for the sharing, trading, and leasing of spectrum.

2) **Changes in the Allocation of Spectrum:**
Spectrum will be assigned by **auction**, except for certain specified uses.
In some **specific use cases**, spectrum will be allocated **on an administrative basis (by the Government)**.
These include: (i) national security and defence, (ii) disaster management, (iii) weather forecasting, (iv) transport (railways, etc.), (v) satellite services such as DTH and satellite telephony, and (vi) BSNL, MTNL, and public broadcasting services.
Note: Supreme Court in 2012 had ruled that there should be competitive auctioning for distribution of natural public-owned resources such as spectrum. Since then, spectrum had been allocated only through the bidding process.

3) **Powers of Interception:** Government can suspend, assume control of, or oversee any telecom service in case of **public emergency or national security concerns**.

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The Bill empowers the central and state governments or a **government authorised officer** to seek interception, disclosure, and suspension of powers in case of a public emergency or interest or safety.

4) **Digital Bharat Nidhi**: An earlier fund to provide telecom services in underserved areas has been renamed as Digital Bharat Nidhi, expanding its usage to include R&D.

5) **Dispute Settlement:** A tiered structure for settling disputes – involving an adjudicating officer, designated committee of appeals and the Telecom Disputes Settlement and Appellate Tribunal (TDSAT) on top.

6) **Biometric Authentication of Users:** Entities have been mandated to carry out biometric authentication of their users as a measure to curb fraud.

7) **Territorial Applicability:** It now extends to offences committed outside India if the offence in question involves a telecom service provided in India.

What is the significance of the Telecommunications Bill 2023?

1) **Replaces Archaic Laws:** The Bill seeks to replace the Indian Telegraph Act (1885), the Wireless Telegraphy Act (1933), and the Telegraph Wires (Unlawful Possession) Act (1950), which are colonial-era archaic laws that need reforms, given that the telecom sector has changed significantly in the last few years.

2) **Provides Clarity for Satellite broadband services:** It provides clarity for **satellite broadband services**, an emerging field of telecom that is expected to expand connectivity to remote areas. It aligns India with international norms and sets the stage for global players to enter.
It will also help drive innovation, create opportunities for startups, and strengthen the country's position in the global satellite market.

3) **Takes Away Executive Discretion:** An earlier draft stated that spectrum could be assigned through auction, administrative processes and "any other manner as may be prescribed." In the 2023 bill, this has been limited to just auction or administrative processes.

4) **Technology-based Solutions for Governance:** For instance, there is a provision of **online dispute resolution** for grievance redressal which will usher in ease of doing business.

5) **Simplification of Bureaucratic Procedures:** Provisions such as applying for licences and permits for telecom operators have been simplified (through digitisation).
For instance, currently, the telecom department issues more than 100 types of licences, registrations, and permissions. The Bill seeks to club many of those in a single authorisation process.
This will give the much-needed regulatory stability and enabling environment for the next phase of telecom expansion.

6) **Does Not Interfere with OTT:** The Bill has stopped short of extending to telecom-adjacent services (such as OTT). This will prevent overregulation of the sector.

What are the challenges in the Telecommunications Bill 2023?

1) **Potential for Misuse by the Executive:** Concerns are being raised over the Bill's broad provisions that would allow the Centre to take over, manage or suspend any or all telecom services or networks in the interest of **national security or war**. Also, another clause proposes message interception and service suspension in case of a public emergency or for public safety.

2) **Privacy and Surveillance Concerns:** Another clause lets the government notify standards and ensure compliance for encryption and data processing in telecom. This raises the question of whether it empowers the

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Centre to possibly prevent popular chat apps from encrypting text messages. This goes against the user's **right to privacy.**

3) **Legal Challenges to Administrative Allocation: Supreme Court's 2G spectrum allotment ruling of 2012** had recommended auctions of scarce natural resources. The 'administrative allocation' provision may go against this ruling.

4) **Ambiguity in Definitions:** Its definitions of telecom, telecom services and what constitutes a message are so broad that it potentially leaves a door open for wide interpretation. It is alleged that these definitions have been kept wide open to potentially regulate online platforms as well (such as messaging apps like Whatsapp, and OTT Platforms).

Way forward:

1) **Checks and Balances:** To prevent misuse, only a declared national emergency under **Article 352** of the Constitution should be allowed to trigger executive action. Any such action must require Parliamentary approval.

2) **Respecting the Right to Privacy:** The message interception and service suspension part must align with fundamental rights such as the right to privacy.

3) **Transparency:** The government must address privacy concerns with an open mind, considering the vast powers that the text of the Bill grants it. The government must also conduct rule-making with absolute transparency and consultation.

4) **Broader Consultations:** The government should conduct a broad based consultation on the current version of the bill, involving all stakeholders (private players, public, etc.).

This Bill is an attempt to rejuvenate the telecom industry, that holds so much promise for India. The telecommunications landscape has evolved dramatically since the Telegraph Act was first passed in the 19th century. Hence, regulation and lawmaking of the current telecommunication scenario should be equipped to comprehensively address the issues that have come with this digital explosion.

Suspension of MPs in Parliament – Explained Pointwise

49 opposition MPs, who had been pushing for a discussion regarding a **breach of security in the Parliament** on December 13, were barred from the legislature recently for allegedly causing disruptions during House proceedings. This move followed the suspension of **78 opposition MPs** from the crucial Winter Session of Parliament the previous day. The total count of suspended lawmakers has reached **141,** comprising 95 from the Lower House (Lok Sabha) and 46 from the Upper House (Rajya Sabha). This has raised concerns over the state of democracy in India.

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What is the Process of Suspension of MPs?

General Principle:

The general principle is that it is the duty of the **Presiding Officer** — Speaker of Lok Sabha and Chairman of Rajya Sabha — to maintain order so that the House can function smoothly. To ensure that proceedings are conducted in a proper manner, the Speaker/ Chairman is empowered to force a member to withdraw from the House.

Terms of Suspension:

a. The **maximum period** of suspension is for the **remainder of the session** (However, the House at any point of time can reinstate a suspended member by passing a motion).
b. Suspended members **cannot enter the chamber** or **attend the meetings** of the committees.
c. He/she will not be eligible to give notice for discussion or submission.
d. He/she **loses the right to get a reply** to his questions.

Grounds for termination:

The grounds for termination are covered under the **Rules of Procedure and Conduct of the House**. This includes-
1. In the opinion of the Chairman, the conduct is **grossly disorderly**.
2. **Disregards the authority of the Chair** or abuses the rules of the House by persistently and willfully obstructing" business.

Why is the Provision for Suspension of MPs Required?

1) **Violation of Parliamentary Rules:** The provision allows for the suspension of members who violate the established rules and norms of conduct within the house. This includes disrupting proceedings, disregarding the authority of the chair, using unparliamentary language, etc.

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2) **Maintaining Order in the House:** The provision for suspension is intended to maintain the dignity, decorum, and smooth functioning of the parliament.

3) **Disruption of Proceedings:** Continuously disrupting the normal functioning of the house by shouting slogans, staging protests, obstructing debates prevents the house from conducting its business. As per the **PRS**, the **16th Lok Sabha (2014-19) lost 16% of its scheduled time** to disruptions.

4) **Financial cost of disruption:** The cost of running Parliament is about Rs 2.5 lakh per minute. Any disruption in its functioning not only affects its efficiency but also has a monetary cost attached.

5) **Refusal to Obey the Speaker/ Chairperson:** Disregarding the authority of the Speaker/Chairperson by refusing to comply with their directions or orders during the proceedings and impacts its dignity.

6) **Maintaining Parliamentary Etiquette:** MPs are required to adhere to certain rules of parliamentary etiquette. For example, the Lok Sabha rulebook specifies that MPs are not to interrupt the speech of others. But untoward behaviour by MPs such as shouting slogans and displaying placards adversely impacts India's democratic credibility.

7) **Clearing Logjam in the House:** The rules are meant to clear obstruction in the House so that business can be conducted without obstruction.

What are the Issues Associated with Suspension of MPs?

1) **Convention of Suspension as a Last Resort not followed:** Suspension is usually resorted to as a last step. However, it is being used rampantly.

2) **Suspension on Unprecedented Grounds:** Some MPs have been suspended on the grounds of pending investigation by the privileges committee of the House. This ground of suspension is not in accordance with any rule or conventions.

3) **Erosion of Democratic Values:** The suspension of a substantial number of Opposition MPs casts a shadow over democratic values, raising concerns about the fair representation of diverse voices within the legislative process.

4) **Lack of Meaningful Opposition in Parliament:** The absence of a vibrant opposition challenges the system of checks and balances, potentially impacting the quality of debate and scrutiny in parliamentary affairs. This leads to a lack of legislative scrutiny.

5) **Erosion of Public Trust:** Trust in the democratic institutions may face erosion if citizens perceive a lack of transparency, accountability, and a conducive environment for meaningful discourse.

6) **Against Freedom of Expression of MPs:** Suspension might be seen as a way of silencing dissent or differing opinions.

7) **Partisan Decision Making:** Decisions to suspend members can sometimes be subjective, influenced by **political motives** rather than the actual violation of parliamentary rules. This can raise concerns about fairness and impartiality.

8) **Excessive Length of Suspension:** Sometimes, the duration of suspension might be seen as excessive, especially if it hampers the member's ability to represent their constituency effectively for an extended period.

9) **Deteriorating Quality of Bills:** Lesser debates will eventually deteriorate the quality of the bills due to a lack of debate and discussion in the absence of Opposition MPs.

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10) **Diplomatic Implications:** The global community often observes the functioning of democracies, and any perceived challenges to democratic norms can influence international perceptions of India. For example, India's standing in indices such as the Global Democracy Index may suffer.

Addressing these issues requires a delicate balance between maintaining parliamentary decorum and ensuring that the disciplinary measures are fair and transparent, allowing for the representation of diverse views in a democratic setting.

What is the Way Forward?

1) **Striking a Distinction:** There is a need to strike a distinction between deliberate disruption and raising of uncomfortable but important issues.

2) **Alternative Methods of Discipline:** Some experts argue that there should be alternative ways to discipline members, such as warnings, fines, or other measures that don't completely exclude MPs from participating in parliamentary affairs. A former Speaker had suggested that TV cameras be focussed on the demonstrating members so that people could see for themselves how their representatives were behaving.

3) **Suspension Should be Considered as a Last Resort:** The House needs the uninterrupted services of all its members and hence, suspension of MPs has to be a last resort.

4) **Due Process:** The provision for suspension is intended to maintain the dignity, decorum, and smooth functioning of the parliament. However, its application should adhere to the principles of fairness, due process, and the rule of law.

5) **Cooperation Between Government and Opposition:** The ruling party responsible for governing should take other parties into confidence. The Opposition should play a constructive role in Parliament and be allowed to put forward its views and express itself in a dignified manner.

6) **Giving Powers to the Opposition:** Letting the Opposition set the agenda for debate in the two Houses can be a possible reform. The Parliament should incorporate specific days for the Opposition in its calendar for deliberating on issues that the Opposition considers important **(like in the UK House of Commons)**.

7) **Political Maturity:** To protect the sanctity of the Parliament, political maturity on the part of both, the government as well as the opposition, is the need of the hour. While the government must engage Opposition in a meaningful manner, it is the responsibility of the Opposition to present its dissent in a orderly fashion.

The recent disruptions and **mass suspension of MPs** should be a wake-up call for our national legislature. These events highlight that its reputation as the highest forum for deliberation is at risk. Parliament needs to find better solutions for fostering debate or risk the slow erosion of public faith in it.

Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita 2023 – Explained Pointwise

The **Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), 2023**, set to **replace the Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860** was recently passed in the Parliament. It is part of the government's efforts at a complete overhaul of the country's criminal justice system.

Earlier, the Ministry of Home Affairs in 2020 had constituted a committee headed by Ranbir Singh to review criminal law. The mandate of the committee was to 'recommend reforms in the criminal laws of the country in a principled, effective and efficient manner – which ensures the safety and security of the individual, the

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community and the nation; and which prioritises the constitutional values of justice, dignity and the inherent worth of the individual'.
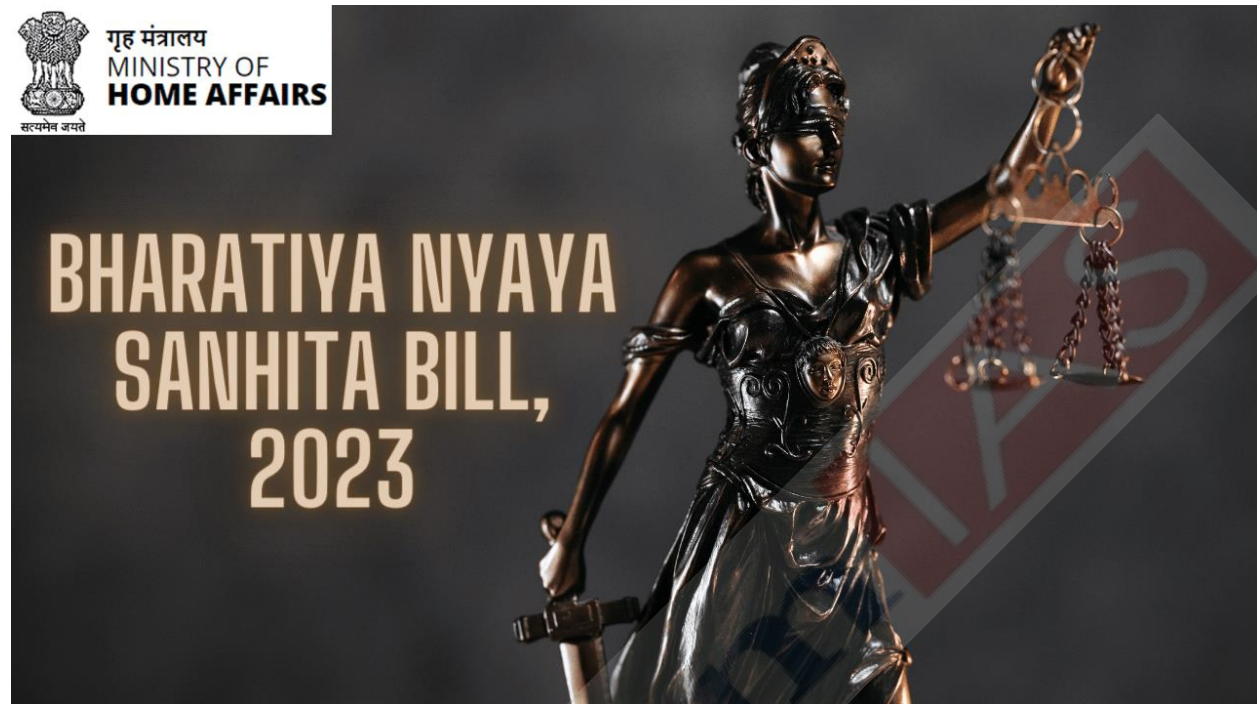
What are the key changes introduced?

New offences:

1) **Mob lynching:** It codifies offences linked to mob lynching and hate-crime murders, for cases when a mob of five or more individuals commits murder based on factors such as **race, caste, community, language, place of birth or personal belief**. The provision has punishment that extends from life imprisonment to death.

2) **Organised Crime:** For the first time, tackling organised crime is brought under the realm of ordinary criminal law. There are special state legislations for organised crime syndicates, such as Maharashtra's MCOCA, 1999. These special laws prescribe vast powers of surveillance and relax standards of evidence and procedure in favour of the state, which is not found in ordinary criminal law.

3) **Terrorism:** The BNS brings terrorism under the ambit of ordinary criminal law.

4) **Attempt to Suicide:** The BNS introduces a new provision that criminalises "whoever attempts to commit suicide with the intent to compel or restrain any public servant from discharging his official duty". This provision could be invoked to prevent self-immolations and hunger strikes during protests.

5) **Promise to Marry:** The BNS introduces Clause 69 criminalising "deceitful" promise to marry. It adds that "deceitful means" shall include the false promise of employment or promotion, inducement, or marring after suppressing identity.

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Deletions:

1) **Unnatural Sexual Offences:** Section 377, which criminalised homosexuality among other "unnatural" sexual activities, has been repealed under the BNS.

2) **Adultery:** The offence of adultery, which was struck down by the Supreme Court as unconstitutional in 2018, has been omitted under the BNS.

3) **Thugs:** The IPC under Section 310 criminalises those who have been "habitually associated with committing robbery or child-stealing" and labels them a thug. This provision is criticised for attaching colonial notions of criminality for certain tribes. The BNS has fully omitted this provision.

Other Important Changes:

1) **Gender neutrality:** While rape laws continue to operate only for women, the BNS has tweaked some other laws, especially those dealing with children, to bring gender neutrality. For adults, the offence of outraging the modesty of women (354A of the IPC) and voyeurism (354C) now has gender neutrality for the accused under the BNS, which means that women can also be booked under the law.

2) **Fake news:** The BNS introduces a new provision under IPC Section 153B which deals with hate speech, criminalising publishing false and misleading information.

3) **Sedition:** The BNS introduces the offence of sedition under a new name and with a wider definition. Apart from a name change from 'rajdroh' to 'deshdroh', the new provision adds the following: **aiding through financial means, acts of "subversive activities", and those encouraging "feelings of separatist activities."**

4) **Community Service:** The BNS also calls for community service as a punishment for petty offences, which will be the part of penal code for the first time.

What was the need for the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS)?

For a long period, it has been a recognized that a revamp the criminal justice system in India is necessary. The existing laws, stemming from the colonial era, no longer represent the present-day dynamics and aspirations of Indian society. Committees like the **Law Commission of India, Bezbaruah Committee, Viswanathan Committee, Malimath Committee, Madhav Menon Committee** have also recommended reforms in the past.

1) **Attempt to Remove Colonial Hangover:** Union Home Minister claimed that it is an attempt to remove the colonial imprint of the IPC, CrPC and the Evidence Act and replace it by a purely Indian legal framework.

2) **Incorporating Supreme Court Judgments:** For instance, omitting Section 377. Supreme Court had earlier struck down Section 377 that criminalised homosexuality.

3) **Gender Neutrality:** Introducing gender neutrality in certain provisions was an important step towards updating the IPC to reflect contemporary societal norms and values.

What are the concerns being raised?

1) **Ambiguity:** For instance, it omits the offence of sedition. However, a new offence has been added that criminalises exciting secession, armed rebellion, subversive activities or encouraging separatist feelings,

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without defining them. The framing of this provision is very similar to that of sedition and can be misused by the government to curb dissent.

2) **No break from colonial legacy:** It makes minimal progress in this objective. It **continues to rely on long-term imprisonments and the death penalty**, by adding and increasing mandatory minimum sentences for certain offences, and by retaining vague definitions for offences against the state as well as for defamation.

3) **Lack of Legislative Scrutiny:** The three Bills that replace the body of criminal laws in India were passed by Parliament in its ongoing session where **more than 140 MPs were suspended**.

4) **Lack of Transformational Changes:** Except the reordering of the sections, much of the language and contents of the original laws have been retained. The new codes do not envisage any path-breaking change.

5) **Provision on Terrorism:** It is being questioned whether 'terrorism' should have been included in the general penal law when it is punishable under special legislation. Experts argue that grave charges such as terrorism should not be invoked on a regular basis.

6) **Marital Rape not Included as a Criminal Offence:** The provision legalising marital rape has been retained.

Way Forward:

1) **Modernization and Clarity:** Further update the BNS to reflect contemporary societal norms and values. Ensure that laws are clear, concise, and easily understandable by both legal professionals and the general public.

2) **Victim-Centric Approach:** Strengthen provisions that protect victims' rights and ensure their access to justice. This includes better support systems, compensation, and participation in legal proceedings.

3) **Focus on Rehabilitation:** Emphasize rehabilitative justice and ensure reintegration of offenders into society alongside punitive measures. Promote alternative sentencing options, especially for non-violent offenses, to reduce overcrowding in prisons and provide a chance for reform.

4) **Technology Integration:** Incorporate technology to streamline legal processes, improve investigation techniques, and enhance evidence collection. This could include digitization of records, use of forensic technology, and modernizing court procedures.

5) **Public Awareness and Education:** Conduct public awareness campaigns and educational programs to inform citizens about their rights and responsibilities within the criminal justice system.

6) **Consultation and Stakeholder Involvement:** Encourage active participation from various stakeholders, including legal professionals, law enforcement agencies, NGOs, and affected communities, in the reform process to ensure inclusivity and diverse perspectives.

Reforming criminal laws is a complex and ongoing process that requires collaboration, thoughtful deliberation, and a commitment to upholding justice and fairness for all members of society.

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Yojana Summary December 2023 – Redefining Mobility: Transforming Land scape of Transport Sector

A **well-knit and coordinated system of transport** plays an important role in the sustained **economic growth** of a country. The transport system of India comprises various modes of transport including rail, road, coastal shipping, air transport etc.

Source: ntaindia.net

What is the importance of the Transport Sector of India?

The transport sector plays a crucial role in any economy for several reasons:

1) **Facilitating Trade and Commerce:** It enables the movement of goods and services from production centers to markets, both domestically and internationally. Efficient transportation networks **reduce costs, improve accessibility, and foster economic growth by connecting producers to consumers**.

2) **Employment Generation:** The transport sector creates jobs directly in areas like **logistics, driving, maintenance**, and indirectly in supporting industries such as **manufacturing (vehicle production)**, etc.

3) **Boosting Productivity:** Efficient transportation systems reduce transit times, enabling quicker delivery of goods and services. This leads to **improved productivity across various sectors**, allowing businesses to operate more effectively.

4) **Connectivity and Accessibility:** Transportation networks **connect remote areas to urban centers**, providing access to essential services, markets, and opportunities. This connectivity helps bridge economic disparities and encourages regional development.

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5) **Supporting Tourism and Travel:** A robust transport system encourages tourism and travel, which contributes significantly to economic growth through spending in accommodation, food services, entertainment, and other related industries.

6) **Global Competitiveness:** Countries with efficient transport systems can compete better in international markets by offering quicker and more cost-effective transportation of goods, thus enhancing their global competitiveness.

Overall, the transport sector serves as a critical backbone of economic activity, influencing various aspects of trade, productivity, employment, and development within a nation and across borders.

Roadways

India has about 62.16 lakh km of road network, which is the second largest in the world.

This sector's development rests on the following departments and schemes:

1) **Bharatmala Pariyojana:** Developing road connectivity to **border areas**, development of **coastal roads** including road connectivity for non-major ports, improvement in the efficiency of **national corridors**, development of **economic corridors**, inter corridors, and feeder routes, along with **integration with Sagarmala**, etc., is envisaged under it.

2) **Green National Highways Corridor Project:** Its objectives include: to evolve a policy framework for plantation along national highways; to **reduce the impact of air pollution and dust** as trees and shrubs are known to be natural sinks for air pollutants; to reduce the impact of ever increasing noise pollution caused due to increase in the number of vehicles; to arrest soil erosion at the embankment slopes; etc.

3) **National Highways Authority of India:** It was set up under the NHAI Act, 1988. It has been entrusted with National Highways Development Project (NHDP), which includes development, maintenance and management of 50,329 km of national highways.
Note: **Highways/expressways constitute only about 1.7% of the length of all roads**.

4) **PM GatiShakti Plan:** PM GatiShakti – National Master Plan for Multimodal Connectivity, 2021 is essentially a digital platform to bring **16 ministries**, including Railways and Roadways together, for integrated planning and coordinated implementation of infrastructure connectivity projects. The **multi-modal connectivity** will provide integrated and seamless connectivity for movement of people, goods and services from one mode of transport to another.

5) **e-Tolling National Electronic Toll Collection (NETC) programme** has been implemented on pan-India basis in order to ensure seamless movement of traffic through fee plazas and increase transparency in collection of user fee using **FASTag**.

Railways

The Railways provide the principal mode of transportation for **freight and passengers**. Indian Railways have grown into a vast network of 7,308 stations spread over a **route length of 68,043 km**. It has played a vital role in the economic, industrial and social development of the country. About **78.46% of total track kilometer** is **electrified**.

This sector's development rests on the following departments and schemes:

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1) **Research and Development:** The Research Design and Standards Organisation (RDSO) is the R&D wing of Indian Railways. It functions as a consultant in technical matters.

2) **Vande Bharat Express:** The Vande Bharat Express is a semi-high-speed, electric multipleunit train operated by Indian Railways. It began its operations in 2019 when the first of its kind was flagged off between New Delhi-Kanpur-Prayagraj-Varanasi route. By September 2023, 50 Vande Bharat trains were running across the country.

Shipping

Maritime Transport is a critical infrastructure for the economic development of a country.

India has a long **coastline of about 7,517 km**, spread on the western and eastern shelves of the mainland and also along the Islands. It is an important natural resource for the country's trade. There are **12 major ports and about 200 non-major ports**. Indian shipping industry has over the years played a crucial role in the transport sector of the economy. Approximately **95% of the country's trade by volume** and **68% by value is moved through maritime transport**. Of the total traffic handled by all Indian ports, 55% is handled by major ports and 45 by others.

This sector's development rests on the following departments and schemes:

1) **Sagarmala Programme:** Government has embarked on the ambitious Sagarmala Programme to **promote port-led development** in the country. The vision of the Programme is to reduce logistics cost of EXIM and domestic trade with minimal infrastructure investment. The objectives of the Programme include: port modernisation, new port development, port connectivity, coastal community development, etc.

2) **Inland Water Transport:** India has about **14,500 km long navigable inland waterway network**. Inland Water Transport (IWT) is a fuel-efficient, environment-friendly and cost-effective and lower carbon footprint mode of transport. However, cargo transport through it is, presently **less than 2%** of the total cargo movement in the country. Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) was set up in 1986 for regulation and development of inland waterways for the purposes of shipping and navigation in the country. To promote IWT, Government declared 111 (including 5 existing and 106 new) National Waterways (NWs) spread over 24 states under the **National Waterways Act, 2016**, to promote inland water transport in the country.

Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) is being implemented by the IWAI for the **capacity augmentation of National Waterway I** on the Haldia–Varanasi stretch of Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly river system.

Civil Aviation

Air transport is one of those sectors which prominently influence economy and employment generation through its direct and catalytic multiplier effects.

This sector's development rests on the following departments and schemes:

1) **Regional Connectivity Scheme:** The Regional Connectivity Scheme (RCS) – **Ude Desh ka Aam Naagrik (UDAN)** was envisaged in National Civil Aviation Policy (NCAP) 2016. The primary objective of RCS-UDAN is to facilitate/ stimulate regional air connectivity by making it affordable to masses through measures such as concessions by the central government, state governments/UT administrations and airport operators to

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reduce the cost of airline operations on regional routes; and Viability Gap Funding (VGF) to meet the gap, if any, between the cost of airline operations and expected revenues on such routes.

2) **Airports Authority of India:** Constituted under the **Airports Authority of India Act, 1994**. The primary responsibility of AAI is administration and cohesive management of airports and of all aeronautical communication stations for the purposes of establishing or assisting in the establishment of airports and for connected.

3) **Airports Economic Regulatory Authority:** As an independent economic regulator, AERA aims to create level playing field, foster healthy competition amongst all major airports, to encourage investment in airport facilities and regulate tariffs for aeronautical services.

4) **International Connectivity:** India operates a wide ranging network of international flights and currently has **Air Services Agreement with 116 countries**. India presently provides **direct connectivity to more than 52 countries**, whereas, connects **more than 100 countries through indirect routes.**

5) **Biometric Enabled Seamless Travel DigiYatra policy** is an initiative launched by Ministry of Civil Aviation for providing passengers seamless and hassle-free experience at airports without the need for verification of ticket and ID at multiple touch points. It envisages contactless, seamless processing of passengers at airports based on **Facial Recognition Technology**.

6) **Krishi Udan 2.0:** The Scheme aims to ensure **seamless, cost-effective, time bound, air transportation and associated logistics for all agri-produce originating especially from North-East, hilly and tribal regions of the country**.

Sanitation In India- Explained Pointwise

Sanitation systems are integral to our daily lives. They help in managing the disposal and treatment of used water, safeguarding public health and preventing environmental pollution. This article explores the diverse types of sanitation systems, their roles in rural and urban settings, and the benefits and challenges associated with these systems.

Figure 2.Source- The Hindu

What are the different types of Sanitation Systems being used In India?

1. On-site Sanitation Systems (OSS)

a. Twin Pits and Septic Tanks- In rural areas, where centralized sewage systems are impractical, twin

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pits and septic tanks are commonly used. Twin pits involve two pits separated by at least one meter. One pit is left unused for two years to allow for natural decomposition while the other is in use. The liquid portion soaks into the ground, and solids degrade at the pit's bottom.

The Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, launched in India in 2014, has promoted the construction of twin pit toilets in rural areas, emphasizing safe containment and eco-friendly disposal of human waste.

b. Other On-site Systems- Bio-digester toilets, bio-tanks, and urine diversion dry toilets are alternative on-site systems. These structures serve as collection and storage units, allowing for passive treatment before disposal into the surrounding soil.

The Sulabh International Social Service Organization in India has pioneered the use of bio-toilets, offering sustainable and low-cost sanitation solutions in urban and rural areas.

2. Faecal Sludge Management (FSM)

a. Faecal Sludge Treatment Plants (FSTPs)- FSTPs are crucial in areas with on-site sanitation. These plants treat faecal sludge removed from pits or tanks. Mechanical or gravity-based systems are employed for treatment. Treated by-products can be reused in agriculture.

The city of Warangal has implemented decentralized FSTPs to treat faecal sludge locally, showcasing a model for effective urban faecal sludge management.

3. Urban Sanitation: Sewer Systems and Treatment Plants

a. Underground Networks of Pipes (Sewers)- In densely populated urban areas, sewer systems consist of interconnected pipes that collect and convey used water to treatment facilities. These networks transport wastewater from toilets, bathrooms, and kitchens.

The Chennai Smart City project incorporates modern sewer systems to manage urban wastewater efficiently, contributing to improved sanitation in the city.

b. Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs)- STPs use physical, biological, and chemical processes to remove pollutants from sewage. Mechanized and non-mechanized systems are employed, and treated water is discharged, while solids may be repurposed.

The Okhla STP in Delhi utilizes advanced membrane filtration for wastewater treatment, demonstrating technological innovation for water reuse.

The Necessity of Complex Sanitation Systems- Used water accumulates impurities, including organic matter, nutrients, pathogens, and heavy metals, necessitating comprehensive sanitation systems. The containment, removal, and treatment of used water are critical to preventing pollution and protecting public and environmental health.

What is the need of Sanitation System In India?

1. Public Health Impact- Sanitation facilities can have an implication for waterborne diseases and can have overall impact of India's health status. **For Ex-** Positive results of the Total Sanitation Campaign in India.

2. Environmental Protection- Discharge of untreated sewage water into River Ganga remains one of the important sources of pollution.

3. Social and Economic Benefits- Improved sanitation correlates with economic productivity, as healthier communities are more capable of participating in the workforce and contributing to economic development.

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4. Cultural and Societal Dignity- Access to proper sanitation facilities enhances human dignity, especially for women, by providing safe and private spaces for personal hygiene.

5. Addressing the challenge of Manual Scavenging- Manual scavenging is a dangerous and unhygienic practice that continues in India, with over 50,000 manual scavengers. Moreover, over 73 per cent of these belong to Schedule Castes.

India's Sanitation Status and Achievement

1. **Open Defecation Free (ODF) Status-** All rural areas declared ODF by October 2019.
Over 100 million toilets constructed under Swachh Bharat Mission Gramin. Massive construction of toilets have been undertaken in rural and urban areas. India has now been ODF+ and ODF++.
2. **Behavioural Change-** "Darwaza Band" campaign and community-level awareness programs have promoted positive sanitation norms.
3. **Reduction in Open Defecation Rates-** Significant reduction in open defecation, particularly in rural areas.
4. **International Recognition-** UN and WHO have recognised India's progress in sanitation.

What are the Challenges in the implementation of the Sanitation systems in India?

1. Difficulty in Achieving Universal Access- Despite national initiatives, some remote and economically disadvantaged areas in India still face challenges in accessing adequate sanitation facilities.

2. Operational Challenges- Issues related to the maintenance of sanitation infrastructure are observed in some urban areas.

3. Affordability and Financial Barriers- The upfront costs associated with implementing sanitation infrastructure can be prohibitive for individuals and communities, particularly in economically challenged regions.

4. Behavioural and Cultural Factors- Deeply ingrained habits and cultural beliefs often impede the adoption of proper sanitation practices.

5. Climate and Geographical Considerations- Certain geographical features, such as rocky terrains or areas prone to flooding, pose challenges for the implementation of standard sanitation systems.

What should be the Way Forward?

Addressing the challenges and optimizing sanitation systems for enhanced efficiency is imperative for sustainable development. The following steps can guide the way forward:

1. Innovations in Technology- The adoption of decentralized and community-scale sewage treatment plants, like those implemented in the city of Devanahalli, showcases the potential of innovative technologies.

2. Community Engagement and Education- Initiatives like the "Nirmal Gram Puraskar" initiative of Ministry Of Rural Development recognizes and rewards open-defecation-free villages, promoting community engagement and education.

3. Policy and Governance- The National Urban Sanitation Policy in India provides a framework for the planning and development of urban sanitation infrastructure.

4. International Cooperation- Collaborative efforts with international organizations, such as World Bank-supported projects, can contribute in addressing sanitation challenges.

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Sanitation systems are indispensable for maintaining public health and environmental integrity. By acknowledging the benefits, addressing challenges, and embracing forward-thinking solutions, societies, including India, can work towards achieving universal access to safe and efficient sanitation services and meet the

Inclusive Growth-Explained Pointwise

As per OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), inclusive growth is economic growth that is distributed fairly across society and creates opportunities for all.

UNDP described it as "the process and the outcome where all groups of people have participated in growth and have benefited equitably from it".

Put simply, it refers to economic development that benefits all segments of society, ensuring equitable opportunities and outcomes for individuals regardless of their socio-economic background or circumstances.

What are the Major Components of Inclusive Growth?

1) **Reduced Poverty-** Inclusive growth strives to reduce poverty by improving the poor's access to opportunities and resources.

2) **Women's Empowerment-** Since women are frequently left out of economic possibilities, inclusive growth aims to provide them more power through employment, education, and training.

3) **Good Governance-** Transparency, accountability, and efficient institutions that meet the demands of all citizens are essential for inclusive progress.

4) **Education & Skill Development-** Building skills is a crucial component of inclusive growth because it paves the way for people to engage fully in the economy.

5) **Equal Opportunity-** Inclusive growth works to level the playing field for everyone, regardless of socio-economic position, gender, race, or religion.

6) **Access to Basic Services-** Inclusive growth seeks to guarantee that all citizens have access to basic services including healthcare, education, and sanitation. This access should include not only the quantity, but also quality, of these basic services.

7) **Employment Creation-** To combat poverty and advance economic development, inclusive growth aims to increase employment, especially for disadvantaged and marginalised people.

8) **Addressing the Marginalised-** Ensuring participation from all sections of society in the social, economic and political sphere.

9) **Reduction in Income Disparities-** Among the following:
a. Sections of society (Religion, Caste, etc.)
b. Rural-Urban Areas
c. Genders

What is the situation of inclusive growth in India?

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India is now one of the fastest-growing economies globally. However, this growth has not resulted in a corresponding increase in its Human Development Index (HDI). According to the Human Development Report of 2021-22, India ranks 132 out of 191 countries.

In the Inclusive Development Index (IDI), 2018 compiled by the World Economic Forum (WEF), India ranked 62nd out of 74 emerging countries and was among the least inclusive countries in G20 countries.

The "Public good or Private Wealth?" Report 2019, published by OxFam showed that India's top 10% holds 77.4% of the total national wealth, while the top 1% holds 51.53% of the wealth. The bottom 60% of the population holds only 4.8% of the national wealth.

What are the reasons behind lack of Inclusive Growth in India?

1) **Historical reasons-** Discrimination against certain sections of the society since historic times has affected their access to opportunities and to education, employment and health. Affirmative policies have been restricted to a few beneficiaries.

2) **Gender Inequality-** Females are treated as subordinate to males. Girl education is considered a burden on the family and women have limited choices in employment.

3) **Large-scale informal employment–** 80% of the Indian labour force is employed in the informal sector. Informal sector jobs are more insecure without regular pay and social security benefits. This increases the wage gap between formal and informal sectors.

4) **Overdependence on Agriculture-** A huge proportion of the population is still dependent on agriculture (~45% of the workforce) but the share of agriculture to the total GDP is falling.
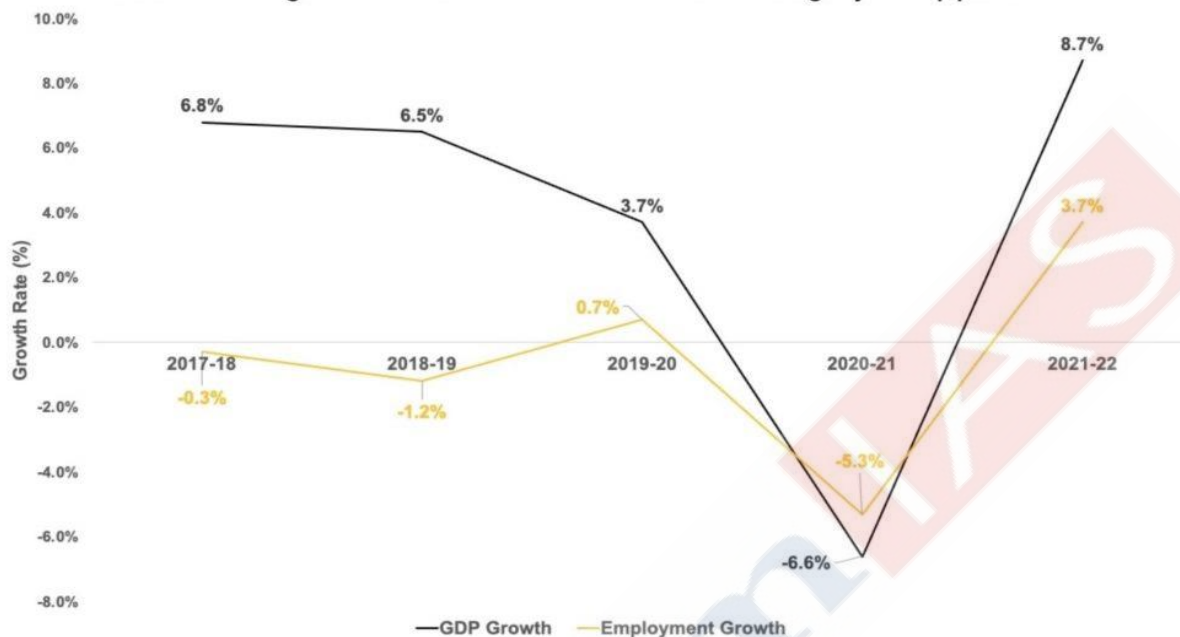
5) **Regional Disparities in Growth-** Growth has been different across sectors and regions. For example, Green Revolution has disproportionately benefitted North-Western India when compared to Eastern India.

6) **Globalisation-** Studies show that globalization and opening up the economy has benefited the rich more than the poor, thus raising inequality.

7) **Jobless Growth-** India experienced job growth of 3% p.a in the 70s at a time when the economy grew at 3-3.5% p.a but over the last 3 decades the economy grew at over 5-8% p.a but job growth has been close to 1% p.a.

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Jobless Growth

India's economic growth has failed to create enough job opportunities

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8) **Government Inefficiencies-** This includes corruption, maladministration, red tapism etc. This prevents the optimum utilization of resources and creation of jobs.

Read More- Inclusive Growth

What are the challenges in ensuring inclusive growth?

1) **Poverty-** The Multidimensional Poverty Index 2022 places India first, with an estimated 23 crore people living in multidimensional poverty.

2) **Uneven Distribution of Resources-** Unfair resource allocation can thwart efforts to create inclusive growth. Examples of unfair resource distribution include wealth, land, and education.

3) **Social and cultural obstacles-** Marginalised groups may encounter social and cultural obstacles that restrict them from accessing opportunities and services, such as discrimination, exclusion, and gender inequity. For instance, Women often face barriers in accessing education, employment, and other opportunities.

4) **Weak institutional capacity-** Policies and programmes aimed at promoting equitable growth may be less effective if there is a lack of proper implementation, infrastructure, functionaries, etc.

5) **Rural-Urban Divide-** Disparities between urban and rural areas persist in terms of infrastructure, access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. This gap has still not been bridged.

6) **Unemployment and Underemployment-** Creating enough jobs for the growing workforce, especially in sectors that absorb a large number of people like agriculture and manufacturing, remains a challenge. Many are employed in the informal sector without job security or proper benefits.

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7) **Education and Skills Gap-** Access to quality education and skill development is uneven across regions and socio-economic groups. This leads to a lack of skilled workers and limits opportunities for many individuals.

What are the advantages of inclusive growth?

Ensuring inclusive growth leads to many advantages that positively impact both society and the economy. Some key advantages include:

1) **Economic Stability and Sustainability-** Inclusive growth contributes to economic stability by creating a more balanced distribution of wealth. When more people have access to resources and opportunities, it can lead to a more sustainable economic development trajectory.

2) **Social Cohesion and Stability-** Addressing disparities fosters a more cohesive society. It reduces social tensions arising from inequality, which can lead to a more stable and harmonious community.

3) **Increased Human Capital Development-** When marginalized groups have access to education and skill development, it enhances the overall human capital of the nation. Educated and skilled individuals contribute more effectively to economic growth and innovation.

4) **Expanded Consumer Base-** Inclusive growth expands the consumer base by bringing more people into the formal economy. This leads to increased demand for goods and services, spurring economic growth.

5) **Enhanced Political Stability-** When people feel included in the economic and social fabric of society, it often translates to more stable political environments, reducing the risk of social unrest or conflicts.

6) **Greater Innovation and Creativity-** Inclusive growth brings together diverse perspectives, fostering innovation and creativity. A diverse workforce and society can generate new ideas and solutions to complex problems.

What should be the Way Forward?

Achieving inclusive growth in India requires a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach. Here are the steps that can be taken to ensure inclusive growth:

1) **Education and Skill Development-** Improving access to quality education for all, especially in rural and marginalized areas, is crucial. Emphasizing skill development programs that align with market needs can enhance employability.

2) **Employment Generation-** Encouraging sectors that create more jobs, such as manufacturing, services, and entrepreneurship, can help reduce unemployment and underemployment.

3) **Social Protection Programs-** Strengthening and expanding social safety nets like the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), subsidized food programs, and healthcare initiatives can provide a safety net for vulnerable populations.

4) **Financial Inclusion-** Expanding access to banking and financial services, especially in rural areas, can empower individuals and small businesses. Initiatives like Jan Dhan Yojana and Microfinance Institutions can play a significant role here.

5) **Gender Equality-** Promoting gender equality through policies that support education, employment, and entrepreneurship for women can unlock significant economic potential.

6) **Rural Development-** Focusing on agriculture by modernizing techniques, providing better access to markets, and improving infrastructure can spur growth in rural areas.

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7) **Policy Reforms-** Implementing policies that promote inclusive growth, such as progressive taxation, land reforms, labour reforms, and policies targeting marginalized communities, can play a pivotal role.

A holistic approach that addresses these multiple dimensions while considering regional disparities and the diverse needs of the population will be key in moving India toward a path of inclusive growth. Collaboration between government, private sector, civil society, and international organisations is crucial in executing these strategies effectively.

> **Read More-** The Hindu
> **UPSC Syllabus- GS-3- Inclusive Growth**

[Yojana December 2023 Summary] India's Growing Stature – A Rising Power- Explained Pointwise

Last nine years has overseen India's growing stature in the international arena. India has now entered the period of Kartavya Kaal, which will provide a golden opportunity for India to achieve unprecedented levels of scientific, technological, economic, and social progress. Today, India has emerged as a Vishwa Mitra (global friend), a Vishwa Guru (global teacher) and a Vishwa Vaid (global physician).

What are the reasons behind India's growing stature as a rising power in recent times?

India's emergence as a global leader and rising international power stems from various factors:

1) **Diplomatic Engagements:** India actively engages in multilateral forums, maintains diplomatic relations with various countries, and actively participates in global discussions, contributing to its role as a global leader. For instance, India's Presidency of the G20 this year, despite doubts expressed by the perennial naysayers in India and around the world, was a big success in building consensus on key issues such as the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), macro-economic stability, digital public infrastructure, climate challenge, a just and equitable green transition, and reforms of multilateral structures.

2) **Global Partnerships:** Strengthening ties with various countries through trade agreements, strategic partnerships, and collaborations in fields like defense, technology, and healthcare have contributed to India's rise as a global leader.
For instance, the inclusion of the African Union (AU) into the G20 at the New Delhi Summit, hinged on India's strong advocacy of 'leaving none behind'.
India is also part of important multilateral institutions such as I2U2, QUAD, BIMSTEC, BRICS, Supply Chain Resilience Initiative, etc.

3) **Soft Power and Culture:** India's rich cultural heritage, Bollywood, cuisine, yoga, and diverse traditions contribute to its soft power, influencing global perceptions and relationships.
For instance, International Day of Yoga, Medical Visa, Vaccine Maitri, proposal to recognise 2023 as the International Year of Millets, etc.

4) **Climate Leadership:** India's commitment to addressing climate change and its role in global climate discussions further enhances its standing on the international stage.
This includes International Solar Alliance (ISA), the Coalition for Disaster Resilient Infrastructure (CDRI), the Indo-Pacific Oceans Initiative (IPOI), and Infrastructure for Resilient Island States (IRIS). To this list should be

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added the Green Grids Initiative – One Sun One World One Grid (OSOWOG), which was proposed at the First Assembly of the International Solar Alliance (ISA) in 2018. Also, Mission LiFE (Lifestyle for Environment).

5) **Digital Public Infrastructure:** India has been at the forefront of technological advancements, particularly in the IT sector. It's a hub for technology and innovation, fostering startups and technological development. For instance, tech powered governance solutions such as CoWIN, UPI, Aadhar, Aarogya Setu, etc.

Apart from this, factors such as the following are also supporting India's rise:

1. Strategic Geopolitical Position: India's geographical location provides it with strategic significance, both in terms of trade routes and geopolitical influence. Its position in the Indian Ocean region amplifies its importance on the global stage.

2. Military Strength: India has been strengthening its military capabilities, enhancing its status as a regional power and contributing to global security initiatives.

3. Demographic Dividend: With a young population, India has a demographic advantage. A large, youthful workforce can be a driving force for economic growth and innovation.

4. Economic Growth: India's economy has been growing steadily, becoming one of the fastest-growing major economies globally. Its large market size and increasing GDP contribute significantly to its global influence.

India's emergence as a global power is a multifaceted process involving economic, technological, diplomatic, and cultural advancements that position it as an influential player in the international arena.

What are the challenges to India's growing stature, which can make India a superpower?

India faces several challenges on its path to becoming a global leader and rising international power:

1) **Economic Disparities:** Despite overall economic growth, India grapples with significant economic disparities between urban and rural areas, as well as income inequality. Bridging this gap is crucial for sustainable growth and social stability and cohesion.
According to OxFam, India's top 10% holds 77.4% of the total national wealth, while the top 1% holds 51.53% of the wealth.

2) **Infrastructure Development:** Infrastructure, including transportation, energy, and urban development, requires substantial investment and improvement to support the growing economy and population.

3) **Political and Bureaucratic Hurdles:** Bureaucratic red tape, corruption, political complexities, and governance challenges can sometimes hinder policy implementation and reforms, affecting the pace of progress.
For e.g. According to Transparency International's (TI) Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) 2021, India was ranked 86 out of 180 countries

4) **Security Concerns:** Internal security issues, including regional conflicts, border disputes, and terrorism threats, demand attention and resources, diverting focus from economic and diplomatic efforts. For instance, the recent Manipur issue, Galwan Valley Skirmishes.

5) **Social Issues:** India faces social challenges like caste divisions, gender inequality, religious strife and a lack of access of its people to basic education and healthcare.

6) **Geopolitical Complexities:** India's relations with neighbouring countries and global powers can be complex due to historical tensions, territorial disputes, and shifting geopolitical dynamics. Balancing relationships with

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different global powers, navigating alliances, and managing divergent interests among various countries poses diplomatic challenges.

7) **Global Competition:** As a rising power, India faces stiff competition globally, particularly from other emerging economies, necessitating consistent innovation and adaptability.
This includes countries like China, Turkiye, Indonesia.

8) **Lack of Reform in Multilateral Institutions:** For instance, India is not represented in the United Nations Security Council (UNSC). This diminishes India's voice and influence in critical decision-making processes on global issues.

> Read More- Dilemmas of India's great power ambitions

What should India do to cement its place as a rising power in global geopolitics?

To solidify its position as a rising power in global geopolitics, India can focus on several key areas:

1) **Economic Reforms and Growth:** Continue implementing economic reforms to foster growth, attract investments, and strengthen industries. This includes infrastructure development, ease of doing business initiatives, and promoting innovation and entrepreneurship.
Advancements in sectors like AI, renewable energy, biotechnology, and space exploration, can enhance India's global standing.

2) **Diplomatic Outreach:** Strengthen diplomatic ties with key global players while actively participating in multilateral forums and negotiations. Forming strategic partnerships and alliances can amplify India's influence on the global stage. Actively engage with neighbouring countries to resolve disputes and build cooperative relationships, contributing to regional stability and cooperation.

3) **Military Modernization:** Invest in modernizing the military to ensure security and stability in the region. This includes advancements in defence technology, joint military exercises, and collaborations with other nations on security issues.

5) **Focus on Soft Power:** Leverage India's rich cultural heritage, art, cinema, cuisine, yoga, and traditional practices to enhance soft power, improving global perceptions and fostering cultural diplomacy.

6) **Addressing Social Issues:** Tackle social challenges such as poverty, healthcare, education, gender inequality, and social divisions to ensure inclusive growth and societal well-being.

7) **Promote Global Governance:** Advocate for reforms in global governance bodies to reflect the changing geopolitical landscape, seeking a more inclusive and representative global order. For instance, India's 'NORMS' initiative (New Orientation for a Reformed Multilateral System).

By focusing on these areas and adopting a comprehensive, inclusive, and forward-looking approach, India can further solidify its role as a significant global power and positively influence global geopolitics. Collaboration, innovation, and sustained efforts in these domains will be key to cementing its place in the international arena. India's growing stature in the international arena is indeed a moment of proud for us.

> **Read More-** The Times of India
> **UPSC Syllabus- GS 2**- Bilateral, Regional and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

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Illegal Migration from India- Explained Pointwise

The recent incident, involving the forced return of 303 Indians detained at a French airport, highlights the menace of illegal migration from India. The desperation and distress faced by Indian youths, particularly in the wake of the farming crisis, have led to a concerning surge in illegal migration from India.

Increasing illegal migration numbers

1. According to the latest U.S. Customs and Border Protection data, from November 2022 to September 2023, up to 96,917 Indians were arrested while crossing illegally into the U.S.

2. In 2019-20,19,883 Indians were apprehended. In 2020-21, up to 30,662 Indians were arrested, while in 2021-22 this number was 63,927.

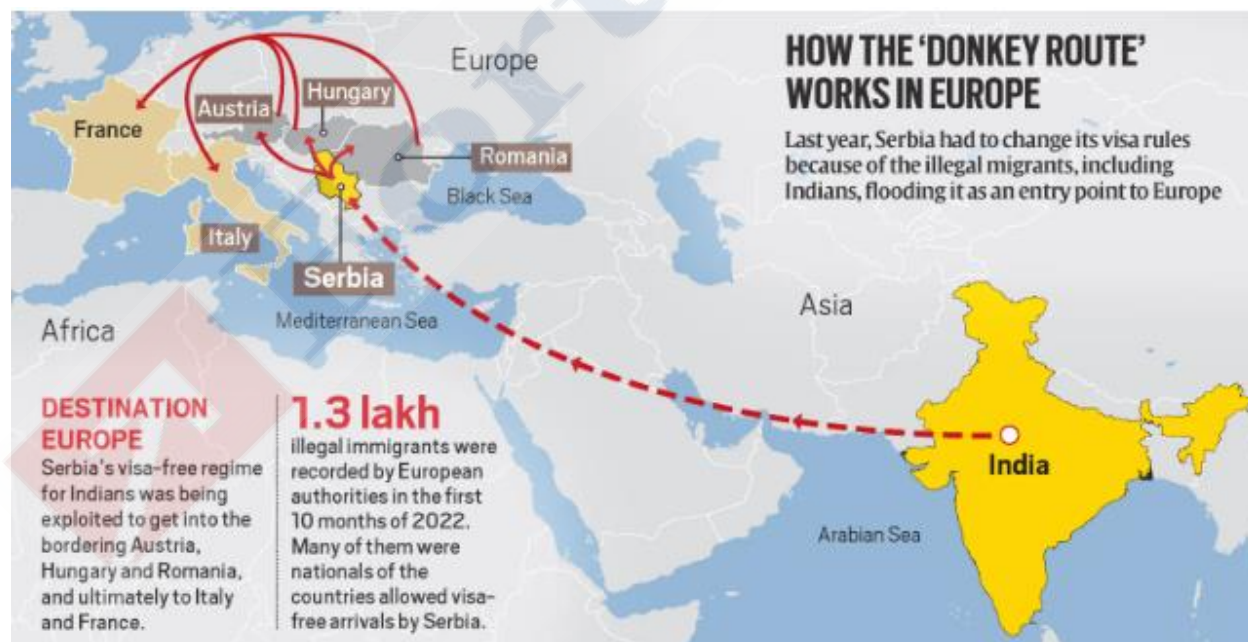### What is donkey routes used by the illegal migrants?

Donkey route- This illegal Migration from India is called taking 'donkey routes'. This refers to a method where migrants transit through various countries with lenient visa policies to finally reach their dream destinations, particularly the U.S., the U.K., Canada and EU.

Sometimes, migrants even resort to dangerous ways of crossing a border like-
a. Traversing dense forests inhabited by wild animals and criminal gangs
b. Travelling in sub-zero temperatures
c. Crossing rivers and other water bodies in rickety boats and treacherous conditions

Route used to enter Europe by the illegal migrants

Siberia has Visa free regime for Indians. This is exploited by creating fake travel history to get into Siberia. From there, the illegal migrants enter into Austria, Hungary and Romania, and ultimately to Italy and France.

Source- The Indian Express

Route used to enter US by illegal Migrants

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Countries like Ecuador, Bolivia, and Guyana have visas on arrival for Indian citizens. The illegal migrants use this route to get into US. Nowadays, many illegal migrants first go to Europe, and from there, directly to Mexico and ultimately get into US.

What are the factors propelling illegal Migration from India?

1. **Farming Crisis-** Low agricultural productivity, debt burdens, and unpredictable weather patterns have contributed to agrarian distress and farming crisis. This crisis has led to plummeting of incomes and exacerbated the vulnerability of individuals, making them susceptible to exploitation.

2. **Unemployment-** High youth unemployment in rural areas has driven individuals to seek illegal migration from India. **For ex-** Punjab rural unemployment.

3. **Poverty-** Economic hardship and poverty are significant drivers of illegal migration.

4. **Lack of Educational Opportunities-** Limited access to quality education hampers skill development among the youth, forcing them to seek high paying unskilled jobs outside.

5. **Social Pressures-** Social and familial expectations contribute to the pressure on young individuals to provide stable income to their families.

6. **Paralysis in implementation of Government Policies-** Ineffective policies related to agriculture, employment, and economic development have exacerbated the illegal migration distress.

7. **Trafficking Racket and Exploitation-** Trafficking racket appears widespread, particularly in rural Punjab and Haryana. Individuals in these regions seem to fall prey to promises of a better future in the U.S. exacerbating illegal migration from India.

What should be the way forward?

The following measures must be undertaken as a way forward to solve the complex problem of illegal migration from India.

1. **Agricultural Reforms-** Strengthen and expand policies like **PM-KISAN**, focusing on technology integration and market access. This will increase agricultural income and remove agricultural distress.

2. **Job Creation-** Enhance MGNREGA coverage and introduce sector-specific initiatives to boost employment in rural areas.

3. **Education and Skill Development-** Invest in education infrastructure and promote vocational training through Skill India Mission.

4. **Social Welfare Programs-** Extend the reach and impact of existing schemes, ensuring they address the specific needs of vulnerable populations.

5. **International Collaboration-** Collaborate with destination countries like US and Europe, sharing best practices and ensuring fair and legal migration pathways.

As India grapples with the complexities of illegal migration, these targeted interventions can pave the way for a more sustainable and inclusive future. By addressing the root causes and providing viable alternatives, the government can empower its citizens and create a conducive environment for growth and prosperity.

Read More- The Hindu
UPSC Syllabus- GS 2- Indian Diaspora, GS 3- Indian Economy challenges

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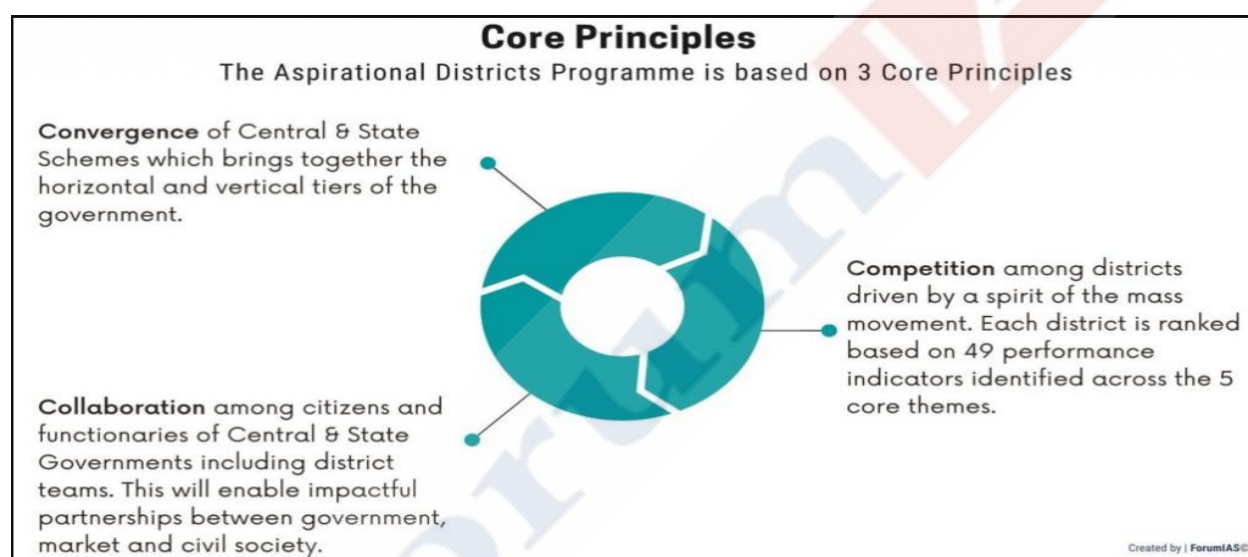**ForumIAS**

[Kurukshetra December 2023 Summary] Aspirational Districts Programme- Explained Pointwise

The Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP) was launched by the Prime Minister in January 2018. The programme seeks to improve socio-economic outcomes. With this initiative, the Government has tried to change the development narrative by referring to these districts as 'aspirational' instead of 'backward'. Since its launch, all 112 underdeveloped districts included in the programme have improved their performance.

What is the Aspirational Districts Programme (ADP)?

It was launched in 2018 to improve the socio-economic status of 112 aspirational districts across 28 States. These districts had witnessed the least progress along certain development parameters. The districts accounted for more than 20% of the country's population and covered over 8,600 gram panchayats.

The Programme is coordinated by NITI Aayog with support from Central Ministries and the State Governments.

Core Principles
The Aspirational Districts Programme is based on 3 Core Principles

Convergence of Central & State Schemes which brings together the horizontal and vertical tiers of the government.

Competition among districts driven by a spirit of the mass movement. Each district is ranked based on 49 performance indicators identified across the 5 core themes.

Collaboration among citizens and functionaries of Central & State Governments including district teams. This will enable impactful partnerships between government, market and civil society.

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5 Core themes of ADP- The 5 core themes include:
(1) Health & Nutrition (30% weightage)
(2) Education (30% weightage)
(3) Agriculture & Water Resources (20% weightage)
(4) Financial Inclusion & Skill Development (10%)
(5) Basic Infrastructure (10%)

The delta ranking of the Aspirational Districts combines the innovative use of data with pragmatic administration. The programme ranks districts based on **the improvement achieved month-on-month** through the Champions of Change dashboard (An online Dashboard).

What is the institutional framework and core strategy of the Aspirational Districts Programme?

Framework

NITI Aayog anchors the program at Central level, while individual Ministries have been responsibility to drive progress in districts. The States are the main drivers of the programme. For each district, a central *Prabhari* officer has been nominated. He/she should possess a rank of joint secretary/additional secretary.

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Core Strategy

The ADP is based on the following strategy-
(1) Work on the strength of each district
(2) Make development as a mass movement in these districts
(3) Identify low hanging fruits and the strength of each district which can act as a catalyst for development
(4) Measure progress and rank districts to spur a sense of competition
(5) Districts shall aspire from becoming State's best to Nation's best

What is the significance of the Aspirational Districts Programme?

1. **Greater autonomy-** States and districts have a greater say in their own development. Local challenges differ significantly across the country. Thus, State and Local Governments are best-positioned to recognize their development challenges, and design customized policy interventions.

2. **Better outcomes by improved governance-** The programme has focused on improving governance, making use of existing resources more smartly and achieving better outcomes for the same amount of money.

3. **Replication of innovative service delivery approaches-** The smart classroom initiative being implemented in Banka, Bihar, to improve student learning outcomes, is being replicated in the aspirational districts across Bihar, Arunachal Pradesh, Odisha and Jharkhand.

4. **Improved Collaboration-** The aspirational district programme has increased the government collaboration with the private sector, philanthropic organizations and technical partners.

5. **Competition among the districts-** It has spurred competition among districts by allowing them to regularly assess their position vis-à-vis other aspirational districts, as well as the best performing districts in the country.

Read More- Aspirational District programme

What are the achievements of the Aspirational Districts Programme?

The success achieved by the ADP has been globally recognized. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) has appreciated the programme's 3Cs principle and recommended its replication in other parts of the developing world.

1. **Health and Nutrition-** Model *Anganwadi* centres have been set up across districts to benefit women and children. The number of institutional deliveries has increased, along with a dip registered in the rate of severe acute malnutrition in infants. Poshan App has been developed for real-time health data analytics in Ranchi.

2. **Education outcomes-** Innovation and digitisation have been the cornerstone of transformation in the education sector. The '*Hamara Vidyalaya*' model adopted in Namsai, a remote district in Arunachal Pradesh has shown substantial improvement in learning outcomes and overall teaching practices.

3. **Agriculture and water resources-** District administrations have laid emphasis on improving irrigation facilities, yield and farmer education. Several innovative paths have been adopted to create market linkages for products indigenous to the aspirational districts. For ex- the farmers of Chandauli, U.P were encouraged to grow fertiliser-free organic black rice.

4. **Basic Infrastructure Development-** This pillar witnessed significant advancement especially in LWE affected districts. This ensured better connectivity and seamless movement from rural to urban regions. For ex- Bijapur in Chhattisgarh and Malkangiri in Odisha have greatly improved the network of roadways and ramped up the infrastructure projects in their jurisdiction.

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5. **Financial inclusion and skill development-** Micro-ATMs have been launched in Maharashtra's Gadchiroli district to provide financial assistance to women self-help group members. They are provided with commission-based income on every transaction.

What are the issues associated with the implementation of Aspirational District Programme?

1. **Inadequate Coverage**: Although the program is highly inclusive in nature, it fails to capture crucial variables like environment and gender.

2. **Imbalance in implementation**: Most districts channelised their efforts focused on health and nutrition, education, and agriculture and water resources. They paid less emphasis on the sectors of Skill Development and Financial Inclusion.

3. **Budgetary Constraints**: ADP is affected by the issue pertaining to insufficient budgetary resources. This sustains the lack of human resources and dearth of technical capacities at the district and block level.

4. **Issues in Coordination**: NITI Aayog plays a mentoring role in 27 districts in eight states. 12 Central Government Ministries have similarly adopted the remaining districts. Implementation involving multiple ministries leads to a lack of coordination.

5. **Shortcomings of Delta Ranking**: It is largely focused on assessing quantity (that is, coverage of access) rather than quality. **For ex-** Timely delivery of textbooks in schools is part of the ranking index, however very less weightage is given to the quality of education rendered in these districts.

What steps need to be taken going ahead?

1. **Formulate strategies for saturation of indicators-** Special focus is required in sectors like health, nutrition and education to recover lost ground due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

2. **Strengthen governance mechanisms-** Analysis has shown that districts perform better when the tenure of key officials like the District Magistrate, Chief Medical Officer, District Agriculture Officers etc. are stable. It is crucial that vacancies for these key positions are regularly filled and stability is provided by the state authorities.

3. **Extension of ADP template-** Extension of the ADP template to under-developed blocks and districts which are lagging behind in social indicators.

4. **Addition of sectors-** The first UNDP appraisal of the Aspirational Districts Programme has recommended a realignment of sectors under the program by addition of topics such as **environment and gender.**

Conclusion

The success of the Aspirational Districts Programme has been testified by national as well as international agencies. It is a flagship initiative for improving the lives of citizens residing in most backward regions of the country. The need of the hour demands overcoming its challenges and realizing the vision of 'SABKA SAATH, SABKA VIKAS' for ensuring inclusive development.

Read More- NITI Aayog
UPSC Syllabus- GS II, Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation, Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by Centre and States and the performance of these schemes; GS III, Inclusive growth and issues arising from it.

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