

9 PM Current Affairs Weekly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



4th Week

Dec. 2023

Features :

Arranged as per syllabus Topics
Most complete coverage of major
News Papers editorials

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GS Paper 1

Subject: Indian Society

Topic: Role of women and women's organization

On Women's Suffrage – Women's vote achieved

News: The article discusses history of the women's suffrage movement and the need to move beyond just granting the right to vote to women.

Recently, 5 religious sisters were allowed to vote at the Papal advisory body in the Roman Catholic Church, which has been male-dominated for centuries. With this historic move, **Vatican City became the last country in the world** to give its women the right to vote.

What has been the history of the women's suffrage movement?

The initial women's suffrage movement emerged during the **19th and early 20th centuries**, predominantly led by protest voices in the **Anglosphere (English-speaking world)**.

129 countries granted women the right to vote **between 1893 and 1960**. Some nations tried to place riders on it by using race, age, education level or marital status as a disqualifier, but these were largely discarded.

1) **Role of Social Activism:** At first, it was other forms of social activism that gave rise to the vote demand.

For instance:

a. New Zealand in 1893 became the first nation to let women vote in national elections. It was a **fight against alcohol** that moved women to seek a role in policymaking.

b. In USA, which did it in 1920, suffrage activism can be traced back to protests led by women **against slavery**.

2) **Role of World Wars:** The suffrage movement gained pace after World War I, at least in the West. The two World Wars hurried the enfranchisement of women.

What more needs to be done in the field of women's political empowerment?

This right has not yet shaken patriarchal social structures that dominate power politics. Hence, the focus must now shift to **achieving proper representation in rule-making and governance**, which goes beyond the basic right to vote.

Despite progress in women's participation in politics, their impact in shaping political decisions and policies worldwide is yet to enhance and transform the state of affairs globally.

GS Paper 2

Subject: Governance

Topic: Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors

Punishment for Doctors in Nyaya (Second) Sanhita Bill, 2023

News: The new amendment (Criminal Law Amendment Bills) proposes to change the punishment for medical negligence resulting in death. It has moved away from criminal negligence akin to murder.

What were the factors that influenced this amendment?

The Jacob Mathew vs State of Punjab case held that criminal charges should apply only in cases of gross negligence of a significantly high degree. Criminal liability can be applied only if physician's act can be demonstrated to be negligent or reckless, causing death.

The Indian Medical Association argued that the criminal liability for medical negligence is controversial. It advocated for the understanding that medical accidents may occur without criminal intent. They proposed that deaths during medical treatment be presumed accidents unless proven as gross negligence by expert evaluation.

What changes have been made for doctors in the Criminal Law Amendment Bills?

1. **Punishment for the doctors for criminal negligence:** Currently, medical negligence resulting in deaths is punishable under Section 304A of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) with imprisonment of up to two years, a fine, or both. Previously, in the Bharatiya Nyaya (Second) Sanhita (BNS) 2023, Clause 106, the punishment was up to five years. However, the amended BNS has reverted to the original IPC terms.
2. **Penalty for mob lynching:** The new Criminal Law Bills **propose life imprisonment or the death penalty for mob lynching**, providing protection to doctors, whose safety has become a growing concern in recent times.
3. **Definition of Registered Medical Practitioner:** It includes anyone with a medical qualification recognized under the National Medical Commission Act, 2019, and registered in either the National or State Medical Register.

What are the concerns regarding this amendment?

1. **No full exemption:** The amendment did not grant a complete exemption to doctors for medical negligence. It effectively **maintaining the existing legal framework like that of Section 304(A) of the Indian Penal Code.**
2. **Fear of legal repercussions:** Doctors may continue to face violence and legal challenges that could deter them from providing optimal care. The need for a balance between accountability and protection is evident.

Subject: Social Justice

Topic: Issues relating to Health

Rehabilitation of the Disabled – A call for disability inclusion that must be heeded

News: The article discusses neuropsychiatric disorders. It also highlights the steps needed to revamp rehabilitation services for Persons with Disabilities, especially with regards to people with neuropsychiatric disorders.

According to the author, 2 important areas for Persons with Disabilities should be in the focus– 1) **activities of daily life** and 2) **quality of life**, especially with regards to people with **neuropsychiatric disorders (both psychiatric and neurological issues)**.

Note: **Neurology** is the branch of medicine dealing with the diagnosis and treatment of conditions involving the nervous system (brain, spinal cord and peripheral nerves). **Psychiatry** is a medical specialty devoted to mental conditions. These include matters related to mood, behavior, cognition, etc.

What are neuropsychiatric disorders?

- a. These include disorders such as autism, Attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and intellectual disability in childhood.
- b. Mental health conditions such as anxiety, depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, eating disorder, addictions, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder.
- c. Traumatic brain injury, spinal injury, epilepsy, stroke.
- d. Neurodegenerative conditions such as Alzheimer’s dementia and Parkinson’s disease that appear in old age.

What is the current status of disabilities and rehabilitation services?

Nearly **1 billion people are suffering from disabilities** worldwide, with 80% of these in developing countries. According to a report by the WHO, **2.41 billion individuals had neuropsychiatric conditions** that would benefit from rehabilitation. However, it has **not been prioritized** in countries and is **under-resourced**.

What should be done to improve rehabilitation services for people with neuropsychiatric conditions?

A large number of people are affected by neuropsychiatric conditions around the globe, leading to a large requirement of rehabilitation facilities. The following can be done to improve them:

1. **Widening the Coverage:** Rehabilitation services must be designed to address the wide spectrum of neurological and mental health problems as opposed to being narrow in concept and led only by specialists.
2. **Generating Awareness:** There is a need to build awareness in the public that disablement does not need to be endured and can be treated or even reversed.
3. **Regarding it as an Essential Service:** There is also a need to encourage medical professionals, medical service providers as well as public health professionals to start considering rehabilitation as an essential service.
4. **Developing Human Resources:** Rehabilitation requires a range of professionals: physical and occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, psychological therapists and professional caregivers. Improving their training and empowering their professional /career growth is important in order for these services to develop and evolve.

5. **Developing Holistic Rehab Services:** Rehabilitation services need to be multidisciplinary, multicomponent and holistic.

6. **Utilising New Scientific Care Methods:** There is a need to consider unique methods of care that have emerged through scientific advances.

For instance, **Non-Invasive Brain Stimulation (NIBS)** procedures have been useful in the care and rehabilitation of neurological and mental health conditions.

7. **Collaboration among Public and Private Sector:** It is crucial for governments, the public and private sectors to collaborate and find innovative solutions for persons with disabilities.

On Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) - Making health our top priority in 2024

News: The article discusses the alarming trend of NCDs in India. It also highlights the steps that can be taken by individuals to lead a healthier life and prevent NCDs.

The alarming trend of non-elderly dying from heart-related issues is marking a paradigm shift in India's disease burden. While communicable diseases persist as a significant threat, **non-communicable diseases (NCDs)** such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer, and chronic respiratory diseases have emerged as the predominant public health concern.

What is the status of NCDs in India?

According to a World Health Organization (WHO) report titled 'Invisible Numbers', a staggering **66% of deaths in India in 2019** were attributed to NCDs.

India has **101 million diabetics** and **136 million with prediabetes**. Cardiovascular diseases top the mortality charts, and **cancer incidence is projected to rise by 57.5% by 2040**.

NCDs also pose a substantial economic burden. According to WEF, India could incur a staggering cost of **\$4.58 trillion between 2012 and 2030** due to NCDs and mental health conditions.

What are the causes?

- 1) The silent epidemic of NCDs is fuelled by **common behavioural risk factors** — unhealthy diet, lack of physical activity, the use of tobacco and alcohol — which are all on the rise in India.
- 2) This epidemic is further spurred by factors including a **genetic predisposition** towards conditions such as diabetes and heart disease.
- 3) A **sedentary lifestyle** which brings with it issues such as stress, anxiety, and depression.

What steps have been taken by the govt?

Government has launched initiatives such as:

- a. **National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases, and Stroke.**
- b. **75/25 initiative** (screening and providing standard of care for 75 million individuals with hypertension and diabetes by 2025).

What should be done by individuals to prevent NCDs?

1. **First**, integrating more natural movement into our daily lives. For instance, walking where possible instead of taking a vehicle. This can increase cardiovascular fitness, strengthen our bones, reduce excess body fat, and boost muscle power and endurance.

2. **Second**, choosing 'slow food' over fast food. This includes food that is prepared with the ingredients that are right for us.
3. **Third**, getting comprehensive health check-ups done regularly.
4. **Fourth**, making health a dinner table and water cooler conversation. For e.g. asking colleagues and loved ones what they did for their health.

The power to transform the nation lies in the daily choices of its citizens, reflecting a profound understanding that the well-being of individuals directly impacts the well-being of society.

Topic: Issues relating to Human Resources

On Youth Unemployment – Are graduates facing unemployment?

News: The article discusses the persistent issue of high unemployment rates among young, educated people in India, despite overall falling unemployment rates. It highlights that while fewer people are unemployed now, the problem remains severe for educated youth, reflecting a long-standing issue in the Indian economy.

What is the current unemployment situation?

1. **Overall unemployment rate:** According to periodic labour force survey, the overall unemployment rate in India has decreased from 6.1% in 2017-18 to 3.2% in 2022-23.
2. **Educated youth unemployment:** Young graduates, specifically those aged 18-29, face a high unemployment rate of 27% as of 2022-23. This indicates a persistent challenge for this demographic despite overall improvements.
3. **Graduate unemployment trends:** For all individuals with graduate degrees, unemployment has seen fluctuations but shows a decreasing trend; it peaked at 17% in 2017-18 and reduced to 13% in 2022-23.
4. **Growing graduate workforce:** The share of graduates in the labor force has increased, now making up around 15% by 2022-23.

Why is youth unemployment a concern?

1. **Underutilized Human Capital:** Such high unemployment rates among young, educated individuals suggest a significant underutilization of skilled human capital, which is detrimental to economic growth and productivity.
2. **Growing Share of Graduates:** The increasing share of graduates in the labor force, from 5% in 1993-94 to around 15% in 2022-23, highlights the expanding pool of educated yet unemployed youth, exacerbating the unemployment issue despite overall improvements.
3. **Structural Issue:** The problem has been longstanding since the 1990s, with unemployment among graduates peaking at 17% in 2017-18, showcasing it as a structural issue rather than a temporary fluctuation.

Way forward

Efforts to align education with market demands and enhance relevant skill development are crucial to address the 27% unemployment among young graduates. Creating more job opportunities in sectors that absorb educated youth will also mitigate high unemployment rates. Strengthening the education-employment linkage is key to utilizing the growing educated workforce effectively.

Subject: International Relations

Topic: Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests

On International Maritime Trade and Choke Points – Global trade disruption

News: The article discusses the reasons behind the recent obstructions in the Suez and Panama canal trade traffic and its implications.

Two continental shipping passages, the Suez and Panama canals, are suffering from obstructions to trade traffic. This has raised concerns about supply-chain woes and risks to the global economy. Additionally, it highlights that climate change and geopolitical tensions have the potential to negatively impact global trade and shipping.

Suez Canal:



Figure 1. Source: Nippon.com

What are the reasons for obstruction to trade in the Suez Canal?

Houthi rebels from Yemen have increased their attacks on ships in response to the war in Gaza. Even an Indian-flagged ship carrying crude oil was attacked. Turmoil in the **Red Sea** can practically render the Suez Canal unusable, a route that facilitates **12% of global trade** and around **20%**

of India's trade flows.

What is the impact?

- 1) This has led to major shipping companies rerouting vessels away from the Suez Canal, navigating around the **Cape of Good Hope (circling the African continent)**, a much longer but safer route.
- 2) Vessels still operating on the route are facing extremely high war-risk insurance premiums.
- 3) Both of these consequences have led to an increase in freight and shipping costs, rendering both imports and exports more expensive.
- 4) **On India:** Continued tensions surrounding the Gulf of Aden can impact India's trade flows. However, India is safe in the case of its oil imports as it sources its oil mainly from West Asia, and this is shipped via the **Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz**.

Panama Canal:



Source: **WorldAtlas**

What are the reasons for obstruction to trade in the Panama Canal?

The Panama Canal, which connects the Pacific and Atlantic Ocean, has been impacted by **drought conditions** coupled with the [El Nino effect](#).

As it **lies above the sea level**, it is completely reliant on freshwater from nearby lakes and cannot run on ocean water.

What is the impact?

- 1) The channel is currently operating only at **55%** of its normal capacity.
- 2) Blockage in the Panama Canal has also exacerbated supply-chain disruptions.

What should be done?

It is important to **recognise the criticality** of these "**choke points**" upon which global trade and navigation depend and take appropriate measures:

1. Smooth trade flows in the future may require **international cooperation** for effectively managing the major straits and canals during periods of natural emergency and political crisis.
2. **Intermodal freight transport** is a possible alternative. For instance, using air transport.

Indian Navy in a threatening Red Sea

News: The article discusses the importance of shipping trade and why the Indian Ocean is more vulnerable to interventions by state and non-state actors. It also mentions the challenges in front of the Indian Navy in dealing with the Houthi threat in the Red Sea.

The recent attacks by Yemen-based Houthi rebels have begun posing a serious threat to merchant ships in the Red Sea.

Why is shipping trade important?

1) Shipping is the **cheapest and most efficient method** of transporting goods over long distances, forming the bedrock of the global economy.

For instance, the waters of the Indian Ocean carry **80% of the world's oil**.

2) **Trade warfare or waging war on seaborne commerce** has historically been a favoured strategy to coerce an enemy by striking at the very roots of its security and prosperity.

Why is shipping trade in the Indian Ocean more vulnerable?

The Indian Ocean has a number of **narrow passages** called "**choke points**". These constrict shipping traffic into a narrow sea lane, making them vulnerable to interventions by states, pirates and terrorists. These include Malacca Strait, Hormuz Strait and Bab al Mandab Strait.

It is at **Bab al Mandab Strait** where the Iran-backed Houthi rebels have launched missile and drone attacks on US Navy units and merchant shipping.



Indian Ocean Choke-Points. Source: Carnegie Endowment.

What could be the reasons for the Houthi attack?

The underlying reasons for these attacks could be manifold:

1. **Clash of Regional and Global Powers:** The conflict between the Yemen Republic and the Houthis is seen as a Saudi Arabia-Iran proxy war, which has assumed wider multilateral dimensions. Countries like USA, Jordan, UAE, Qatar, Sudan, Bahrain and organisations like Al Qaeda and Hezbollah either participate or support one or the other side.
2. **Ideological Objectives:** The Houthis have claimed that their aim for attacking shipping is to pressurise Israel to end its bombardment of Gaza, targeting only those ships which are in any way “linked” to Israel.

What has been the world’s response?

The US, due to its deep ties to Israel, launched “**Operation Prosperity Guardian**” with the aim of safeguarding Red Sea shipping.

However, it is being seen as provocative against Iran, and hasn’t received wider support by 3 important NATO countries — France, Italy and Spain.

India: India’s deployment of 4-5 warships as a show of “naval presence” reflects its status as a maritime power.

What will be challenges in front of the Indian Navy?

According to the author, the Indian Navy will be constrained by two factors:

1. **Jurisdictional Issues:** The state in which a ship is registered has the primary responsibility for maintaining security and law enforcement on ships in international waters. A warship of any other state wanting to board a merchant vessel in peacetime will need the consent of the flag state.
2. **Drone Warfare:** Navies are struggling to devise counter-measures to the evolving dangers of drone attacks.

The smaller, low-flying drones are hard to spot by radars and target. Soft-kill measures (jamming the drone’s radio signals) or hard-kill/kinetic systems (missiles or rapid-firing guns) can be utilised.

India must use its good relations with Iran, as well as with Israel, to urge moderation and restraint in order to restore peace in the Indian Ocean.

On the Qatar Death Row Issue – A quiet reprieve

News: The article discusses the recent commuting of the capital punishment handed down in October to 8 former Indian naval personnel by Qatar. It also highlights the possible future course of action that the government can follow to ensure the best possible results for the naval personnel.

A detailed article on **India-Qatar Relations** can be [read here](#).

Recently, the Qatari Court of Appeals reduced the capital punishment handed down in October to 8 former Indian naval personnel, commuting it to a jail term.

However, since the conviction was upheld, the government and the men’s families must now reassess their legal strategy and evidence of their innocence before filing a review petition with Qatar’s Court of Cassation.

Read more about this issue [here](#).

What are the options if all avenues of judicial appeal are exhausted?

The government will have three options:

1. **First**, to press for a review of the conviction with Qatar's ruling Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani.
2. **Second**, if that fails, the men could appeal for clemency and ask for a pardon, that Qatar's rulers have given in the past.
3. **Third**, the men could serve out their terms in India (according to a **2015 bilateral Agreement on Transfer of Sentenced Persons**). However, this option would require them to accept the conviction.

What was the role played by diplomacy in getting the death sentence commuted?

1. India's Prime Minister reached out publicly to the Qatari leadership when he met Qatar's Emir on the sidelines of COP28 recently.
2. India chose not to react to the case with public rhetoric (such as negative media reporting against Qatar). This could have been counterproductive.
3. India also did not allow the case to be influenced by the growing tensions in the region due to the Gaza conflict.

What should be done?

1. **Reviewing Intelligence Operations:** If the case is in any way connected to India's intelligence services, then an appropriate review should be undertaken (of operations that could risk Indian lives overseas).
2. **Diplomatic and Political Efforts:** The government must be seen to be pursuing diplomatic and political efforts at the highest level, to convey that the men are a priority for India.

Topic: Bilateral groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

On MEA's Russia Visit – Express View on Jaishankar in Moscow

News: The article discusses Dr. S Jaishankar's recent trip to Moscow. It highlights the significance of the visit and the changing dynamics of India-Russia bilateral relations.

The camaraderie between India and Russia was evident during Dr. S Jaishankar's recent trip to Moscow. Dr. Jaishankar rightly highlighted that amidst fluctuations in ties with other key nations, the **Indo-Russian bond has remained remarkably steady** and haven't encountered significant disagreements. India and Russia have often found **convergence in their geopolitical goals**, particularly in maintaining a stable balance of power in Asia.

What is the status of India-Russia bilateral relations?

- 1) **Trade & Energy Relations:** Bilateral economic engagement has risen rapidly in the last two years. Bilateral trade has grown from about \$12 billion to **\$50 billion last year**, thanks to the massive oil imports from Russia.
- 2) **India's stand on Russian Aggression against Ukraine:** India came under widespread criticism in the West for not condemning the Russian invasion of Ukraine and for expanding its energy and economic cooperation with Moscow.

What is the significance of the visit?

- 1) **Aims to uphold a strong level of political involvement with the Russian leadership:** This is important given the inability to hold the annual summits between PM Narendra Modi and President Vladimir Putin over the past two years due to the conflict in Ukraine.
- 2) **Does not mark a break in the thriving strategic partnership between India and the US:** It is wrong to interpret the visit as a major Indian decision to embrace Russia amid presumed setbacks to India's relationship with the US (regarding the **Gurpatwant Singh Pannun episode and the rejection of Republic Day Invitation by US President**).

What are the new announcements during the recent visit?

1. **First**, talks for the Eurasian Economic Union-India free trade agreement have been resumed.
2. **Second**, agreement over furthering collaboration in future Kudankulam nuclear power projects.
3. **Third**, imports of Russian hydrocarbons will continue to rise despite the West's Russian sanctions.
4. **Fourth**, as Russia will host the expanded BRICS summit next year, India will be beneficiary of coordination with Russia like at the UN and SCO.

What are the changes in the bilateral relations between India and Russia?

The context of bilateral relations with Russia has fundamentally changed due to the following factors:

- 1) **Economic Gap Reversed:** India is no longer a junior partner to Russia. India's GDP in 1991 was half that of Russia's; today it is bigger than Russia's by a large margin — \$3.6 trillion to \$2.2 trillion.
- 2) **Dependence on Russian Military Imports Decreasing:** India is diversifying away from its traditional military dependence on Russia — France and the US have emerged as major arms suppliers.
- 3) **Increased Partnerships with the West:** India's commercial and technological relationships are deeply tied to the US, Europe and the UK. A large section of the Indian diaspora resides in the English-speaking world.

India is reconstituting its Russia relationship as an equal. There are concerns over defence supplies from Russia and the method of payment for imports from Russia. Yet both countries value sustaining a sensible bilateral relationship that will help them deal with an increasingly bipolar world.

On Shift in Global Trade Policy

News: The article discusses how recent trade policies, particularly in the US and EU, are moving away from global trade rules and becoming more protectionist. This shift is leading to a more fragmented and contentious global trade environment.

What is changing in global trade policy?

1. **Unilateral Measures:** The US and EU are adopting more unilateral trade policies, as evidenced by the **US's Inflation Reduction Act** and the **EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism**. These measures, like the **US's local content rules in electric vehicle manufacturing** and the **EU extending its Emission Trading System**, are contrary to WTO rules and favor certain regions over others.
2. **Rising Protectionist Actions:** Nations are following the US and EU's lead with their own protective measures. For instance, the Netherlands and Japan's restrictions in the semiconductor industry are part of a broader trend of increasing trade restrictions aimed at protecting domestic industries.
3. **Contradictory US Policies:** The US has the highest number of trade and industrial policy interventions between 2017-23, contradicting its stated commitment to a rules-based order. This includes actions

against China and its own protectionist measures, reflecting a larger trend of contradiction in its trade policies.

For more information on **US's Inflation Reduction Act**, [read here](#).

For more information on **EU's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism**, [read here](#).

What are the implications of these changes?

1. **Undermining WTO Principles:** Unilateral measures like the Inflation Reduction Act and the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism challenge WTO's rules-based order, undermining principles of non-discrimination and fair competition.
2. **Weakening of Multilateral Dispute Settlement:** The US's reluctance to engage with the WTO's dispute resolution mechanisms signals a move towards more uncertain and bilateral dispute settlements. This move threatens the predictability and stability provided by the multilateral system.

What should be done?

1. **Strengthen WTO Commitment:** Reinforce adherence to World Trade Organization rules and principles to ensure a fair and stable global trading system.
2. **Support Positive Trade Developments:** Recognize and build upon the growth and resilience of global trade, as evidenced by the expansion of the **Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP)** and the full effectuation of the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**.
3. **Encourage Multilateral Cooperation:** Utilize the positive momentum from these regional blocks to foster a more inclusive and rules-based global trade environment.
4. **Enhance Transparency:** Developed countries should lead by example, ensuring that any new trade measures are transparent and in line with international norms.

For more information on **CPTPP**, [read here](#).

For more information on **RCEP**, [read here](#).

Topic: India and its neighbourhood- relations

On India losing influence in South Asia

News: The article discusses India's waning influence in South Asia, attributing it to internal changes, neighboring countries' evolving perspectives, and external pressures from powers like China and the Middle East. It suggests that India must revise its strategies to effectively respond to these new regional dynamics and maintain its regional standing.

Why is India losing influence in South Asia?

1. **Historical Legacies:** The India's collective nostalgia for the British Raj's integration of the Subcontinent along with partition and unresolved disputes have led to continuous regional tension.
2. **Perception of Hegemony:** Neighbors perceive India's regional strategies as attempts at hegemony, conflicting with their sovereignty and autonomy. For example, India's concepts like "Akhand Bharat" or the liberal version of an integrated Subcontinent, seen as covers for regional hegemony.

3. **Domestic Politics of Neighborhood:** Neighbors like the Maldives demand the withdrawal of Indian military presence, worried about its impact on its sovereignty. Additionally, the unresolved Kashmir issue with Pakistan remains a focal point of contention.
4. **Changing Regional Dynamics:** The rising influence of global powers like China in South Asia and the strategic and economic interests of Middle Eastern countries are diminishing India's role and complicating its traditional influence.

What is the future of South Asia?

1. **Evolving Geopolitics:** The influence of external powers like China and the Middle East will grow, reshaping regional dynamics.
2. **Changing Alliances:** Neighboring countries will continue to assert their sovereignty, potentially leading to new alliances and partnerships beyond India's influence.
3. **Increased Regional Integration:** Despite challenges, there is potential for more economic cooperation and regional integration, albeit at a pace influenced by political will and external factors.
4. **Continued Legacy of Partition:** Historical disputes, especially related to Partition, will persist in shaping the political and social landscape.

Way forward:

India needs to reassess its regional strategy, focusing on inclusivity, cooperation, and resolving disputes like Kashmir to adapt to a changing South Asia. Recognizing and constructively engaging with neighboring countries and external influences is vital for navigating the region's complexities. By embracing these changes, India can better position itself in the evolving geopolitical landscape of South Asia.

GS Paper 3

Subject: Indian Economy

Topic: Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment

An Alternate Development Model – The quest for 'happiness' in the Viksit Bharat odyssey

News: The article discusses the flaws with the development model followed under 'Viksit Bharat'. It highlights an alternate developmental model that should be followed by India.

Viksit Bharat aims to make India a developed nation by 2047, the 100th year of its Independence. In achieving this goal, the focus and priorities in the choice of development planning are crucial and complex.

What are the developmental aspects included under 'Viksit Bharat'?

1. Structural transformation; 2. Organising labour markets; 3. Increasing competitiveness; 4. Improving financial and social inclusion; 5. Governance reforms.

What are the concerns with this model of development?

- 1) **Euro-centricism:** In Viksit Bharat, economic development is overemphasised. Post-developmentalists argue that this is a Euro-centric notion of development which reflects the interests of its practitioners.
- 2) **Contradictions of Development:** The current model of mere economic development is highly disruptive to our social order, leading to disorders and crime. It creates imbalances and contradictions (such as rising income inequality).

What aspects can be included to make it a more comprehensive and inclusive developmental model?

1) **'Happiness' as a goal:** Happiness ought to be a central pursuit. Materially rich nations are not essentially happy nations. This development scheme conveniently overlooks mental health and wellness. It is also crucial because India is ranked 126 out of 137 countries in the Happiness Index despite being the 5th-largest economy.

2) **Developing Social Connections:** Happiness Report 2023 highlighted the importance of social connections and relationships in contributing to happiness and well-being. According to the report, Finland, Denmark, Iceland and the Netherlands are the happiest countries due to focusing on social connections and support systems.

3) **Inclusion of Other Indices:** There is a need to include social indicators for development as GDP estimates fail to consider life's human and social aspects.

For instance, a weightage to the **Human Development Index**, which consists of life expectancy, educational attainment, and income level, could be considered.

Similarly, the World Bank has developed a **'Green Index'** that measures a nation's wealth by incorporating three components: produced assets, natural resources and human resources.

Indices such as the Global Innovation Index, Rule of Law Index, Poverty Index, Corruption Perceptions Index, Gender Equality Index, and World Press Freedom Index will be significant to give effect to the idea of a happy India.

On the Overseas Demand for Indian Labour

News: The article discusses the recent developments regarding the rising demand of Indian labour and the steps taken by the government in this regard.

After focusing on **migration and mobility pacts**, the government is now increasingly eyeing agreements with developed nations to send skilled workers in the construction, farm, and manufacturing sectors.

Flurry of mobility and migration agreements signed by India in recent years

AGREEMENTS SIGNED

France	2018
United Kingdom	2021
Germany	2022
Finland	2022
Australia	2023
Austria	2023
Italy	2023

UNDER DISCUSSIONS

Netherland, Taiwan, South Korea, Greece, Denmark

Source : MEA

What are the recent developments regarding the rising demand of Indian labour?

Developed countries are facing a major shortage of workers due to **rising labour costs** and **increasing inflation**. India (especially states with a history of international migration such as Haryana, Punjab, and Tamil Nadu) has stepped in to fill that demand from various countries. These include:

1. **Greece** has approached India for sending up to 10,000 seasonal agricultural workers.

It is facing an acute shortage of at least 70,00 workers in Greece for domestic production of vegetables, fruit, olive oil and milk.

2. **Italy** has sought workers to staff municipal bodies in its emptying towns.

3. A labour agreement signed with **Israel** in May, to send 42,000 Indian workers may be expanded further. Israel is looking to bring in foreign workers to fill up nearly 90,000 jobs which had been held by Palestinians before the recent Gaza conflict.

4. Recently, India signed a **Migration and Mobility Partnership** with **Italy**. There are 1,57,000 NRIs in Italy, the majority of whom work in the farm and dairy sectors. A

similar agreement was signed with **France** in 2018.

What steps have been taken by the government in this regard?

1. **Pravasi Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PKVY)**: It is a skill development initiative of the Ministry of External Affairs in partnership with the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship. It is aimed at training and certification of Indian workforce keen on overseas employment, in line with international standards.

2. **Skill India International Centres (SIICS)**: Govt had announced setting up of **30 SIICS** in the 2023-24 Budget. They aim to provide destination-based skilling, re-skilling, immigration assistance and post placement support. They provide both domain skills training on international standards and pre-departure orientation training (PDOT) to candidates.

3. **Labour Agreements**: India has signed **17 agreements** with various countries between 2015 and 2023 to facilitate movement of labour.

How can India gain from sending labour overseas?

1. **Opportunities**: India is a labour-surplus country and has been exporting workers around the world through both formal and informal channels over the years.

2. **Experience**: Although there could be concern that labour migrating abroad could create shortages in India, most of the labour demand for now seems temporary in nature, which means people will come back with international experience.

3. **Incomes**: Since wages in developed countries are much higher, they are also likely to return with savings, which can be used to build real assets in India. Given the vast pool of surplus labour, it is unlikely to create shortages in India.

Why is sending Indian labour overseas not enough?

It is important to recognise that this will not solve the unemployment or under-employment problem India is facing and should not be seen as an answer to the Indian economy's inability to create enough well-paid jobs. According to the latest Periodic Labour Force Survey, over **57% of the workforce was self-employed**. This is not an indication of entrepreneurship, but people engaged in some economic activity to sustain themselves because not doing anything is not an option.

Over **18%** of the labour force was engaged as **helpers in household enterprises**, while more than **21%**

identified themselves as **casual workers**.

Thus, India needs to create gainful employment for its rising workforce.

What should be done?

Since the government is actively pursuing this route, there are at least two important things that must be kept in mind.

1. **First**, the kind of workforce being discussed here is not particularly highly educated and savvy. It is, therefore, important that people are shortlisted transparently with trusted third-party involvement, if necessary.
2. **Second**, as the number of Indian workers goes up in various countries over time, India should consider increasing its diplomatic presence to ensure difficulties faced by Indians are swiftly addressed.

On Private Investment – Crowd-in must not start crowding investors out

News: The article discusses the optimistic indicators in Indian economy which signal a future increase in private investment in the economy.

In June 2023, India's credit-to-GDP gap has turned positive for the first time in a decade, according to **Bank for International Settlements**. This has led to optimism regarding the economy's trajectory ahead.

What is Credit-to-GDP Gap?

The **Credit-to-GDP gap** compares the current level of credit (the amount of money lent by financial institutions) to the GDP.

This gap helps identify periods when the pace of credit expansion is unusually high relative to the growth of the economy. A high credit-to-GDP gap may indicate a credit boom, potentially signaling increased risk of financial instability or a future economic downturn. Conversely, a negative or low credit-to-GDP gap might suggest limited credit availability, which could constrain economic growth.

While the credit-to-GDP gap is a contentious figure to assess the state of an economy, it is often used along with other data as an early warning indicator of a banking crisis.

What are some other positive indicators in the economy?

- **Healthy State of Banks:** Banks are broadly in better shape than a decade ago, with bad loans as a chunk of bank assets having fallen to low single-digit rates. Lending norms have been tightened and the risk of debts going bad appears to pose no systemic threat at this point.
- 2. **Credit Growth:** The rate of credit growth has reached mid-teen levels.
- 3. **Increased Capacity Utilization in Manufacturing:** It has crossed 75% (the percentage of potential output levels that is being achieved), which suggests business borrowings are increasing as expansion plans are dusted off for action.
- 4. **Consumer Spending:** The post-pandemic recovery in consumer demand has been uneven, but markets for many products and services have logged record sales and even the laggards have begun to look up.
- 5. **Increasing capex by the Government:** India's post-covid economic growth has been boosted by heavy capital expenditure by the Centre.
- 6. **Crowd-in effect of Government Capex:** A major thrust behind government's capex push was to crowd-in private investment, which is crucial for gross capital formation. To this extent, the author

has found that government capex has finally begun to **crowd-in private investment (increased government spending leading to increased private investment)**.

What requires to be done?

The increase in government capex has resulted in an enlarged **fiscal deficit**. With crowding in of private investment, it's time for a sharp fiscal pullback, sharper than outlined by India's official glide path to 4.5% of GDP by 2025-26. The economy has emerged from its COVID crater and grown faster than expected, but a big fiscal deficit for too long risks crowding out private players.

Topic: Infrastructure: Energy

On Renewable Energy Storage

News: The article discusses India's plans to increase renewable energy use by investing in energy storage technologies like batteries and pumped storage. It mentions government incentives, future goals for storage capacity, and the importance of new technologies and policies to support this growth.

What is the current status of renewable energy storage?

1. **Renewables Growth:** 83% of the world's power capacity added in 2022 was renewable, primarily wind and solar.
2. **Energy Storage Expansion:** Energy storage is **growing at 23% annually**, crucial for managing renewable variability.
3. **India's Position:** India, with a significant renewable capacity, is projected to be the third largest by 2030 but fifth in energy storage installations.
4. **Future Goals:** India targets 500 GW renewable capacity by 2030. By 2047, the Central Electricity Authority estimates a **need for 320 GW of energy storage**, including 90 GW of PSP (pumped storage projects) and 230 GW of BESS (Battery Energy Storage Systems) to meet rising renewable energy use and 2070 net zero targets.
5. **Storage Needs:** A requirement of 60 GW of energy storage by 2030 is projected, with current visibility around 30 GW.

For more information on **PSP**, [read here](#).

For more information on **BESS**, [read here](#).

What are the challenges of renewable energy storage?

1. **High Capital Costs:** Initial investments for technologies like BESS are high, with costs anticipated to be ₹2.20-2.40 crore per MWh in 2023-26.
2. **Material Availability:** Lithium, crucial for batteries, poses supply and volatility challenges; alternatives like sodium are being explored.
3. **Infrastructure Needs:** Implementing large-scale storage requires infrastructure upgrades and policy support. Some storage technologies, especially newer ones like green hydrogen, are in early development stages.

What are the solutions for renewable energy storage?

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1. **Exploring Alternatives:** Consideration of sodium-ion batteries as a potential alternative to lithium-ion, given sodium's abundance.
2. **Integrated Tenders:** Promoting integrated solutions combining solar, wind, and storage to optimize costs and efficiency, as seen in tariffs ranging from ₹3-7/kWh.

What initiatives have been taken by the Indian government?

A. Ministry of Power:

1. Announced the National Framework for Promoting Energy Storage Systems, detailing procedures and incentives for different sub-sectors of ESS. This includes-Generation, Transmission, Distribution, Standalone ESS Operating Independently as Merchant Units, and Storage for Ancillary and Balancing Services.
2. Approved a ₹3,760 crore viability gap fund for Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS).

B. Ministry of Environment:

1. At COP28, emphasized the need for viable storage and abatement technologies before committing to phasing out fossil fuels.

C. Ministry of New and Renewable Energy:

1. Set a target of 500 GW renewable energy capacity by 2030.
2. Launched a ₹18,000 crore Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme for advanced cell chemistry battery manufacturing to boost domestic and foreign investment.

D. Lithium Reserves Discovery: Identified significant lithium reserves in Jammu & Kashmir and Rajasthan to support battery manufacturing.

Way forward:

India should continue to expand its renewable capacity, invest in diverse storage technologies, and implement supportive policies. Leveraging the ₹18,000 crore PLI scheme and enhancing infrastructure for BESS and PSP are crucial. Addressing regulatory challenges and tapping into newly discovered lithium reserves will also be vital to sustainably meet the 2030 and 2047 energy goals.

Topic: Changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth

On Make in India - There is no substitute for an industrial policy

News: The article discusses the Make in India initiative, contrasting it with past self-sufficiency policies. It explores the campaign's focus on manufacturing and global competitiveness, concerns about protectionism, and the need for policies that support job creation.

What is Make in India (MII)?

[Read here.](#)

How is it different from past policy?

1. **Beyond Import Substitution:** MII diverges from the past policy of self-sufficiency and import-substituting industrialization. It's **geared towards making India a global manufacturing hub**, unlike the 1970s approach that led to inefficiencies and market distortions.
2. **Not a Protectionist Policy:** While MII is implementing some protective measures like raising tariffs, it's not intended to be as pervasive or damaging as past policies. For example, a mobile phone made in India typically has 80-85% imported content, indicating the importance of keeping trade somewhat open.

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3. **Job Creation and Economic Growth:** The National Manufacturing Policy (NMP, 2011) targeted raising manufacturing's GDP contribution to 25% and creating 100 million additional jobs. MII aims to further these goals with a more outward-looking, competitive approach.
4. **PLI Schemes for Modernization:** The PLI scheme under MII aims to enhance manufacturing efficiency and global competitiveness in specific sectors, contrasting with the broad-brush protectionism of earlier times.

For more information on **PLI scheme**, [read here](#).

What are the concerns related to MII?

1. **Rising Protectionism:** There's concern that MII could lead to increased tariff duties, reminiscent of past protectionist policies, potentially hindering the competitive edge and increasing costs.
2. **Legacy of Past Policies:** Fears persist that MII might unintentionally bring back elements of the License Raj era, characterized by shortages, black markets, and rampant rent-seeking, despite its fundamentally different approach.
3. **MII cannot be a substitute for an Industrial Policy:** Industrial policy over and above MII is needed to address the issue of jobless growth. Mass job creation remains the need of the hour, given the large working population.

What should be done?

1. **Balance Protectionism and Open Markets:** While protecting nascent industries, India should avoid excessive tariffs that hinder competitiveness, focusing instead on strategic, sector-specific support.
2. **Enhance Labor-Intensive Manufacturing:** Given the emphasis on job creation, policies should focus more on labor-intensive manufacturing to provide employment, especially for women.
3. **Ensure Data-Driven Policymaking:** Frequent and reliable data collection is crucial for informed policymaking, avoiding the "shooting darts blindfolded" scenario and enabling responsive and effective strategies.

Subject: Agriculture

Topic: Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies

On the PM-Kisan Scheme – Not the way forward

News: The article discusses the significant features of the PM-Kisan scheme. It suggests the reforms that can be undertaken in the scheme to make it better for Indian farmers.

The Government is undertaking a drive to increase the total number of farmer-beneficiaries under the [Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi \(PM-Kisan\)](#), from the current 8.12 crore to about 8.75 crore.

What are the significant features of the PM-Kisan scheme?

PM-Kisan's is a **direct income support (DIS) programme**. Its significant features include:

1. **Not dependent on Crops Grown:** This payment is irrespective of which crops she grows in whatever quantities and sells to whomsoever at any price.

2. **Not dependent on the Inputs Used:** The payment is also indifferent to inputs used, whether chemical fertilisers and insecticides or organic manure and biological control of pests and diseases.

Thus, it's a **subsidy that is not market-distorting** or **encouraging chemicals-based agriculture** (as against natural farming).

What are some changes that can be made?

Within the overall framework of PM-Kisan, certain refinements can be made:

- 1) **Income Support on a Per-Acre Basis:** For instance, Telangana government's Rythu Bandhu scheme provides farmers up to Rs 12,000 per acre per year.
- 2) **Upper Limits on the Per-Acre Payment:** The payment under PM-Kisan can be made on a per-acre basis **up to a limit of, say, 10 acres**. This would address concerns over large landowning farmers getting a higher amount compared to poor farmers with less land.
- 3) **Additional Payment by State governments:** State governments can top up the amount under PM-Kisan with an equivalent income support (as a per-acre transfer).

Where will the provisioned money come from?

According to the author, the money for moving from per-farmer to per-acre payments can come from the following sources:

- 1) **Savings from ending all market-distorting subsidies:** This includes subsidies on farm **inputs** (fertiliser, electricity and water) or **output** (procurement of grain at MSP beyond necessary stocking requirements). The savings can be redirected towards PM-Kisan. For e.g. the Centre's fertiliser subsidy (around Rs 1,75,100 crore), if distributed among the 8.75 crore beneficiaries, would work out to over Rs 20,000 per farmer.
- 2) **Additional savings from similar inefficient and environmentally-disastrous subsidies by states.**

For more information regarding **Issues with Farm Subsidies in India**, [read here](#).

Subject: Environment

Topic: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

Global Goal on Adaptation and the road from Dubai

News: COP28 in Dubai marked a significant moment in addressing climate change adaptation, pushing for a more serious approach and building on previous efforts from COP26 and COP27.

What are the key outcomes of COP28?

[Read here](#).

What is the difference between adaptation and mitigation?

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1. **Definition:** Adaptation involves adjusting to current and expected impacts of climate change. It focuses on reducing vulnerability and enhancing resilience. Mitigation targets the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions to slow climate change.
2. **Approach: Adaptation** actions are often local or regional, addressing specific climate impacts like flooding or heatwaves. **Mitigation** efforts are global, aiming to reduce overall emissions through strategies like renewable energy or reforestation.
3. **Measurement:** Measuring adaptation is complex with no universal metric, focusing on varied local outcomes. Mitigation is measured in CO2 equivalents, offering a standardized metric for comparing efforts globally.

What is the Global Goal on Adaptation (GGA)?

The GGA is a commitment within the Paris Agreement aiming to enhance adaptive capacity, strengthen resilience, and reduce vulnerability to climate change.

The GGA focuses on having nations conduct comprehensive climate risk assessments, inform policy with these findings, and establish early warning systems by 2027.

What are the Challenges in Implementing GGA?

1. **Translating Global Goals to National Action:** Implementing the GGA is complex due to differences in national conditions, administrative capacities, and economic development levels, which affect how global goals are adopted locally.
2. **Measuring Progress:** There's no universal metric for adaptation, making it difficult to aggregate and compare progress across countries. The GGA is working on developing indicators but currently lacks specifics on development and implementation.
3. **Financing Gap:** The adaptation finance gap is widening, with a need for \$ 71 billion per year until 2030. Current finance is insufficient, with adaptation finance significantly trailing behind mitigation, reflecting a bias in climate financing priorities.

Way forward:

To address climate challenges effectively, global efforts must prioritize adaptation alongside mitigation, recognizing its urgency due to escalating extreme weather events. It's critical to close the adaptation financing gap, aiming for the \$71 billion needed annually. Additionally, establishing universal metrics for adaptation and implementing key strategies, such as risk assessments and early warning systems, are essential steps.

Subject: Internal Security

Topic: Security challenges and their management in border areas

On Civilian deaths in Kashmir

News: The article discusses the history of the Rajouri and Poonch districts in the context of cross-border terrorism. It also highlights why the recent death of 3 civilians allegedly in the military's custody is a setback to the military's efforts to curb terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir.

The recent **death of 3 civilians allegedly in the military's custody** in the aftermath of the Poonch ambush (by the People's Anti-Fascist Front (PAFF)) is a setback to the military's efforts to curb terrorism in Jammu & Kashmir. It can **decrease the population's support** for the security forces. The security situation in the border districts of **Rajouri and Poonch** in the Jammu region has a social and political dynamic, due to a mixture of religious, ethnic and linguistic communities.

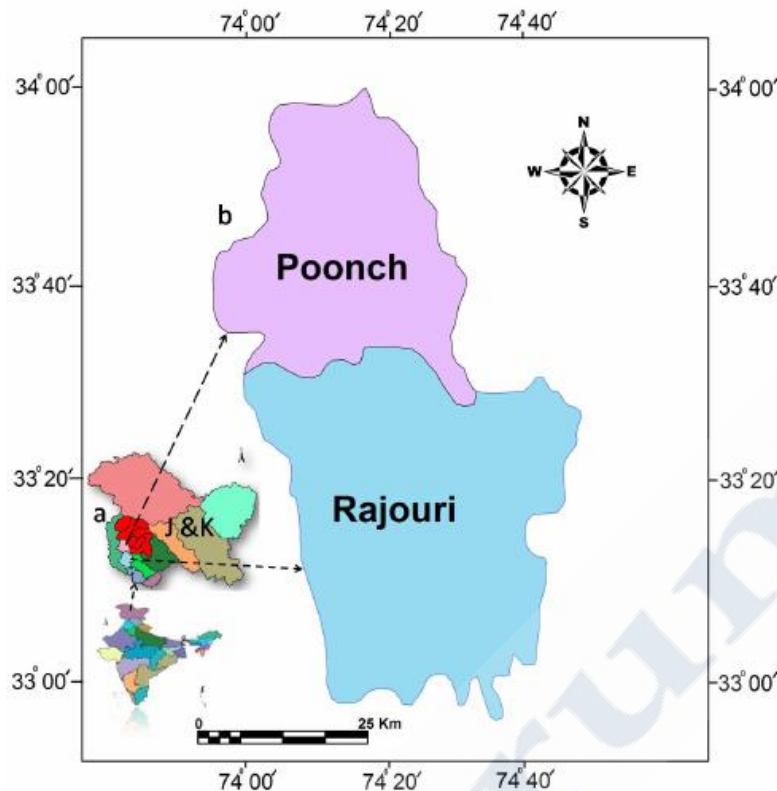


Figure 2. Source: Anzar Ahmad Khuroo (Research Gate).

What has been the history of the two districts in the context of cross-border terrorism?

- 1) **Early Years of militancy in the 1990s:** The districts were used to access the Valley by exploiting the terrain for concealed movement.
- 2) **Post 1996-97:** This region has served as a fallback option for terror groups whenever they were driven away from the Kashmir Valley.
- 3) **Late '90s and early 2000s:** This period witnessed rising terror activities in the area. The Indian Army conducted **Operation Sarp Vinash** in 2003, dealing a deadly blow to the base of militancy in the region. In this operation, support from the majority community of **Gujjars and Bakarwals** was not just passive but also active, wherein **Village Defence Committees** fought along with the Indian Army.

Indian

4) **Present:** In 2023 alone, Rajouri, Poonch and Reasi districts in the Jammu region reportedly witnessed the deaths of 55 individuals (including security personnel and terrorists). The two districts continue to provide a fertile ground for terrorist operations and enable them to assert control.

Why is the region being used as a base for terrorist operations?

- 1) **Sending a Message of Mass Support:** By striking outside the Valley, terrorists try to depict the mass appeal of their resistance.
- 2) **Difficult Terrain:** The treacherous terrain gives the terrorists an advantage — they need not seek a mass support base for their survival. They can sustain themselves among the higher ridges of the thickly wooded semi-mountainous terrain merely by support of a few **Overground Workers**.
- 3) **Lack of Attention:** The general focus on the Kashmir Valley has led to the Rajouri-Poonch region being at a disadvantage in terms of development funds, implementation of government programmes, infrastructure development, etc.

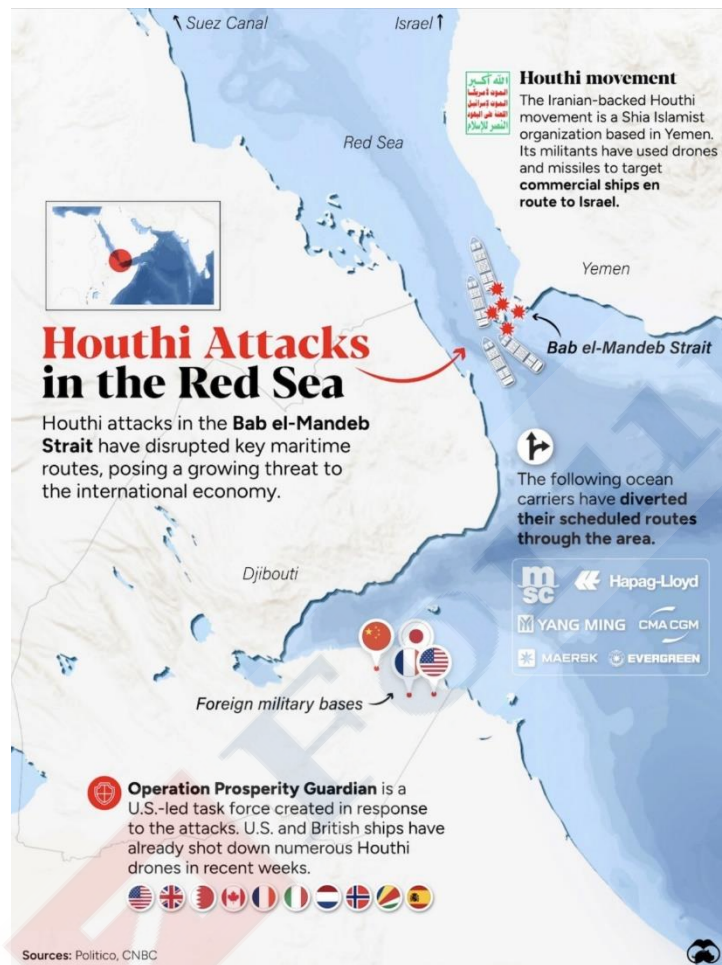
The once well-consolidated support of locals has been decreasing.

What should be done by the Indian military?

- 1) Moving beyond mere military operations, **bold and imaginative initiatives and countermeasures** should be undertaken.
 - 2) **Including non-kinetic means**, as part of a **whole-of-government approach**. This includes preventing terrorist activities through diplomatic, economic, political, informational, or cyber means
- Note-** Non-kinetic warfare generally refers to action against an adversary without a direct conventional military action.

Drone attack on merchant ship in the Indian Ocean

News: The article discusses a suspected drone attack on a merchant ship in the Indian Ocean, India's response, and the challenges and strategies of maritime forces, including India's, in dealing with new threats like armed drones and the evolving tactics in anti-drone warfare.



What are the responses to a drone attack on a merchant ship in the Indian Ocean?

India's Response:

1. **Swift Military Deployment:** India dispatched the Coast Guard and Navy ships to the attack site, demonstrating quick reaction capabilities.
2. **Naval Adjustments:** Indian Navy, traditionally focused on piracy, is now considering anti-drone tactics and strategies.

Global Response:

1. **Operation Prosperity Guardian:** Initiated by the US with allies like the UK, Bahrain, and Canada to protect maritime traffic from drone threats. **Note:** Operation Prosperity Guardian, started in December 2023, is a US-led international mission. The aim is to protect ships in the southern Red Sea and Gulf of Aden from Houthi attacks. This effort, under Combined Task Force 153, seeks to secure freedom of navigation and enhance regional security and prosperity.
2. **Coalition Changes:** France, Italy, and

Spain withdrew from the coalition, reflecting challenges in unified action.

3. **Anti-Drone Technologies:** Emphasis on developing jamming and spoofing techniques, although these are not widely available or fully effective against drones.

What are the challenges in maritime security?

1. **Technology Gaps:** Effective anti-drone technologies like jamming and spoofing are not widely accessible or proven under all conditions, making defense difficult.

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2. **Coalition Dynamics:** Disagreements within international coalitions, evidenced by nations withdrawing from Operation Prosperity Guardian, complicate unified responses.

What are the implications of a drone attack on a merchant ship in the Indian Ocean?

1. **Regional Security Concerns:** The drone attack near Porbandar raises the specter of a new, unpredictable threat in maritime regions, prompting urgent security reassessments.
2. **Navigation and Commerce Impact:** Such attacks threaten commercial shipping routes, leading to broader economic implications and heightened calls for maritime security.

What should be done?

1. **Join International Coalitions:** India might consider joining forces like Operation Prosperity Guardian for a coordinated response, as the CMF's task forces specialize in regional maritime security.
2. **Adopt Anti-Drone Technology:** Navies should invest in and deploy effective anti-drone technologies such as jamming, spoofing, and directed energy weapons to counteract the new aerial threats.
3. **Enhance Maritime Communication and Intelligence:** Improve surveillance and intelligence sharing among maritime nations to detect and respond to threats promptly.
4. **Regular Training and Adaptation:** Naval forces need continuous training in anti-drone strategies and tactics, moving beyond traditional anti-piracy measures to address the evolving maritime security landscape.

Topic: Organised crime

Drug problem in Punjab - A promise to keep

News: The article discusses Punjab's struggle with drug problems and efforts by the government to stop it.

What is the scale of the drug problem in Punjab?

From April 2022 to February 2023, Punjab Police filed **11,156 drug-related FIRs, with 25% pertaining to pharmaceutical drugs** (such as nasheeli goliyan).

The number of individuals grappling with addiction at 10 lakhs.

Women are notably involved in 10% of these drug cases, highlighting gender-specific impacts. The state has seen a persistent rise in drug activities since 2019, except for a brief dip during 2020 due to COVID-19.

Despite efforts, **266 deaths were reported due to overdoses from 2020 to 2023**,

What are the reasons for the drug problem in Punjab?

1. **Geographical Vulnerability:** Punjab's position as part of the **Golden Crescent (Iran-Afghanistan-Pakistan)** facilitates its role in the heroin and cocaine trade, leading to widespread substance abuse.
2. **Poverty and Socioeconomic Issues:** The involvement of women in drug cases, many from denotified tribes or rural backgrounds, illustrates how poverty pushes individuals into the narcotics trade.
3. **Systemic Loopholes:** Major drug dealers continue to evade arrest shows the challenge in dismantling organized networks.
4. **Availability:** The transition from heroin (Chitta) to pharmaceutical opioids (nasheeli goliyan) reflects **changing drug preferences and availability**.

What initiatives have been taken by the Punjab government?

1. **Awareness and Rehabilitation Campaigns:** Initiatives like cyclothons, street plays, and gully cricket aim to raise awareness and promote rehabilitation.
2. **Setting Up All-Women Anti-Drug Committees:** In some villages of the Malwa region, these committees are formed to combat drug abuse and support affected families.
3. **Legislative Action:** FIRs and legal actions under the **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act** have been significantly employed, with 11,156 cases filed between April 2022 and February 2023.

For more information on **India's initiative to regulate drugs trafficking**, [read here](#).

Way forward:

Punjab must escalate actions against the drug networks and improve education and employment options for those most at risk. Strengthening legal systems is essential to close loopholes that allow trafficking to persist. Sustained focus on rehabilitation programs and targeting top-tier traffickers will help diminish the narcotics supply and demand.