

# 9 PM Current Affairs Monthly Compilation

For UPSC CSE mains examination



June  
2024

Features :

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

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## GS Paper 1

### Topic- Post-independence Consolidation and Reorganization within the country.

#### 10 Years of Andhra Pradesh Bifurcation

**Context-**It has been a decade since Andhra Pradesh was divided into two states.The article attempts to examine the political, economic, and historical implications of this division for the Telugu people and the Indian Republic. It is surprising to learn this fact that there is very little nostalgia for the nearly five and a half decades of living together as one political entity among the people of both successor states.

#### What bigger questions does Andhra Pradesh's split raise about Indian republic?

- 1) It raises question about the unity of Telugu speaking elites.They seem to be less unified than elites in Kannada and Marathi-speaking regions.
- 2) There's speculation regarding whether these other linguistic groups may encounter analogous challenges in the future because of common regional disparities.
- 3) As most states are based on language, people are asking if this principle should change. Should states be organized based on factors like territory or population instead? This division highlights the importance of India addressing these basic questions sooner rather than later.
- 4) It raises questions about disorderly bifurcation process, unfulfilled promises, and mishandling of asset distribution.

#### What is the impact of this on representation and federal structure?

1) **Strain the Federal Structure**-In India, most states are organized based on language, but some in the central region aren't. The different sizes of states translate into varying numbers of seats in the central legislature, which can cause tension due to unequal political power and resources. This unequal representation might strain the federal structure, making some regions feel marginalized.

#### Read more- [Concerns in India's Fiscal Federalism](#)

- 2) **Altering Power Dynamics** - When Andhra Pradesh split, it changed which states held more political influence, as the new ones became smaller. This difference in size can make some regions less important and others more important in deciding national power.
- 3) **Discontent Due to Unequal Political Power Distribution**- Unequal political power distribution may also influence economic resource allocation, potentially leading to disenchantment among certain states. Concerns exist among southern states about possible future delimitation favoring northern states with larger populations.

## Subject: Indian Society

### Topic- Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India.

#### Impact of misinterpretation of the Special Marriage Act (SMA)

**Context:** The article discusses a case where the Madhya Pradesh High Court incorrectly applied Muslim personal law instead of the Special Marriage Act (SMA), which allows inter-faith couples to marry legally without religious rituals. The court wrongly questioned the validity of an inter-faith marriage under Muslim law, even though the SMA should have been the only relevant law.

For detailed information on **Special Marriage Act** [read this article here](#)

#### What Does the Special Marriage Act Say?

The SMA allows inter-faith couples to marry legally without following their religious marriage rituals. The act is designed to help couples who come from different religions to marry in a secular manner, without needing to convert.

#### How did the court misinterpret the law?

- 1. Irrelevance of Personal Law in SMA:** The judge questioned the validity of the marriage under Muslim law, which is irrelevant when a couple opts for the SMA, designed to supersede personal religious laws.
- 2. Ignoring the Act's Purpose:** The SMA's purpose is to enable secular, inter-faith marriages without the need for religious conversion or compliance with the specific marriage rituals of any religion. The court's focus on personal law contradicts this aim.

For detailed information on **SC slams sections of Special Marriage Act requiring prior notice** [read this article here](#)

#### What could be the impact of this misinterpretation?

1. If this judgment is accepted, it could weaken the purpose of the SMA, making it ineffective for inter-faith couples who want a secular marriage.
2. It might also slow down efforts toward a uniform civil code, which aims to standardize personal laws across all religions in India.
3. This could lead to more people converting to another religion just to get married, which isn't the intention of the SMA.

#### India faces age-related discrimination at work

**Context:** The article discusses how both young and older workers in India face age-related discrimination at work. It highlights how such issues might grow as India's population ages. It suggests considering raising the retirement age to utilize the experience of older workers more effectively.

#### What is the Demographic Projection for India?



The UN Population Fund projects a sharp rise in the elderly population's growth rate, from 35.5% (2011-21) to 41% (2021-31). By 2046, the elderly population will surpass children under 15 years.

### What is Age-Related Discrimination in Indian Workplaces?

**Prevalence:** 40% of employees experienced or witnessed age-related discrimination.

**Younger vs. Older Workers:** 42% of employees below 55 faced discrimination, compared to 29% of those over 55.

**Compensation Issues:** 32% of employees under 35 feel inadequately compensated.

**Job Advertisements:** 61% report age or experience criteria in job ads, with multinationals leading this trend.

**Gender Disparity:** 42% of women report discrimination, compared to 37% of men.

### How Does India's Retirement Age Compare Globally?

1. India's retirement age is 58-60 for most workers, with 70 for whole-time directors and 75 for non-executive directors.
2. Advanced countries like Iceland, Australia, Spain, and Italy set retirement ages at 66-67.
3. France faced protests over proposals to raise the pension age from 62 to 64.
4. Singapore recently raised the retirement age from 63 to 64 and the re-employment age from 68 to 69.

### What should be done?

**Raise Retirement Age:** Increase the retirement age to benefit from older workers' experience. India's current retirement age is 58-60 years, while countries like Iceland and Australia set it at 66-67 years.

**Prepare for Demographic Changes:** Plan for an ageing population. The UNPF projects the elderly population will surpass children by 2046, necessitating policy adjustments.

## Contradictory approach of the Madhya Pradesh High Court

**Context:** The article discusses a problematic order from the Madhya Pradesh High Court. This order misinterprets the law on inter-faith marriages, questioning the Special Marriage Act, 1954. The court denied police protection to an unmarried Hindu-Muslim couple, contrary to established legal principle. **Contradictory approach of the Madhya Pradesh High Court on inter-faith marriage**

For detailed information on **Impact of misinterpretation of the Special Marriage Act** [read this article here](#)

### What is the Madhya Pradesh High Court order on an inter-faith marriage?

1. The Madhya Pradesh High Court questioned the validity of an inter-faith marriage between a Hindu girl and a Muslim boy under the Special Marriage Act, 1954. The court denied police protection to the unmarried couple.
2. The decision reversed gains in the right to choose a partner. It ignored the main objectives of the Special Marriage Act, which aims to provide a legal way for inter-faith marriages.
3. The decision neglected the couple's right to protection under Article 21 of the Constitution.

### What contradicts the Madhya Pradesh High Court's approach?

1. High Courts usually protect the rights of petitioners in inter-faith and inter-caste marriages under Article 226 of the Constitution. Even unmarried couples often receive protection due to societal threats.

2. In *Shafin Jahan vs. Asokan K.M.* (2018), the Supreme Court emphasized that marriage is a personal choice protected by privacy. Social approval is not required for recognizing such decisions.
3. The Madras High Court granted police protection to a lesbian couple, recognizing the dangers they faced.
4. The Punjab and Haryana High Court protected a live-in couple, emphasizing their fundamental rights under Article 21, not the legality of their relationship.
5. The Madhya Pradesh High Court used a Supreme Court case on property succession, which was irrelevant to the issue of marriage validity or police protection.

### How does the order affect the Special Marriage Act?

1. **Misinterprets Section 4:** The court wrongly applied Section 4, which only prohibits marriages within certain degrees of relationship.
2. **Uses Irrelevant Precedent:** The court referenced the *Mohammed Salim vs. Shamsudeen* case, which deals with property succession under Mohammedan Laws, not inter-faith marriage validity.

### Why is this order significant in today's context?

1. **Vigilantism Threat:** The order is significant due to the current threat of vigilantism against inter-faith and inter-caste marriages.
2. **Ignoring Constitutional Morality:** The "love jihad" conspiracy and right-wing propaganda challenge constitutional morality.
3. **Pending Reforms:** There are ongoing petitions in the Supreme Court challenging certain provisions of the Special Marriage Act.

## Topic- Role of Women and Women's Organization, Population and Associated Issues, Poverty and Developmental issues, Urbanization, their problems and their remedies.

### Impact of Methodological Changes on Poverty Data in India's 2022-23 Household Consumption Expenditure Survey

**Context:** This article discusses the recent **Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES)** in India, focusing on how poverty rates are calculated and the debate over whether poverty reduction was more effective under the NDA or UPA government. It highlights changes in survey methods and questions their impact on poverty data comparability.

For detailed information on **All India Household Consumption Expenditure Survey 2022-23** [read this article here](#)

### What changes were made in the recent Household Consumption Expenditure Survey in India?

1. **Use of MMRP:** Since the inception of HCES, the NSSO has employed a 30-day recall period, known as the **Uniform Reference Period (URP)**. But now the latest survey shifted to the **Modified Mixed Reference Period (MMRP)** for better data accuracy, incorporating seven-day, 30-day, and 365-day recall periods.
2. **Multiple Questionnaires:** Unlike earlier surveys that used a **single questionnaire**, the **2022-23 survey employed three distinct questionnaires** for food items, consumables and services items, and durable goods.
3. **Multiple Visits for Data Collection:** Previously, data collection involved a single visit, but the latest survey adopted a multiple-visits approach, aimed at improving the quality of responses.

**4. Impact on Non-Food Reporting:** This led to a sharp increase in reported non-food items consumption in 2022-23 due to improved reporting.

#### How are poverty rates calculated?

1. Initially, poverty rates were calculated based on calorie intake, but dissatisfaction with this method led to new guidelines by the **Tendulkar Committee**, which didn't focus solely on calories.
2. In 2012, the Planning Commission, guided by the **Rangarajan Committee**, suggested a broader approach, including food, clothing, and other essential needs to define the poverty line.
3. **Use of Price Indexes: Consumer Price Index** is used to update the base year poverty line across studies, ensuring adjustments for inflation.

For detailed information on **Poverty Measurement in India: Approaches and Challenges** [read this article here](#)

#### What does the data show about poverty reduction under different governments?

1. **UPA Period (2004-2011):** Poverty decreased from 37.2% to 21.9%, averaging an annual decline of 2.2 percentage points.
2. **NDA Period (2011-2022):** Poverty fell from 21.9% to about 6%, with an average annual reduction of 1.6 percentage points.

#### Why is it hard to determine which government reduced poverty more?

1. **Temporal Misalignment:** Data collection periods do not coincide exactly with the terms of UPA or NDA, making direct comparisons difficult.
2. **Changing Survey Methods:** Differences in survey methodologies, such as the shift to MMRP and multiple-questionnaire use, affect data comparability.
3. **Impact Delay:** Anti-poverty measures take time to show results, so effects may not align with the government's tenure.
4. **Near-Poverty Reduction Challenges:** As poverty rates decline, reducing them further becomes more difficult, complicating percentage comparisons.
5. **Inflation Adjustments:** Different approaches to updating poverty lines with the Consumer Price Index can lead to varied estimates, influencing perceived effectiveness

### Issue of Postponement of the Census

**Context-** The last census conducted in India was in 2011, and since 2021, the decennial counting measure has been indefinitely postponed. India is among a minority of countries, specifically 44 out of 233 nations, that have not conducted their latest census. The government has cited the COVID-19 pandemic as the reason for postponing Census 2021.

However, 143 countries managed to conduct their census rounds after March 2020, during the COVID-19 pandemic. India is the only BRICS nation that has not conducted its census during or after the pandemic. Brazil, China, South Africa, and Russia have successfully conducted their census rounds despite the challenges of COVID-19. Where, only conflict-affected nations such as Ukraine, Yemen, Syria, Myanmar, and economically distressed countries like Afghanistan and Sri Lanka, along with several sub-Saharan African nations, have not conducted the Census.

### What is the significance of Census data?

- 1) It plays an important role in identifying beneficiaries for various welfare schemes that range from specific initiatives like building schools for tribal children to large-scale programs like the Public Distribution System (PDS).
- 2) According to a 2011 publication from the Office of Registrar General and Census Commissioner, census provides primary data at the village, town, and ward levels which is important for implementing various welfare schemes effectively.

A detailed article on **Population Census: Significance and Challenges** can be [read here](#).

### What are the important surveys that need census data to determine their samples?

**Table 2:** Surveys that need census data to determine their samples and some schemes that require updated population figures

Name	Use of census
Consumption survey	The sampling frame for rural sector is the list of villages as per Census 2011
National Family Health Survey	The 2011 census served as the sampling frame for the selection of villages in rural areas
PLFS	List of 2011 population census villages constituted the rural sampling frame
Sample Registration System	The statistical report uses sample from Census 2011 frame
Household social consumption on education	The total number of sample first stage units (census villages in the rural sector and blocks in the urban sector) were allocated to the States and UTs in proportion to population as per Census 2011
Key Indicators of Social Consumption in India: Health	For the rural areas, the list of 2011 Census villages constituted the sampling frame
National Food Security Act	The Act covers nearly 2/3rd of the country's total population on the basis of estimates done using Census 2011 figures. 75% of rural and 50% of urban population is entitled to receive highly subsidised foodgrains
National Social Assistance Programme	Central assistance to States and UTs under NSAP is determined on the basis of BPL population of the respective States/UTs. Estimated number of beneficiaries are calculated using population figures as per <b>Census 2001</b> and the poverty ratio determined by the erstwhile Planning Commission in 2004-05
Delimitation of constituencies	The Social Studies Division provides the Scheduled Caste (SC) and Scheduled Tribe (ST) Census figures to the Election Commission for delimitation of constituencies and reservation of seats for the SCs and STs

Source-The Hindu

### What are the issues with postponement of Census in India?

- 1) Many welfare schemes rely on census data to determine beneficiaries and allocate resources. For ex-schemes like the National Family Security Act, which provides subsidized food grains, are still using data from the 2011 census. This outdated data may lead to exclusion of eligible beneficiaries and misallocation of resources.
- 2) The delay impacts programs like Eklavya Model Residential School, designed for quality education of Scheduled Tribe (ST) children. Using 2011 census data for planning may lead to schools being set up where they are no longer needed or missing out on areas where they are now required due to changes in demographics since 2011.



## Subject: Geography

### Topic- Salient features of Physical Geography.

#### Preserving India's Geological Heritage

**Context**-India's landscapes span from the highest peaks to coastal plains, showcasing a diverse morphology shaped over billions of years. Various locations feature a range of rocks, minerals, and unique fossil collections, revealing scientific "origin" stories derived from geological interpretations rather than mythology. The article highlights that unlike the well-established protections for archaeological, historical monuments, and cultural heritage sites, India lacks specific laws or policies dedicated to conserving and preserving geo-heritage sites and geo-relics for future generations.

#### What is the significance of preserving Geo-heritage Sites?

- 1) Geo-heritage sites serve as educational spaces for geological literacy.
- 2) They help preserve representative examples of India's geological features and events.
- 3) These sites allow present and future generations to appreciate natural geological laboratories
- 4) They provide insights into the evolution of Indian terrain.

**Read more-** [Biodiversity Heritage Sites in India](#)

#### What are the difficulties in preserving geological sites in India?

- 1) **Limited Traction and Awareness**-Geo-conservation in India lags global efforts. Further, there is a widespread lack of awareness concerning important geological sites. For ex- the Dhala meteoritic impact crater in Shivpuri, Madhya Pradesh, believed to have formed between 1.5 to 2.5 billion years ago, and the Lonar crater in Maharashtra, recently re-dated to approximately 576,000 years old, highlight geological history that remains relatively unknown.
- 2) **Impact of Development and Mining** -Many fossil-bearing sites have been destroyed due to development and real estate growth. This is further compounded by extensive stone mining activities in India.
- 3) **Lack of Specific Legislation**- Countries such as Canada and China have designated national parks for their geo-heritage sites, guided by UNESCO's recommendations, and have enacted laws to protect and designate these areas. Despite being a signatory, India lacks specific legislation or policies for conserving its geo-heritage.
- 4) **Lack of Adequate Power**-The Geological Survey of India (GSI) has identified 34 geological sites but lacks the authority to enforce preservation measures. For ex-in Varkala, Thiruvananthapuram district, Kerala, overlooking the Arabian Sea, composed of ancient rocks identified by GSI as a geological heritage site was partially demolished by the district administration due to landslide risks.
- 5) **Half-hearted Measures by the Government**- The government withdrew the attempt to establish a National Commission for Heritage Sites, originally introduced in the Rajya Sabha, for unspecified reasons. Similarly, in 2022, the Ministry of Mines drafted a bill aimed at preserving and maintaining geo-heritage sites and geo-relics, but no further steps have been taken since then.

#### What should be the way forward?

- 1) India's turbulent geological history is documented in its rocks and landscapes and should be regarded as part of our non-cultural heritage.
- 2) There should be compilation of list of all potential geo-sites across India, beyond the 34 already identified by the Geological Survey of India (GSI).
- 3) There is a need to develop legislation for geo-conservation modeled after the Biological Diversity Act of 2002.
- 4) The government should create a 'National Geo-Conservation Authority' similar to the National Biodiversity Authority, ensuring independent oversight to avoid bureaucratic delays and safeguard the autonomy of researchers and private collectors engaged in academic endeavors

## GS Paper 2

### Subject: Indian Polity

#### Topic- Indian Constitution—Historical Underpinnings, Evolution, Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions and Basic Structure.

#### The Right to Property in India

**Context-** The article highlights the history of the right to property in post-colonial India and the power struggle between the judiciary and the legislature over this issue.

#### What are the debates surrounding right to property in India?

The right to property was a fundamental right protected under Article 19(1)(f) of the Constitution.

1) **Bela Banerjee case-** In this case the court focused on how to interpret Articles 19(1)(f) and 31(2) of the Constitution. The Supreme Court of India decided that in Article 31(2), the word "compensation" meant providing the owner with a fair equivalent for what they lost.

To change this interpretation, the 4th constitutional amendment was passed in 1955. This amendment explicitly stated that courts could not question the inadequacy of compensation.

2) **Kesavananda Bharati Case-** Parliament understood that the term "compensation" in Article 31(2) was causing problems. So, they replaced it with "amount" through the 25<sup>th</sup> Constitution Amendment Act, 1971, which prevented the courts from interpreting it.

The Supreme Court in this judgement interpreted that while the adequacy of the amount paid was non-justiciable, the principles for determining such compensation were still open to judicial review.

3) **44<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment-** The Janata Party government passed the Constitution 44th Amendment Act in 1978, which deleted the right to property from the list of Fundamental Rights and placed it as a Constitutional Right under Article 300-A.

Article 31, which had caused a lot of debate about how compensation should be decided, was removed.

#### What are the arguments against the Deletion of Article 31?

1) One of the dissenting judges in Kesavananda Bharati held that that the right to property should be considered a basic feature of the Constitution.

2) The power granted under Entry 42 of the Concurrent List allows for "acquisition," not "confiscation," and it's stressed that compensation should still mean what was defined in the Bela Banerjee case.



### What are various Supreme court judgements after the deletion of Articles 19(1)(f) and 31?

In the years following the deletion of Articles 19(1)(f) and 31, the Supreme Court has held that the right to property is not only a constitutional right but also a human right. In the **M.C. Mehta case**, the Court stated that a law depriving a person of property must be just, fair, and reasonable.

**B.K. Ravichandra case**- In this case, the Court observed that the phrasing of Article 300-A resembled Articles 21 and 265, and its guarantee could not be read down.

**The Kolkata Municipal Corporation Case** - The recent decision in the Kolkata Municipal Corporation case has fleshed out seven facets protected under Article 300-A, including the right to notice, the right to be heard etc.

The Court has affirmed that the obligation to provide compensation, which means the value of the property taken in monetary terms, as established in the Bela Banerjee case, has been restored.

### Diversification in Parliament potentially strengthens democracy and federalism

**Context:** The article discusses how the 2024 general election in India led to more regional parties in Parliament, potentially strengthening democracy and federalism. It highlights ongoing conflicts between the central government and states over resource allocation and suggests ways to improve cooperation and fairness.

#### What does the 2024 General Election result mean for India?

1. In 2024 general election more regional parties gain seats in Parliament. This diversification in Parliament means that both the ruling coalition and the opposition will include a mix of regional parties, potentially leading to more representative governance.
2. The success of regional parties suggests an electorate seeking to address local concerns more directly, challenging the dominance of central parties.
3. The election outcomes reflect a response to central policies perceived as undermining state autonomy, as seen in the tensions over resource allocation and political statements during the campaign.

#### What are the major issues between the Centre and states?

**Resource Allocation Complaints:** States governed by the opposition have accused the central government of unfair treatment regarding resource distribution. Specific examples include Kerala's complaints about inadequate transfer of resources, Karnataka's concerns over drought relief, and West Bengal's issues with funds for the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS).

**Legal Disputes:** The Supreme Court of India has highlighted that a "steady stream of States are compelled to approach it against the Centre," pointing to a rise in legal disputes between the states and the central government.

**Bias in Finance Commissions:** The states argue that the Finance Commissions, which are tasked with allocating funds between the Centre and the states, often favor the Centre. This is seen as a source of conflict, with states feeling the need to inflate their financial requirements to ensure they receive adequate funds.

For detailed information on **issues between the Centre and states** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

#### What are the implications for poorer and richer states?

**Resource Distribution:** Richer states generate more revenue but receive a smaller share relative to their contributions. For instance, Mumbai, as a financial hub, contributes significantly to national taxes but doesn't proportionately benefit from these contributions in local investments or services.

**Development Disparities:** Poorer states rely on greater resource allocation to accelerate development and reduce inequality. The Finance Commission aims to distribute funds more fairly, yet historical disparities persist.

**Market Dynamics:** Richer states benefit from markets in poorer states, fostering their own growth. For example, poorer states provide larger consumer bases that richer states rely on to expand their economic activities.

### How could federalism be improved?

**Increase Resource Devolution:** Boosting the percentage of resources devolved from the Centre to the States beyond the current 41% could empower states, allowing for more tailored local governance.

**Fair Finance Commission Practices:** The Sixteenth Finance Commission should aim for equitable treatment of all states. This could reduce friction and improve resource distribution, particularly favoring poorer states to address inequality.

**Enhance State Autonomy:** Reducing the central government's dominance in programs like the Public Distribution System and MGNREGS would affirm the constitutional roles of states as equal partners in governance. This will prevent the central government from overshadowing state efforts.

## Supreme Court rulings that affect the rights of individuals accused of crimes

**Context:** The article discusses two Supreme Court rulings that affect the rights of individuals accused of crimes. One ruling is about the necessity of custody before filing a charge sheet. The other is about informing the accused of the grounds of arrest in writing.

### What are the Supreme Court rulings that affect the rights of individuals accused of crimes?

#### 1. Custody Not Required Before Charge Sheet Filing:

The Supreme Court ruled that an accused does not always need to be in custody when a charge sheet is filed, provided they are cooperating and not likely to abscond. This directive alleviates unnecessary detentions, easing the burden on both investigating agencies and the accused. For example: In **Siddharth v. State of Uttar Pradesh (2021)**, the Court highlighted that **Section 170 of the CrPC** does not mandate custody for filing charge sheets.

#### 2. Mandatory Written Grounds of Arrest:

The Court emphasized that informing the accused in writing about the grounds of arrest is a **constitutional right under Article 22**.

Examples:

- a) In **Pankaj Bansal v. Union of India (2023)**, the Court reiterated that the reasons for arrest must be documented in writing to uphold due process and transparency, further aligning with constitutional mandates.
- b) In **Prabir Purkayastha v. State (NCT of Delhi)**, the Court reaffirmed the same principle, applying it equally under the UAPA, emphasizing the necessity for detailed, personalized grounds of arrest.

### What are the implications of these judgements?

- 1. Reduced Need for Custody:** The SC ruling on custody before filing a charge sheet, as outlined in *Siddharth v. State of Uttar Pradesh (2021)*, reduces unnecessary detentions, easing the burden on investigating officers and courts.
2. The mandate to provide written grounds of arrest **enhances transparency and protects constitutional rights** under Article 22 of the Constitution. The SC emphasized that written grounds help the accused seek legal counsel and bail, **ensuring fair legal proceedings under Section 50(1) of the CrPC.**
- 3. Extension to Special Statutes:** The directive to provide written grounds of arrest, initially highlighted in cases involving Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA), is set to influence procedures under the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) as well.

### B.R. Ambedkar's View on Constitutional Morality

**Context:** The article criticizes disregarding the Indian Constitution despite his public displays of respect. It highlights instances where he bypassed established procedures and norms, leading to concerns about the concentration of power and undermining constitutional values.

For detailed information on **Safeguarding constitutional morality** [read this article here](#)

### What recent government actions went against the constitution?

- 1. Preemptive Decision-Making:** India's PM approved the seventeenth instalment of the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi, a ₹20,000 crore scheme, before the allocation of ministerial portfolios, which traditionally falls under the Ministry of Agriculture and the Department of Expenditure.
- 2. Cabinet Actions Without Portfolios:** The first cabinet meeting led to the decision to assist three crore additional households under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana without assigned portfolios, raising questions about the procedural legitimacy of the decision.
- 3. Extension of Tenures:** India's PM extended the tenures of the National Security Adviser and the Principal Secretary prematurely, using the old Appointments Committee of the Cabinet setup, despite not having reconstituted the Cabinet Committee after the new government formation.

### What are the implications of these approaches for democracy and governance?

- 1. Centralization of Power:** India's PM approach centralizes decision-making in the PMO, bypassing other ministries and diluting collective cabinet responsibility.
- 2. Lack of Accountability:** The centralized governance model has reduced the effectiveness of parliamentary checks like questions and motions, limiting the daily and periodic assessment of government actions.
- 3. Suppression of Opposition:** His public speeches often dismiss and belittle the opposition, weakening democratic debate and oversight.
- 4. Ignoring Major Issues:** The government has been slow to address critical national problems such as unemployment, inflation, and regional conflicts like the situation in Manipur, suggesting a focus on optics over substantive governance.

### What historical warnings did Ambedkar give that relate to Governance?

- 1. Ambedkar's Warning:** B.R. Ambedkar cautioned that blind devotion in politics could lead to dictatorship.
- 2. Constitutional Morality:** He emphasized that constitutional morality must be cultivated and respected by both the ruling and opposition parties.
- 3. Ambedkar's Quote:** On November 4, 1948, Ambedkar stated that democracy in India is like a "top-dressing on an Indian soil which is essentially undemocratic."
- 4. Current Implications:** Present actions of government show a disregard for collective responsibility and constitutional processes, leading to concerns about an emerging constitutional dictatorship.

### Reservation Judgements: An overemphasis on merit

**Context** The Patna High Court annulled the Bihar govt's notification increasing reservation from 50% to 65% for backward classes, scheduled castes, and tribes in government jobs and educational institutions. This expansion was based on the much-discussed Caste Survey of 2023. The Indian Constitution promises social justice and allows the state to make special provisions for underprivileged groups. However, courts have often nullified expanded reservation policies for various groups (Jats, Gujjars, Marathas, Patidars, Muslims) using the "strict scrutiny" doctrine. The judiciary has prioritized "merit" and "efficiency in administration" in their decisions in the recent past.

#### Why did Patna High Court strike down 65% reservation?

- 1) The judgment firmly dismissed the idea of "proportionate representation" for Backward Classes, stating that this concept is not supported by Articles 15 and 16. Article 16 mentions "inadequacy of representation." The High Court cited the Supreme Court's ruling in Indra Sawhney (1992), where it stated that "adequate representation" should not be interpreted as "proportionate representation."
- 2) Bihar reservation amendment exceeds the 50% reservation limit. The Supreme Court introduced this limit in M R Balaji (1962), considering it discriminatory under the right to equality. This principle has been upheld in subsequent rulings like Devadasan (1964), N M Thomas (1976), and Indra Sawhney (1992).
- 3) The 50% reservation rule is defended on grounds of efficiency and merit. The Patna High Court also noted that "merit cannot be entirely sacrificed."
- 4) The proposed reservation was not proportionate given that Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and backward castes constitute 84.46% of Bihar's population. The Supreme Court acknowledged in Indra Sawhney that the proportion of backward classes to the total population is relevant.
- 5) Indra Sawhney implied that strict adherence to the 50% limit is not necessary in remote or less developed areas. The High Court rejected the idea that Bihar is outside the national mainstream, highlighting its significant role in national politics.
- 6) The court observed that there was no analysis of the Caste Survey and consultation with the experts before increasing reservation.

**Read more- [Issues associated with Calcutta High Court's judgement on reservation policies in India](#)**

#### What are the issues with this judgement as per the author?

- 1) **Inconsistencies in policy implementation-** Before extending reservation to the EWS category, no survey was conducted to assess their underrepresentation. However, the Janhit Abhiyan (2022) Supreme Court decision represents a departure from the typical strict scrutiny approach in judicial rulings where it allowed



breach of 50% limit.

2) **Neglect of Bihar's socio-economic context** - The government overlooked Bihar's significant challenges in court, such as its lowest per capita income (less than \$800), highest fertility rate, and lowest college density in the country. These factors present strong arguments.

3) **Expert Consultation in Affirmative Action Policies**- The requirement for analyzing the Caste Survey and consulting with experts could impose additional constraints on the government's affirmative action policies in the future.

4) **Over emphasis on Merit and Efficiency**- There is no scientific or empirical evidence that supports the notion that SC/ST/OBC employees perform less efficiently than those recruited under the general category. Justice Chinnappa Reddy countered the efficiency argument in Vasanth Kumar (1985) case challenging the assumption that upper caste individuals appointed based on presumed merit naturally outperform those appointed through reservations.

**Way forward**-Justice Chandrachud in B K Pavitra II (2019) observed that we need to redefine our notions of merit in terms of a more inclusive and plural society. Merit cannot lead to exclusion. Merit must be measured in terms of social good.

### The court's decision on "Annadhanam" and "Angapradakshanam"

**Context:** The article discusses a court ruling allowing a religious practice of rolling on leftover plantain leaves for spiritual benefits. It explores the legal conflict between religious customs and human rights, emphasizing the need for rationality and human dignity in such practices.

#### What was the court's decision on "Annadhanam" and "Angapradakshanam"?

1. The Madurai Bench of the Madras High Court permitted the continuation of "annadhanam" (free food offering) and "angapradakshanam" (ritual rolling on plantain leaves) at Nerur Sathguru Sadasiva Brahmendral's resting place.
2. The court ruled that these practices are fundamental religious rights under the Constitution, specifically citing Articles 14, 19, 21, and 25.
3. Justice Swaminathan overturned a previous 2015 Division Bench decision that had halted the practice, criticizing it for not involving all necessary parties, such as devotees and trustees.

#### How did Justice Swaminathan's ruling differ?

**1. Inclusion of Necessary Parties:** Justice Swaminathan argued that the 2015 Division Bench's order was flawed because it did not include or hear the necessary parties, such as the devotees and trustees of the Adhistanam.

**2. Fundamental Rights:** He invoked Article 25(1) of the Constitution, which guarantees the right to freely profess, practice, and propagate religion. He argued that the right to privacy includes "spiritual orientation" similar to how it includes gender and sexual orientation.

**3. Promotion of Communal Harmony:** Swaminathan highlighted that the practice at Nerur involved all devotees, regardless of caste, which promotes communal harmony and social integration.

**4. Citing Religious Texts:** He referenced the Mahabharata to support the belief that spiritual benefits are conferred by rolling on leftover food, thereby justifying the practice.

**5. Contrast with Karnataka Case:** Swaminathan negated the Supreme Court order by noting that the

Karnataka case involved only Brahmins' leftovers, which were rolled over by persons of other communities. In contrast, at Nerur, all devotees participated regardless of community. He observed that the practice points to communal amity and social integration.

### What are the broader implications?

- 1. Conflict Between Rights:** The case highlights the tension between religious freedoms under Article 25(1) and human dignity and equality under Articles 14 and 21.
- 2. Cultural Relativism vs. Universalism:** Justice Swaminathan's ruling favors cultural practices over universal human rights standards, as seen with communal participation in angapradakshanam.
- 3. Judicial Precedents:** The decision contrasts with a Supreme Court stay on a similar practice in Karnataka, stressing the need for consistent judicial approaches.
- 4. Health and Morality Concerns:** Rolling on leftover plantain leaves raises public health issues, as previously noted in the Karnataka case.
- 5. Scientific Temper:** The judgment raises questions about the state's role in promoting rationality and scientific inquiry over traditional practices that may be superstitious or harmful.

## Topic- Parliament and State Legislatures—Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges and Issues Arising out of these.

### Challenges for the Leader of the Opposition in India

**Context:** The article discusses the significant role of the Leader of the Opposition (LoP) in India's Lok Sabha, especially after the 2024 general elections which resulted in a large opposition. It explains the conditions required for recognizing the LoP and highlights the challenges and importance of this position in a balanced and effective parliamentary system.

For detailed information on **Qualifying for Leader of the Opposition** read this article [here](#)

### What are the Requirements for the Leader of the Opposition?

- 1. 1950s Order (Direction 121):** This direction requires a party to have at least 10% of the members in the House to be recognized as a parliamentary party and receive certain facilities. However, it does not specifically address the recognition of the Leader of the Opposition (LoP).
- 2. Leader of Opposition in Parliament Act, 1977:** Defines the LoP as the leader of the largest opposition party recognized by the Speaker. The party must be the largest in opposition and meet the 10% member threshold. For example, **in 2019**, Congress, with only 52 members, did not meet the 10% requirement (54 members) and thus could not claim the LoP post.
- 3. 10th Schedule:** It states all political entities are "parties" regardless of size, eliminating the 'group' classification. This suggests the need for updates in the LoP Act to align with the 10th Schedule, which recognizes all parties irrespective of their numbers in the House.

### What is the Role of the Leader of the Opposition in the Westminster System?

- 1. Prime Minister-in-Waiting:** The Leader of the Opposition is considered the Prime Minister-in-waiting. They lead an alternative government ready to take over if the current government falls.



- 2. Shadow Cabinet:** Forms a shadow cabinet that mirrors the positions of the actual cabinet members. This helps scrutinize government policies and suggest alternatives.
- 3. Policy Scrutiny:** The shadow cabinet critiques the government's actions and offers alternative policies. Erskine May describes this as directing criticism and outlining alternative policies.
- 4. Communication with Prime Minister:** In the British tradition, the Prime Minister informs the Leader of the Opposition about major policy initiatives directly. This maintains an open communication channel.
- 5. Indian Context:** Although India follows the Westminster system, it does not have a shadow cabinet practice. The role has been mainly statutory since 1977.

### What are the Challenges for the Leader of the Opposition in India?

- 1. Diverse Opposition:** The opposition in India is composed of multiple parties with divergent ideologies and programs, making unity difficult.
- 2. Maintaining Unity:** The role of the LoP is challenging due to the absence of power-sharing incentives to maintain unity among opposition parties.
- 3. Strong Ruling Party:** Over the past 10 years, the ruling party's large majority and intimidatory postures often overawed the opposition, making it feel helpless.
- 4. Role of Critic:** The traditional role of the opposition is to oppose the government, criticize it, and seek to replace it, but this is challenging without substantial influence.
- 5. New Dynamics in 2024:** The 2024 general election resulted in over 234 members in the opposition, creating a stronger and more influential opposition. The LoP must capture this new mood and present effective views to influence parliamentary proceedings.

### What should be done?

- 1. Update the LoP Act:** Align the Leader of the Opposition Act with the 10th Schedule, recognizing all parties regardless of size.
- 2. Promote Opposition Unity:** The LoP should work to maintain unity among diverse opposition parties, leveraging their collective strength.
- 3. Enhance Communication:** Adopt the British tradition of keeping open communication channels between the Prime Minister and the LoP.
- 4. Learn from History:** Emulate Jawaharlal Nehru's practice of valuing opposition input and being present during debates to ensure healthy parliamentary democracy.
- 5. Form Shadow Cabinet:** Consider forming a shadow cabinet to scrutinize government policies effectively.

## Topic- Functions and Responsibilities of the Union and the States, Issues and Challenges Pertaining to the Federal Structure, Devolution of Powers and Finances up to Local Levels and Challenges Therein.

### On Special Category Status for Andhra

**News:** The demand for Special Category Status (SCS) for Andhra Pradesh has resurfaced in the political discourse, especially after the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. This issue has reignited the debate whether the state qualifies for special category or not.

Read more – [Special Category Status – Explained Pointwise](#)

### What is the Criteria for Special Category Status?

The SCS was created in 1969, on the recommendation of 5<sup>th</sup> Finance commission, to support states with significant socio-economic disadvantages and geographical challenges. There are 5 factors that are considered for granting SCS:

- 1) Majority tribal population,
- 2) Low population density,
- 3) Hilly terrain and international borders,
- 4) Socio-economic and industrial backwardness, and
- 5) Inadequate state finances

**Current SCS States:** Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, and Uttarakhand.

### What are the arguments in favour of granting a SCS to AP?

**First,** Andhra Pradesh continues to face a revenue deficit and increasing debt. Development projects and the new capital at Amaravati are stalled.

**Second,** 15<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission chairman has stated in his book that 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission never stopped SCS status. It is only up to the central government to take a call on this matter.

### What are the arguments against providing an SCS to AP?

Andhra Pradesh does not qualify for the SCS, as per norms.

**Tax Devolution and Grants:** The 14th Finance Commission increased tax devolution to 42% and introduced revenue deficit grants, which Andhra Pradesh received. The 14th Finance Commission equated SCS with the general category status, nullifying SCS for new states.

**Special Package (SP):** In place of SCS, the NDA government offered Andhra Pradesh an SP, which included full funding for the Polavaram irrigation project, tax concessions, and special assistance.

**No Mention in reorganization Act:** The Andhra Pradesh Reorganisation Act, which split the state into Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, came into effect on June 2, 2014. It did not mention SCS for Andhra Pradesh.

## Topic- Salient Features of the Representation of People's Act.

### Neglect of Children's Issues in Elections

**Context-** The article highlights the lack of attention given to children's interests by political parties in India, despite children constituting about 30% of the country's population. It emphasizes the need for political parties to address issues related to children's nutrition, education, and health in their election manifestos.

### What is the education related promises made by different political parties in India?

- 1) BJP-

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A) Promises to strengthen PM SHRI Schools, Ekalavya Schools, and other model schools.  
B) BJP: Aims for 100% Gross Enrollment Ratio (GER) from pre-school to secondary level but lacks concrete steps to achieve this.

2) **Congress**:- Promises to amend the Right to Education Act (RTE) to make education from Class 1-8 compulsory and free. Congress and DMK: Promise financial support and economic opportunities to curb dropout rates.

3) **CPI(M)**: Promises to expand the RTE Act from 3 to 18 years.

### What are the nutrition and healthcare related promises made by various political parties?

1) **BJP**: Focuses on eliminating malnutrition among tribal children.

2) **CPI(M)**: Commits to universalizing the Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme to cover all children aged 0-6 years and provide nutritious meals. It assures complete coverage of basic services like immunization and regular health check-ups for all children.

3) **Congress**: Promises to expand the midday meal programme up to Class 12, while DMK promises to expand the Chief Minister's Breakfast Scheme for children to aided schools (Class 1-5). It also promises to address nutritional deficiency among children and ensure full immunization of children within 5 years (currently at 76%).

4) **DMK**: Promises budgetary allocations to ensure complete healthcare during the first 1,000 days of a child's development and mental health programmes in schools.

### What are some unaddressed areas in political manifestos regarding children's welfare?

Manifestos of various political parties have not addressed issues such as-

A) children's participation in decision-making processes.

B) online safety for children, and initiatives to prevent child exploitation.

C) There is a lack of a "child-rights based approach" in the manifestos and the tendency to club children with 'women' or 'youth', thereby downplaying their specific needs.

D) There is a focus solely on a few cost-intensive model schools as opposed to bringing systemic changes to improve the public education system.

## Impacts of inaccurate exit polls

**Context:** The article discusses how exit polls, which predict election results, were wrong in predicting a big win for the BJP-led NDA in India. These incorrect predictions affected the stock market and raised concerns about the accuracy and credibility of pollsters and media.

For detailed information on **exit polls** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

### What happened with the exit polls?

1. Exit polls inaccurately predicted a significant majority for the BJP-led NDA in the recent elections, estimating around 400 seats.

2. This overestimation influenced the financial markets, with the BSE Sensex initially surging by 2,507 points, or 3.39%, due to optimistic investor sentiment.

3. Reality clashed with predictions when actual election results were announced, showing a stark difference from the polls, causing the stock market to plunge by 5.74%.
4. Similar inaccuracies in exit polls have occurred in the past, such as in the Lok Sabha elections in 2004, and the Bihar and Chhattisgarh assembly elections in 2015 and 2023, respectively.

### What issues do these inaccuracies highlight?

1. The inaccuracies in exit polls highlight concerns about the sampling methods used, which might not accurately represent the entire voting population.
2. Issues of potential underrepresentation of certain groups in the polls suggest that significant voter segments might be overlooked, affecting the accuracy of results.
3. The impact of flawed exit polls extends to financial markets, as evidenced by a stock market surge and subsequent crash based on the initial predictions and actual outcomes.
4. These repeated discrepancies suggest a need for greater transparency and scrutiny in how pollsters conduct and report their findings.

### What should be done?

1. Pollsters should reevaluate their sampling methods to ensure they more accurately reflect the diverse voter population.
2. There is a need for stricter disclosure norms concerning the funding of poll organizations to prevent potential conflicts of interest and ensure unbiased results.
3. The repeated inaccuracies call for a thorough internal review and possibly external oversight to regain public and market trust.

## Current status of NOTA

**Context:** The article discusses the NOTA "None of the Above" option in Indian elections, introduced in 2013 to ensure voter secrecy. It highlights a recent election in Indore where NOTA received a record 2,18,674 votes, the highest ever, while the winner, Shankar Lalwani of the BJP, got 12,26,751 votes. The piece also mentions a petition that seeks to enforce legal consequences when NOTA receives the most votes.

For detailed information on **None Of The Above (NOTA)** [read this article here](#)

### Why was the NOTA option introduced?

**Purpose of NOTA:** The NOTA (None of the Above) option was introduced to allow voters to reject all candidates, enhancing voter freedom and secrecy.

**Legal Push:** Initiated by the Supreme Court of India in September 2013, following a petition from the People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUC) in 2004, which argued that the existing voting rules violated the secrecy of voters.

**Supreme Court Ruling:** The court ruled that voter secrecy must be maintained whether a voter decides to vote or not, countering the government's position that only active voters deserve secrecy.

**EVM Concerns:** The introduction of Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs) made it apparent if a voter chose not to vote, compromising voter secrecy. NOTA was seen as a solution to maintain this secrecy.

**Integrity in Elections:** By implementing NOTA, the Supreme Court aimed to encourage political parties to nominate candidates of higher integrity, given that voters could now formally express disapproval.

### What is the current status of NOTA?

**Current Impact of NOTA:** If NOTA receives the highest number of votes, it generally has no legal consequence on the election outcome at the national level, meaning the candidate with the next highest votes wins.

**Local Rules by State Election Commissions:** In states like Maharashtra, Haryana, Puducherry, Delhi, and Chandigarh, the State Election Commission has passed orders treating NOTA as a "Fictional Electoral Candidate" in local body elections. If NOTA receives more votes than any candidate, these elections are declared null, necessitating a re-election.

**Petition for Legal Consequences:** A petition filed in April 2024, asking for elections to be declared null and void if NOTA gets the majority. He argues that NOTA should pressure political parties to field better candidates. He also suggests that candidates polling fewer votes than NOTA should be banned from contesting elections for five years.

### First Past the Post (FPTP) Vs Proportional Representation Vs MMPR System: Which one is best?

**Context:** The ruling National Democratic Alliance (NDA) secured a majority by winning 293 seats with 43.3% of the national vote share. However, the opposition INDIA bloc, despite garnering 41.6% of votes, could win only 234 seats. In this context, the article discusses the potential benefits and challenges of adopting a Proportional Representation (PR) system in India's electoral democracy.

#### What is FPTP system and what are the issues associated with it?

At present, India is following First Past the Post (FPTP) system. It has few basic flaws, like, it often results in a significant mismatch between the percentage of votes received by political parties and their representation in legislative bodies. For example, Congress historically winning 75% of seats with 45-47% vote share, and NDA securing 64 out of 66 seats in three states with around 55% vote share. However, it also has many advantages like, this system is simple and feasible in a large country like India. It also provides greater stability to the executive by ensuring a majority for the ruling party/coalition.

#### What is Proportional Representation (PR) System?

In the Proportional Representation (PR) system, a party is allocated legislative seats based on their overall vote share, nationally. One such system is 'party list PR', in this system, voters vote for the party and not individual candidates.

**Advantages of PR System:** Every party, getting a percentage of vote from the voters, will get representation in the Parliament.

**Issues associated with PR System:** PR systems can potentially lead to fragmented legislatures and unstable governments, as no single party or alliance may secure an outright majority.

It also has a potential to formations of political parties based on the religion, caste, language, region, leading to division within the country.

#### What is Mixed Member Proportional Representation (MMPR) system?

This system addresses the flaws of PR and FPTP systems. It uses the mix of both these systems. For example, Germany, follows the MMPR system. In their Bundestag (like India's Lok Sabha), there are 598 seats. They fill



299 seats (50%) from constituencies under the FPTP system and rest of the seats are allocated as per the PR system. Similar system is followed by South Africa, the Netherlands, Belgium and Spain.

### Significance of the MMPR system

- 1) Stability:** By adopting MMPR, India can achieve a balance between the stability offered by the FPTP system and the fair representation ensured by proportional representation.
- 2) Representation to smaller states:** This system can potentially mitigate feelings of disenchantment among smaller states and regions that may lose out under a purely population-based seat allocation.
- 3) Law commission recommendation:** in its 170th report, 'Reform of the electoral laws' (1999), recommended the introduction of the MMPR system on an experimental basis.

## One Election One Phase

**Context-**The article highlights that multi-phase elections were once important for ensuring safety and fairness. However, changes in circumstances and advancements in technology require reforms to streamline the electoral process while maintaining integrity and peace.

### What were the reasons for implementing multi-phase elections?

- 1) Multi-phase elections were introduced at a time when muscle power and violence during elections were rampant.
- 2) The limited deployment of central armed police forces required phased polling to ensure security in sensitive areas.
- 3) Political parties supported this approach because they were concerned that local police could be influenced by political pressure.

### What are the issues with multi-phase elections?

- 1) **Heat Wave-** The recent election conducted in seven phases under severe temperatures (45-50°C) resulted in fatalities.
- 2) **Social Media Explosion-** Multi-phase elections in today's digital age encounter fresh hurdles. The gap between phases allows swift spread of rumors, fake news, and hate speech through social media. This escalates communal tensions and misinformation.  
**For ex-** The Guardian reported that Meta, which owns Facebook and Instagram, authorized AI-altered political ads during India's 2024 election. These ads spread misinformation targeting Muslims and made false allegations against opposition leaders.
- 3) **Criticized by all stakeholders** -The extended duration of the election received criticism from political parties, media outlets, and voters. Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar acknowledged the necessity for shorter elections.

### What is the feasibility of conducting one election, one phase elections?

- 1) The Election Commission (EC) has introduced vulnerability mapping for all polling stations to identify potential troublemakers. Identified individuals are pursued under the CRPC with a bond for good behavior; nearly half a million have been identified recently.
- 2) Successful efforts have been made to seize illegal arms, including those licensed, which are surrendered, leading to reduced violence.



3) Government officials, including the Home Minister, have endorsed reports of peace restored in previously unstable regions.

4) There are various existing laws that can ensure peaceful elections such as-

A) IPC provisions such as Section 295A, 153A, 499, 505, and 506 address hate speech, cyber-crimes, and defamation.

B) The Representation of the People Act (RP Act), Section 125, addresses promoting enmity between classes during elections, with penalties of one to three years in prison for violations.

5) A general election can be conducted in one phase with the support of 4,000-5,000 paramilitary companies, supported by increased battalions and restored peace in sensitive areas.

**Read more-** [Challenges of holding general elections in India during hot weather](#)

**What is the significance of one election, one phase election?**

- A) Reduced duration of paramilitary force deployment.
- B) Cost savings on prolonged campaigns.
- C) Less disruption to normal work and governance.
- D) Reduced time for mischief and hate mongering.
- E) Addresses Prime Minister's expressed concerns about prolonged election

**Topic- Statutory, Regulatory and various Quasi-judicial Bodies.**

### **Issues with Statutory Regulatory Authorities**

**Context-**The article highlights the need to improving the governance of powerful regulators that currently wield significant influence over the Indian economy and citizens' lives.

There are over 20 Statutory Regulatory Authorities in India overseeing sectors ranging from finance and telecommunications to healthcare and transportation. Together, these bodies directly regulate more than 75% of India's Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This highlights their important role in maintaining sectoral integrity and consumer protection.

Regulatory bodies' effectiveness isn't just about their leaders. Leadership influences strategy and morale, but institutional design with checks and balances is equally crucial.

**What are the issues with Statutory Regulatory Authorities in India?**

- 1) **Consolidated Powers and Economic Impact-**In India, SRAs merge legislative, executive, and judicial powers, giving them significant authority over specific sectors. This authority enables them to oversee and regulate entities within their jurisdiction. This enormous power can affect private sector confidence, potentially slowing down innovation and holding back India's economic growth.
- 2) **Appointment Process-** Currently, most senior personnel in SRAs are former or current government officials. This is because the appointment process is largely controlled by the executive government, with limited involvement of external experts. The tenures of these appointees are inconsistent and uncertain.
- 3) **Delegating Law-Making Authority to Unelected Bodies-** In democracies, elected bodies accountable to the public hold the authority to make laws. When this authority is delegated to unelected bodies, rigorous

safeguards are necessary. Many Indian laws do not outline clear procedures for regulators to exercise this authority, leading to a "democratic and legitimacy deficit".

4) **Lack of Accountability**- Most Indian Statutory Regulatory Authorities (SRAs) are mainly accountable through parliamentary oversight, which includes open discussions on their yearly performance and financial reports. However, these discussions have never taken place in the Indian Parliament for any SRA.

**Read more-** [Issues with the drug regulatory system in India](#)

**What should be the way forward?**

1) **Appointment Reforms**-There is a need to create a diverse group of subject matter experts that have predictable and fixed long tenures in regulatory bodies.

2) **Autonomy**- There is a need to align legislative provisions to empower all SRAs to regulate without needing government approval. This autonomy needs sufficient human resources and financial independence. However, these provisions must include checks-and-balances to prevent abuse of power.

3) **Clear Guidelines**- Legislative guidelines should outline how regulators are to perform their executive and judicial functions.

4) **Robust Accountability**- Accountability reforms should focus on three key areas-

A) establishing a well-structured board with clear functions and roles

B) introducing appeals processes at tribunals

C) conducting audits by the Comptroller and Auditor General of India.

D) Mandatory open discussions on their yearly performance and financial reports by Parliamentary Committees.

5) **Implementing recommendation of Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission** - The Commission proposed extensive governance reforms applicable to all SRAs across India. It is now important to revisit and update this report to align with current requirements and promptly implement its recommendations.

## Subject: Governance

**Topic- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.**

### Visions for India's future

**Context:** This article is a speech by an Indian leader reflecting on his spiritual journey and the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. He discusses his campaign, visions for India's future, and the importance of unity and progress in the country.

**What role did meditation and spiritual reflection play?**

1. Meditation and spiritual reflection provided the leader with peace and detachment during the intense election campaign.

2. In Kaniyakumari, inspired by Swami Vivekananda, the leader experienced effortless meditation despite responsibilities.

3. This spiritual practice allowed the leader to reflect on the bright future and unity of Bharat, drawing

inspiration from the rising sun and vast ocean.

4. Meditation helped the leader detach from political debates and focus on the nation's goals.

5. The leader's spiritual journey emphasized the importance of cultural heritage and unity, exemplified by his visit to the Vivekananda Rock Memorial and Saint Thiruvalluvar's statue.

### What future vision does the leader have for India?

1. The leader envisions a "**Viksit Bharat**" (Developed India) by 2047, emphasizing holistic reforms beyond economic changes.

2. He highlights the need for speed, scale, scope, and standards in all development aspects, following the mantra of "**zero defect-zero effect.**"

3. The leader has outlined a **three-fold vision of "reform, perform, and transform"** to guide India's development:

a) **Reform:** Initiating changes in policy and governance to meet modern needs and challenges.

b) **Perform:** Implementation of these reforms by the bureaucracy to ensure efficient administration and service delivery.

c) **Transform:** Engaging the general populace in these efforts, fostering a collaborative spirit of '**Jan Bhagidari**' (**people's participation**), which is crucial for true transformation and sustainable progress.

4. Inspired by Swami Vivekananda, the leader calls for dedicating the next 25 years to nation-building, similar to the freedom struggle period.

### How does the leader view India's role on the global stage?

1. The leader views India as a pivotal voice for the Global South, representing emerging nations on significant global platforms.

2. Highlights India's presidency of the G-20 as a successful example, influencing global economic discussions and strategies.

3. Credits India's initiative for including the African Union in the G-20, enhancing the geopolitical influence of African nations

4. India's governance model as a benchmark for global countries, focusing on poverty alleviation and transparent administration.

5. India's response to the COVID-19 pandemic as a model of resilience and support, offering aid and solutions to poorer and developing countries.

6. Envisions India's technological advancements, like the Digital India campaign, as templates for other nations to improve governance and societal welfare.

### Governance Model under Coalitions

**Context-** The article discusses the governance model that should be adopted by the new regime at the Centre, given the electoral results indicating a possible return of the coalition era. It questions whether a coalition government can deliver better governance results than the previous government, which held a single-party majority.

### What economic reforms have been undertaken by the previous government?

1) Inflation targeting monetary policy regime with RBI

2) Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code

3) Goods and Services Tax (GST)

- 4) Real estate regulatory system
- 5) Improving digital public infrastructure

Read more- [Five Years of GST: Achievements, Challenges and Way Ahead](#)

### What reforms are still pending?

- 1) Progress on key economic reforms like rationalizing GST rates, privatizing non-strategic PSUs, and reforming land, labour, and farm laws was limited.
- 2) Despite the passage of four labor codes, the Center did not garner support from all states.

### What are the prospects of economic reforms under coalition?

- 1) There are lesser chances of implementing long-pending economic reforms because the ruling party in its election manifesto has been mostly silent on land and farm sector reforms.
- 2) Given the government's significant reliance on its coalition partners for its survival, it may not go ahead with reform initiatives.
- 3) There is a lack of clarity on renewing efforts to bring trade unions and states on board for implementing labour law reforms.
- 4) Throughout history, coalition administrations have traditionally advocated for reforms mainly in times of economic crisis. However, that's not the situation now

### What should be the way forward?

#### 1) Governance Reforms -

A) Reviving institutions like the Industrial Management Pool (IMP) could help break the dominance of the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and encourage the appointment of domain experts and technocrats in key ministries.

B) The new government should form a committee with representatives from all states to develop a plan. Involving states in both shaping the new governance model and maintaining investment momentum would be beneficial.

2) **Cooperative Federalism**- A coalition structure should encourage adoption of a positive approach towards cooperative federalism and try to minimize the strain in Centre-state relations witnessed during the previous decade.

3) **Consensus Building**- There is a need to build consensus among coalition partners for initiating crucial governance reforms.

### Digital Competition Bill: Its core needs strengthening

**News:** The Ministry of Corporate Affairs recently concluded public consultations on the draft Digital Competition Bill (DCB) and the findings of the Committee on Digital Competition Law (CDCL).

The CDCL highlighted the necessity of a robust framework to support the rapid growth of India's digital ecosystem. It recommended introducing ex-ante measures through the DCB to complement the existing ex-post framework under the Competition Act.

### What are the key provisions of draft Digital Competition Bill (DCB)?

#### Stages in the process

1. Identification of core digital services (CDS).

2. Designation of Systemically Significant Digital Enterprises (SSDE) for each CDS.
3. Mandatory ex-ante compliance obligations for an SSDE.
4. Penalties for non-compliance by an SSDE.

### Identification of CDS

The CDCL suggests pre-identifying certain digital services prone to market concentration based on the Competition Commission of India's (CCI) experience and global practices.

Nine digital services, including online search engines and video-sharing platforms, have been identified as CDS.

**For more details about the bill** – [Click Here](#)

### What are the concerns related to the bill?

**Identification of CDS:** Unlike the EU's Digital Markets Act (DMA), the DCB lacks clear guidelines on identifying CDS, raising concerns about fairness and transparency.

The DCB needs a systematic approach for updating the CDS list, with the CCI better positioned to propose amendments based on its dealings with anti-competitive practices.

**Double Penalty:** The proposed ex-ante regime under the DCB could lead to a double penalty for SSDEs, as it would operate alongside the existing ex-post regime under the Competition Act. The CDCL suggests rationalizing penalties to avoid disproportionate punishments for the same conduct under both regimes. This should be codified in the statute for clarity.

### What should be done?

**Strengthening the DCB:** The government should refine the DCB based on public feedback, ensuring it clearly defines the framework within which the CCI operates. Building a robust ex-ante regime requires addressing concerns about certainty and fairness.

**Enhancing CCI's Technical Capacity:** The CCI should enhance its technical capacity and establish a Digital Markets and Data Unit to effectively implement the DCB while maintaining its ex-post responsibilities.

## Challenges faced by Indian companies, due to amendment in the foreign investment rules

**Context:** The article discusses challenges faced by Indian companies, especially startups, due to a 2019 amendment in the foreign investment rules which require (PN3 Requirement) government approval for investments from countries bordering India.

For details information on **What is PN3 guidelines** [read this article here](#)

### What are the Challenges with the Current Foreign Investment Rules?

**1.Unclear Definition:** The term 'beneficial owner' is not defined, leading to confusion. This has led to conservative interpretations by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).

**2.Impact on FOCCs:** FOCCs face restrictions similar to those imposed on non-residents. This has caused issues with downstream investments, as seen in 2023 when many FOCCs received notices from the RBI regarding their compliance.

**3.Approval Delays:** The government approval process is slow and has a high rejection rate. For example, proposals worth ₹50,000 crore are pending, withdrawn, or rejected, with 201 applications rejected in the past three years.

**4.High Penalties:** Fines for non-compliance can be up to three times the investment, risking insolvency for



startups. These companies often receive investments beyond their revenue, making fines particularly damaging.

### What should be done?

- 1. Indemnity Challenge:** Indian companies should require foreign investors to provide representations backed by indemnities about their compliance with the PN3 Requirement. This could reduce the risk for Indian companies but may discourage foreign investment due to potential liabilities.
- 2. Beneficial Owners:** Clearly define 'beneficial owners' to include specific ownership thresholds, ranging from 10% to 25%. Include control tests that consider rights overboard meetings, veto powers, and operational matters. For example, Foreign Owned or Controlled Companies (FOCCs) faced RBI notices about investments due to ambiguous definitions.
- 3. Consultation Mechanism:** Introduce a time-bound consultation process with regulatory authorities to clarify control-conferring clauses in investment agreements. This mechanism would help resolve ambiguities like Indian competition law. For Example, Industry practices and legal advice on beneficial ownership have become conservative due to the RBI's strict interpretations.

## Topic- Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

### Importance of Healthcare Cost Management

**Context-** The article emphasizes the urgency of addressing healthcare costs and ensuring equitable access to medical services in India. With rising health disparities, sustainable and fair healthcare policies are crucial.

### What is the role of private hospitals in driving innovation?

Private hospitals, particularly those accredited by organizations like JCI and NABH, serve not only as centers of specialized care but also as hubs for innovation, investing in advanced technologies like telemedicine to enhance patient outcomes.

### What are the concerns regarding price caps in healthcare?

- 1) Implementing uniform price caps could greatly reduce healthcare quality. Research indicates that hospitals facing financial strain due to these caps experience a 15% rise in patient dissatisfaction.
- 2) Such caps could significantly hinder the advancement of new treatments and technologies, particularly in critical areas like cancer research and robotic surgery, which require substantial investment.
- 3) Properly implemented rate standardization can alleviate health-care disparities. However, they should not destabilize providers' economic health.

### What should be the way forward?

- 1) **Pricing Models-** There is a need to employ dynamic pricing models that change depending on how complex the medical issue is and the patient's financial situation. Thailand's system, which looks at how much patients earn and how necessary the treatment is, could be a good example for India's diverse economy.
- 2) **Addressing Legal and Regulatory Challenges-** Legislative reform is necessary to accommodate local



conditions and support rate standardization. States like Rajasthan and Tamil Nadu are advocating for robust legal frameworks to address gaps in rate fixation provisions.

- 3) **Leveraging the Role of Technology**- Technology, such as artificial intelligence and telemedicine programs, can make healthcare more available and affordable, particularly in distant regions, while advancements like mobile health applications can be useful in handling long-term health conditions beyond hospital settings. For ex- telemedicine initiatives in Karnataka that have reduced hospital visits by 40%.
- 4) **Stakeholder Engagement**- There is a need to engage all stakeholders, including private healthcare providers, to understand the nuanced dynamics and craft effective, sustainable policies.
- 5) **Data-driven policymaking** – The government needs to prioritize data-driven policymaking. They should use data analysis and predictions to decide on rates and understand how they'll affect healthcare innovation and accessibility in the long run.
- 6) **Establish Public-Private partnerships**- There is a need to allocate government subsidies to support research and development in private hospitals and establish public-private partnerships to integrate cutting-edge technologies in public hospitals.
- 7) **Pilot projects**-The government can implement pilot projects to gauge the impact of rate caps on healthcare quality and innovation.

### Findings of National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2021

**Context:** The article discusses the importance of not just access to education but also its quality. It highlights disparities in educational outcomes across Indian states and suggests solutions like better teaching practices and targeted interventions to improve learning outcomes for all students.

For detailed information on **National Education Policy (NEP) 2020** [read this article here](#)

#### What are the main findings of the National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2021?

**1. Decline in Performance:** Compared to NAS 2017, student performance has declined significantly across grades.

Class 3 scores dropped by 3.9% in Language, 4.7% in Mathematics, and 4.4% in Environmental Studies (EVS). Class 10 scores fell by 13.4% in Mathematics, 18.6% in Science, and 9.1% in Social Science.

**2. Disparities Across States:** States like Punjab, Rajasthan, and Haryana excel, while Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, and Chhattisgarh lag behind.

**3. Performance Drop with Progression:** Scores decline as students advance from Class 3 to Class 10. Language scores fell from 64.6% in Class 3 to 52% in Class 10.

Mathematics scores dropped from 61.2% in Class 3 to 44% in Class 10.

For detailed information on **National Achievement Survey (NAS) 2021** [read this article here](#)

#### Why are there declines in performance?

**1. Shift in Assessment Style:** The move from rote learning to competency-based assessments challenges students not used to this approach.

**2. Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic:** Disruptions in regular schooling due to the pandemic contributed significantly to learning losses.

**3. Inadequate Foundational Learning:** Students' foundational skills in early grades are not strong enough,

leading to compounded difficulties in higher grades.

**4. Insufficient Reinforcement of Concepts:** According to **Jerome Bruner's Spiral Curriculum Theory**, a lack of regular revisitation and reinforcement of core concepts leads to gaps in knowledge as students' progress.

**How does the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for School Education 2023 address quality disparities?**

1. It aims to define learning standards clearly and systematically align educational goals with measurable outcomes, supporting the core vision of the NEP 2020.
2. By detailing specific learning outcomes, the NCF allows for precise assessment and targeted interventions, which help educators identify and close learning gaps effectively.
3. The framework includes operational guidelines for adapting learning outcomes to different contexts and customizing teaching strategies, ensuring that all students meet set competencies.
4. These measures contribute to reducing educational quality disparities, as highlighted by the disparities in NAS 2021 data.

For more information on **National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for School Education 2023** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

**What should be done?**

- 1. Strengthen Foundational Learning:** The NEP 2020 aims to ensure all children achieve foundational literacy and numeracy by Grade 3, with an emphasis on a shift from rote learning to holistic, integrated, and experiential learning approaches.
- 2. Enhance Teacher Training:** The NEP 2020's focus on continuous professional development and the establishment of National Professional Standards for Teachers to elevate teaching quality.
- 3. Use Data-Driven Approaches:** Utilize NAS data to identify and address specific areas where students are underperforming, ensuring targeted interventions.
- 4. Promote Competency-Based Education:** The NEP 2020 promotes shifting from memorization to competency-based education, ensuring students master essential skills before moving on to more advanced topics.
- 5. Engage Community and Parents:** Actively involve parents and communities in the educational process, making them partners in improving education.
- 6. Align State Policies with NEP 2020:** Ensure that state education policies support the goals of NEP 2020, particularly around foundational learning and teacher training.
- 7. Implement Bloom's Mastery Learning:** Emphasize mastery of lower-order cognitive skills before advancing to higher-order thinking skills. This approach ensures that students fully understand the material at each stage of their education before moving on to more complex concepts.

### Reasons for systemic healthcare regulation failures in India

**Context:** The article discusses a fire tragedy in a New Delhi neonatal care nursing home, highlighting systemic healthcare regulation failures in India. It argues for realistic, fair regulations that support small clinics and nursing homes to ensure affordable and quality healthcare.

For detailed information on **challenges faced by the healthcare sector in India** [read this article here](#)

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### What are the issues with Healthcare in India?

**Excessive Regulations:** India has numerous health regulations, sometimes over 50 approvals are needed, making compliance complex and cumbersome.

**Unrealistic Standards:** The Clinical Establishments Act of 2010, which is difficult to implement, and the Indian Public Health Standards show that only 15-18% of government primary health-care facilities meet their own standards.

**Inconsistent Enforcement:** In 2017, incidents at two hospitals in Delhi showed a disparity in consequences; a private hospital had its license suspended while a government hospital only faced an inquiry. This is significant in a system where private facilities provide the majority of outpatient and hospital services.

**Delayed Approvals:** Many health-care providers face delays in getting approvals, even when they apply months in advance, affecting the continuity and quality of care.

**Overemphasis on Large Facilities:** Regulations often cater to large hospitals, overlooking the needs and capabilities of smaller clinics and nursing homes, which serve a significant portion of the population at lower costs.

### What should be done?

**Simplify Regulations:** Overcomplex regulations hinder health care delivery. For instance, only 15-18% of government health facilities meet their own standards, illustrating the gap between policy and practicability.

**Facilitate Faster Approvals:** Delays in renewing licenses, as reported by facility owners, disrupt service provision. Approvals should be streamlined and made time-bound.

**Involve Stakeholders:** Regulations should be drafted with inputs from doctors, facility representatives, and the community to ensure they are realistic and equitable.

**Support Smaller Facilities:** Small clinics and nursing homes are essential for low-cost health services. They need regulations that are supportive and not overly burdensome to maintain accessibility and affordability.

### Impacts of exam paper leaks in India

**Context:** The article discusses how exam paper leaks in several Indian states became a significant issue affecting young voters. These leaks led to cancellations and delays in government job recruitment, causing frustration and impacting election results. Political parties are addressing this by promising reforms and compensation for affected candidates.

### What is the present state of exam paper leaks in India?

1. Exam paper leaks are a critical issue in India, affecting several states including Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, and Bihar.
2. Over the last five years, 41 paper leaks have impacted 1.4 crore job seekers across 15 states, showcasing the extent of the problem.
3. Recent incidents in 2024 include major leaks in UP's police constable recruitment exams, with over 48 lakh candidates affected.

### What are the impacts of exam paper leaks in India?

#### 1. Impact on Young Aspirants

**Financial and Emotional Strain:** Aspirants invest in coaching, application fees, and often relocate, incurring debts. Leaks lead to wasted resources and increased uncertainty and stress. The frustration and financial strain are significant, especially for those from marginalized backgrounds.

### 2. Political Consequences

**a) Electoral Impact:** In the 2024 elections, paper leaks significantly affected political outcomes, notably in Uttar Pradesh where exam leaks influenced the BJP's performance negatively.

**b) Policy Responses:** Political parties are responding with promises of reforms, such as fast-track courts and compensations, to address the grievances of young voters.

#### What should be done?

1. Political parties and the government are suggesting measures like special task forces and stricter laws to prevent cheating and leaks.
2. However, the effectiveness of these measures is still questionable, as the problem persists and continues to affect the job market and the aspirations of young Indians.

### Reasons for the Failures of the Current Exam System

**Context:** The article discusses the failures of the current exam system, suggests continuous assessment, online testing, AI-based proctoring, and internships for admissions. It emphasizes reforms to reduce fraud and improve education quality, aligning with the National Education Policy 2020 goals.

For detailed information on **Revision of Competitive Examination** [read this article here](#)

#### What are the main issues with the current exam system?

- 1. High-Stakes Exams:** Exams like NEET and UGC NET are single high-stakes tests that push students towards cramming. Coaching centers flourish, focusing on passing exams rather than understanding subjects.
- 2. Impact on School Education:** Grades 11 and 12 are overshadowed by coaching institutions, compromising holistic personality development outlined in the National Education Policy 2020.
- 3. Drop in Engineering Graduates:** In the last five years, the number of engineering graduates has decreased by 40%, indicating a lack of student interest after securing admission.
- 4. Outdated Assessment Methods:** School boards use outdated and non-standardized assessment methods, focusing on rote learning. The 2022-23 deadline for implementing competency-based assessments from NEP 2020 has been missed.
- 5. Exam Conduct Issues:** The inability to conduct large-scale exams professionally is troubling. Despite the NTA's establishment in 2017, pen and paper exams prone to fraud are still used.

#### What should be done?

- 1. Change Selection Process:** Introduce continuous assessment over two years for higher education admissions, reducing reliance on single high-stakes exams.
- 2. Implement Continuous Online Assessments:** Assign 40% weightage to eight quarterly online assessments using a standardized question bank. These tests ensure critical thinking and conceptual



understanding and are taken within school premises.

**3. Promote Social and Professional Aptitude:** Allocate 40% weightage to internships and participation in NSS/NCC or social upliftment programs. These experiences enhance practical skills and social awareness through two six-week long internships.

**4. Conduct Final Exams with Reduced Weightage:** Assign 20% weightage to a final online exam like NEET/JEE, conducted twice a year, allowing students to choose the best score.

**5. Use Technology for Integrity:** Employ AI-based proctoring and robust question banks to prevent fraud. Collaborate with institutes like IITs and the Indian Statistical Institute to design secure exam protocols.

### Rising issue of Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD)

**Context:** The article discusses the theme for International Fatty Liver Day, "Act Now, Screen Today" It highlights the rising issue of non-alcoholic fatty liver disease, now called Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD). It emphasizes the importance of early screening and personalized health checks to detect and manage liver disease before it progresses to severe stages.

For detailed information on **Global Hepatitis Report 2024** [read this article here](#)

#### What is the current status of fatty liver disease in India?

**1. Prevalence:** MASLD affects 25-30% of people globally. In India, 38.6% of adults and 36% of obese children have fatty liver.

**2. Linked Conditions:** High rates of MASLD are found in those with diabetes (55.5%-59.7%), obesity (64.6%-95%), and severe metabolic syndrome (73%).

#### What is Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD)?

**Definition:** Metabolic dysfunction-associated steatotic liver disease (MASLD) is a reclassified name for non-alcoholic fatty liver disease. It is linked to metabolic health, cardiac health, and cancer risk.

#### Reasons

- a) MASLD is closely associated with metabolic syndrome, including obesity, diabetes, high blood pressure, and abnormal cholesterol levels.
- b) High carbohydrate intake, especially refined carbs and sugars, leads to high insulin levels.
- c) Persistent high insulin levels cause insulin resistance, converting excess glucose into fatty acids stored in the liver.

#### What should be done?

**1. Prioritize Early Screening:** Early detection through comprehensive health screenings is crucial to prevent advanced liver disease.

**2. Incorporate Advanced Testing:** Use tools like vibration-controlled transient elastography for early detection of liver fibrosis, as it non-invasively measures liver stiffness, crucial for managing liver health effectively.

**3. Customize Health Checks:** Personalize screening frequency and tests based on individual risk factors such as family history and lifestyle, recognizing the diversity in non-communicable disease presentation.



**4. Promote Lifestyle Adjustments:** Encourage dietary modifications, regular physical activity, and effective weight management to mitigate liver disease risks, considering the high prevalence of MASLD in obese individuals (64.6%-95%).

**5. Educate on the Importance of Screening:** Increase awareness that early stages of liver disease often present no symptoms, emphasizing the importance of regular health checks for early intervention.

### Issues with the NEP's Structure

**Context-**The article highlights the issue with the implementation of National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Read more- [National Education Policy \(NEP\) 2020](#).

#### Why Was the NEP Updated?

- 1. Outdated Policy:** The old policy from 1986 was not updated for 34 years, making it irrelevant for modern needs.
- 2. Employability Issues:** Graduates lacked the skills needed for today's job market, with many industries and jobs now existing that did not exist 20 years ago.
- 3. Technological Changes:** The rise of the internet and Industry 4.0 drastically changed job requirements.
- 4. Need for Modern Skills:** The NEP focuses on soft skills, technical skills, research, problem-solving, and critical thinking.

#### How Does the NEP Support Students?

- 1. Flexible Learning Paths:** The NEP allows students to pause their education for work and return later. This facilitates lifelong learning.
- 2. Recognition of Prior Learning:** Students can earn credits for work experience related to their studies, contributing towards their degrees after proper assessment.
- 3. Practical Experiences:** The curriculum includes internships, apprenticeships, projects, and community outreach. These provide real-world applications of theoretical knowledge.
- 4. Outcome-Based Learning:** Each course has specific learning outcomes measured through assessments. This ensures targeted and effective education.
- 5. University Autonomy:** Institutions like Delhi University allow students to choose majors and minors along with electives. This offers a multidisciplinary education.
- 6. Credit-Based Courses:** The NEP includes generic electives and skill enhancement courses, which equip students with employability and entrepreneurial skills.

#### What are the issues in the implementation of NEP?

- 1) Standardization and Mobility in Higher Education-**It implements a credit-based eight-semester format aimed at creating a standardized and mobile higher education system. This format theoretically allows students to transfer credits across institutions, emphasizing interoperability. However, it neglects the organic development of content.
- 2) Truncation of Syllabus-**The syllabus has been reduced from five units per paper to three, and even prescribed chapters have been truncated. For ex- in a poem by Walt Whitman, "Passage to India," earlier the entire 255-line poem was taught, but now only 68 lines across four sections are prescribed, despite the philosophical nature of the poem.

3) **Dilution of Core Content**- The NEP's focus on a credit-based system dilutes core subjects. For ex- in Economics Honours at St. Xavier's University, Kolkata, only one out of eight courses directly relate to the honours subject. The rest cover various areas such as human behavior and media studies. This raises concerns about whether students gain enough specialized knowledge to succeed in their careers.

4) **Introduction of additional courses**- Adding more courses, like skill enhancement and value-added studies, increases administrative work but doesn't always improve educational results. This weakens higher education's original goal of fostering critical thinking and expertise in specific fields

5) **Logistical Challenge**- The NEP brings logistical challenges with frequent exams (7 to 8 per semester) and extensive internal assessments. This heavy focus on assessments, including attendance and continuous evaluation, burdens both students and educators with bureaucratic tasks.

6) **Mandatory Practical Exams in Arts Education**-Unnecessary demands, such as mandatory practical exams for non-core arts subjects, waste resources and teaching time. These issues highlight a gap between policy goals and real-world application.

7) **Neglect of Educational Excellence**-NEP focuses more on valuing bureaucracy over educational excellence. It suggests that by prioritizing standardization and superficial adaptability, the NEP diminishes universities' traditional function of fostering critical thinking.

For detailed information on **National Education Policy (NEP)** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

### Omitting several critical events from NCERT textbooks:Pros&Cons

**Context:** The article critically criticizes the NCERT for omitting references to significant historical events like the Gujarat riots and Babri Masjid demolition from textbooks. I

For detailed information on **Changes to the NCERT syllabus and associated issues** [read this article here](#)

#### What has been omitted from NCERT textbooks?

The NCERT textbooks have omitted several critical events and details, which include:

**Gujarat Riots:** These significant communal disturbances are not mentioned.

**Babri Masjid Demolition:** Referred to only as a "three-domed structure," without explicit details.

**BJP's Rath Yatra:** This influential political event is not included.

**Role of Kar Sevaks:** Their involvement in communal violence post-demolition is omitted.

**Presidential Rule in BJP-Ruled States:** The textbook no longer discusses the imposition of President's rule post December 6, 1992.

**BJP's Regret Over Ayodhya:** Earlier acknowledgments of regret by the BJP have been removed.

#### What are the issues with school textbooks?

1) **Historical Narratives in School Textbooks:** School textbooks in the past focused narrowly on India's achievements, overlooking its contributions to art, literature, philosophy, and science. This distorted the country's historical identity and perpetuated colonial mindsets.

2) **Impact on Students:** Introducing complex historical conflicts prematurely in school curricula may lead to emotional distress and perpetuate negative perceptions. This may divide communities.

3) **Ethical Considerations-** The biased historical accounts in outdated textbooks raised concerns about their potential to undermine unity and mutual respect among students.

#### **What is the impact of these omissions?**

1. **Hinders Critical Thinking:** Omitting significant events like the Gujarat riots and Babri Masjid demolition prevents students from developing critical thinking skills.
2. **Sanitized History:** Presenting a sanitized version of history avoids discussing faultlines and key events in India's journey, like the BJP's rath yatra and kar sevaks' role.
3. **Loss of Comprehensive Education:** Deleting sections on Scheduled Castes and Tribes' poverty, Gandhi's assassination, the Emergency, and protest movements leads to an incomplete understanding of historical and social contexts.

#### **What should be the way forward?**

- 1) **Need for Balanced Narratives-**Textbook revisions are important to provide a credible historical narrative that focuses on resolving conflicts and fostering mutual respect, helping students become responsible citizens with a better grasp of India's heritage.
- 2) **Role of Universities** –It should offer an environment where mature discussions and critical analyses of historical controversies can take place.
- 3) **Pedagogical Goals-**School education should try to cultivate positive attitudes and critical thinking among students. This can prepare them for societal roles without early disillusionment.
- 4) **Promoting National Unity and Inclusivity through Revised Textbooks-** Revised textbooks should focus on national unity, inclusivity, and India's cultural contributions. It should move away from divisive narratives and integrating contemporary global issues relevant to students' lives.
- 5) **Continuous Improvement:** -Regularly updating textbooks, as mandated by the National Education Policy 2020, is important to meet changing educational demands and encourage empathy, curiosity, and critical thinking among students.

### **Significance of AI in Education Sector**

**Context-**The article discusses the potential of AI to bridge the gap in access to quality education and personalized tutoring. It cites the "2 Sigma Problem" which highlights the effectiveness of one-on-one tutoring, but also the practical challenges of scalability.

The current higher education places too much importance on job placement and salary packages as the main objectives of higher education. This focus could restrict motivation for learning.

#### **What role does AI play in enhancing the quality and access to education?**

- 1) Recent advancements in AI like OpenAI's ChatGPT offer scalable, personalized, and cost-effective alternatives to traditional teaching methods
- 2) AI models can offer personalized tutoring, adjusting to each student's learning speed and preferences. It can also replicate the advantages of one-on-one teaching.
- 3) Integration of voice and vision capabilities in AI is making interactions more natural. It allows students to communicate with AI tutors like human instructors.
- 4) In India, many students don't have access to quality teachers. AI can help bridge this gap by offering consistent and high-quality educational support.

5) AI can democratize education, ensuring all students, regardless of where they live or their socio-economic background, can access the resources they need to succeed.

**What are the issues with it?**

- 1) There is no consensus on the impact of AI on education. Some view it as a threat to human capabilities, whereas others see it as enhancing them.
- 2) Advanced technology by itself is not enough; learner engagement and motivation driven by meaningful purposes such as addressing social issues and promoting public welfare are essential for effective learning.
- 3) It cautions against an overemphasis on job placement and salary packages as the primary goal of higher education, which may limit motivation for learning.

**What should be the way forward?**

- 1) **Integration of AI in Education**-Policymakers, educators, and philanthropists should prioritize AI adoption in education and invest in AI infrastructure, teacher training, and curriculum development.
- 2) **Empowering Educators as Facilitators:** - Educators should transition to facilitator roles, utilizing AI for personalized support and emphasizing higher-order thinking skills and creativity. This integration can improve learning outcomes, preparing students for future careers by nurturing critical thinking and innovation.
- 3) **Embracing AI as a Complementary Educational Tool** -Educators should see AI models not as threats, but as tools that complement their teaching methods. By incorporating AI into classrooms, teachers can concentrate on the intricate and profound elements of education that demand human insight and awareness.

Read more- [Major concerns of AI use in India](#)

**Revision of Competitive Examination**

**Context**-The article criticizes the current system of competitive entrance examinations for higher education as an "elimination exercise" rather than a genuine selection process. It proposes an alternative examination system.

**What are the issues with the current entrance examination system?**

- 1) These exams cannot assess important life capacities like creativity, deep conceptual understanding, and social capacities. This undermines the value of these abilities.
- 2) The high-stakes nature of these exams causes mental, social, and economic problems for aspiring students and their families.
- 3) The concept of "merit" being truly represented by these exams, as they evaluate a limited range of abilities and can produce varying rankings, may be questioned.

**What is the proposed alternative selection method?**

- 1) This alternative selection method is based on qualifying criteria assessed through improved board examinations or similar assessments.
- 2) Students who meet the basic qualifying criteria (e.g., 70% in four subjects) would be eligible for admission to higher education institutions.
- 3) If the number of eligible students exceeds available seats, randomized selection would be employed.

Read more- [Exam Paper Leaks- Concerns and Way Forward](#)

**What are the advantages of the proposed method?**

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- 1) This approach would lessen the pressure on students and families since they only have to meet the minimum requirements. This will minimize competitive stress and related pressures.
- 2) By evaluating a broader range of abilities, the issue of limited educational goals emphasized by current exams can be minimized. This will promote a more diverse society and enhance collective competence.
- 3) Colleges would be evaluated based on the overall quality of education they provide, focusing on students' broader capacities rather than selecting based solely on narrow, exam-focused skills.

The proposed method doesn't immediately solve the problem of limited seats in top higher education institutions. However, it suggests that students who don't get admitted would understand it's due to chance, not their worth. The real solution is to enhance capacity in high-quality institutions to accommodate all students.

### Ongoing issues with the NEET exam

**Context:** The article discusses the ongoing issues with the NEET exam in India, including cheating scandals, a lack of transparency, and its negative impact on rural and poorer students. It suggests that the root problem is poor school education quality and calls for a policy overhaul to address these issues.

For detailed information on **NEET Controversy** [read this article here](#)

#### What are the problems with NEET?

- 1. Paper Leaks:** NEET exams have been marred by repeated paper leaks over the years, undermining the exam's credibility.
- 2. Incorrect Results:** Mismanagement in result declaration has led to incorrect outcomes, causing distress among aspirants.
- 3. Unusual Scoring Patterns:** This year, 67 students scored perfect marks, a significant increase from the usual two or three, raising suspicions of irregularities.
- 4. Grace Marks Issues:** Over 1,560 students received grace marks for unclear reasons, adding to the transparency issues.
- 5. Loss of Trust:** These issues have significantly eroded trust in the National Testing Agency (NTA), responsible for conducting NEET.

#### Why was NEET introduced?

- 1. Standardizing Entry-Level Competence:** It aimed to ensure that all medical college entrants had a solid understanding of basic sciences like Chemistry, Physics, and Biology.
- 2. Reducing Multiple Exams:** Prior to NEET, students faced around 46 different entrance exams, which was cumbersome and stressful.
- 3. Eliminating Capitation Fees:** NEET intended to remove the high fees charged by private medical colleges for admissions, which were often not based on merit but on the ability to pay.

#### How has NEET affected the education system?

1. NEET has led to a significant bias in the education system, **favoring students from CBSE** backgrounds because the NEET syllabus is more aligned with the CBSE curriculum, disadvantaging students from state boards.
2. Due to this imbalance, students from state boards are often compelled to undertake extra coaching to



compete effectively, **contributing to the growth of a coaching industry** valued at Rs 58,000 crore, expanding at a rate of 15% annually.

3. Specifically, in Tamil Nadu, the introduction of NEET has **adversely affected rural and Tamil(state)-medium students.**

#### **What has been Tamil Nadu's response to NEET?**

1. Tamil Nadu has always opposed NEET, favoring its policy of linking medical college admissions to high school performance.
2. In 2021, Tamil Nadu formed the Expert Committee led by Justice A K Rajan to assess the impact of NEET.
3. The Rajan Committee found that admissions of Tamil-medium students dropped from an average of 15% to between 1.6% and 3.2% from 2017 to 2021.
4. Admissions of rural students to government medical colleges decreased from 62% to 50%.
5. Tamil Nadu's public health system relies on rural students who are willing to work in primary health centers, unlike urban students who often seek careers in corporate hospitals or abroad.
6. The state government passed a law to scrap NEET, but it was blocked by the Governor.

#### **What should be done?**

1. Revamp NEET with input from all stakeholders.
2. Consider decentralizing exams to states or universities.
3. Possibly reintroduce a six-year MBBS degree with a pre-medical year.
4. Establish regional boards or centralize only qualifying exams for practicing outside the state.

## **Subject: Social Justice**

**Topic- Welfare Schemes for Vulnerable Sections of the population by the Centre and States and the Performance of these Schemes; Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the Protection and Betterment of these Vulnerable Sections.**

### **Issue with juvenile detention in India**

**Context:** The article discusses how children accused of crimes are sometimes wrongly held in adult prisons in India. It mentions cases where children were not treated according to juvenile justice laws, highlighting systemic flaws in the system that fail to protect these children adequately.

For detailed information on **When a juvenile is tried as an adult** [read this article here](#)

#### **What is the issue with juvenile detention in India?**

**Improper Detention:** Children accused of crimes are often held in adult prisons, violating juvenile justice laws.

**Study Findings:** Between 2016 and 2021, a study by iProbono found that 9,681 children were transferred from adult prisons to child-care institutions.

**Legal Framework:** The 2015 juvenile justice act prohibits detaining children in adult prisons, requiring placement in observation homes or places of safety.

For detailed information on **juvenile justice act 2015** [read this article here](#)

**Continued Violations:** From 2017 to 2019, 75 juveniles were found in adult prisons in Haryana, Punjab, and Karnataka.

**Systemic Issues:** Police often misrepresent children's ages, fail to inform them of their rights, and delay legal representation, leading to wrongful detention.

**What are the gaps in the legal system?**

**Lack of Legal Representation:** Many children meet their lawyers only weeks after being imprisoned, undermining their defense.

**Procedural Gaps:** There are no clear guidelines for ensuring a lawyer is present during police questioning.

**Delayed Justice:** Regular inspections by the Juvenile Justice Board are not consistently conducted, allowing violations to persist unnoticed.

## Subject: International Relations

Topic- India and its Neighborhood- Relations.

### The key area of focus in the India-Bangladesh relationship

**Context:** The article discusses the strong relationship between India and Bangladesh, led by Prime Ministers Narendra Modi and Sheikh Hasina. They have met frequently to enhance their countries' partnership, focusing on improving trade, defense, and regional cooperation. They aim to address remaining challenges and strengthen their bond further.

For detailed information on **India-Bangladesh relationship** [read this article here](#)

**What have India and Bangladesh achieved in bilateral relations?**

Prime Ministers Narendra Modi of India and Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh have strengthened their countries' relationship significantly. They have met 10 times over the past year, emphasizing the importance of their partnership. Their efforts are described as a "golden chapter" in the history of bilateral relations between the two nations.

**What are the key areas of focus?**

- 1. Easing Visa Procedures and Freer Movement of Goods:** The countries plan to simplify visa processes to support easier and more frequent travel. They also aim to enhance the free movement of goods across borders.
- 2. Cross-border Energy and Electricity Flows:** There is a focus on facilitating energy exchange, which includes the flow of electricity across the border to ensure mutual energy security and integration.
- 3. Building Digital Bridges:** The efforts to create digital connections that will likely support advancements in

technology and communication between the two nations.

**4. Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA):** India and Bangladesh intend to commence negotiations on a CEPA to encourage free trade. This is particularly important given the breakdown of the global trading order, positioning the partnership as a regional economic imperative.

**5. Defense Modernization:** Plans to modernize bilateral defense ties involve collaboration between armed forces and supporting Dhaka's military modernization, contributing to regional stability in the Indo-Pacific.

#### What challenges remain?

**1. River Water Management:** Despite significant progress in bilateral relations, the management of river water remains a challenge. This issue is critical as it affects agriculture and livelihoods in both countries.

**2. Unfinished Connectivity Agenda:** The ongoing efforts to ease visa procedures and enable freer movement of goods and energy are crucial for seamless cross-border interaction but have yet to be fully realized.

**3. Negotiations on Economic Partnership:** The long overdue negotiations for a comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA) have yet to commence, which is essential for enhancing trade and economic integration between India and Bangladesh.

### India's Tibet Policy amid US-China Tensions

**Context-** A US delegation visited Dharamshala soon after the US Congress passed the 'Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Dispute Act.' This legislation aims to support Tibet and criticize China's treatment of Tibetans. The Central Tibetan Administration invited the delegation to express solidarity with the Tibetan diaspora and to urge renewed talks between the Dalai Lama's representatives and Beijing. India hosted the delegation, with the External Affairs Minister arranging a dinner and the Prime Minister meeting them the next day. This gesture was seen as a carefully considered move amidst ongoing tensions with China.

#### How has India's Tibet policy evolved in last few decades?

**1) Diplomatic and Humanitarian Commitment--**India recognized Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) as a part of China in 1954, reflecting its diplomatic position on territorial issues. Since 1959, India has provided asylum to the Dalai Lama and Tibetan refugees. This demonstrates its robust commitment to humanitarian principles.

**2) Changed Stance due to China's Disregard -** China's disregard for India's territorial integrity, its renaming of places in Arunachal Pradesh, and its practice of issuing stapled visas to residents of Jammu and Kashmir, India has opted not to publicly support a 'One China' policy. This indicated a shift in India's approach towards Tibet.

**3) Position on the Dalai Lama -**India highlights the Dalai Lama's status as a respected spiritual leader instead of categorizing him as a "separatist," despite China's objections. India does not officially recognize the Tibetan Government in Exile or Parliament in Exile as independent entities.

#### What are the difficulties linked to the United States' engagement with India's immediate neighborhood?

**1) Marginalizing of India-** India has chosen not to publicly endorse U.S. criticisms of China's policies towards Tibetans. Instead, India has maintained its own carefully balanced approach to relations with Beijing. Allowing U.S. leaders to deliver messages to Beijing from India neglects India's historically calibrated Tibet policy.

**2) Diminishing Regional Influence-**Similar challenges are being observed in other parts of South Asia,

including the Maldives, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and the Indian Ocean islands, where India's influence has diminished amidst rising competition between the United States and China.

Read more-[India-Maldives Relations](#)

**What should be the way forward?**

- 1) **Maintain Strategic Autonomy**-India's Tibet policy requires careful recalibration considering changing geopolitical dynamics. While maintaining its historical stance of providing refuge to Tibetans, India must navigate the complex U.S.-China relationship and assert its own interests in the region.
- 2) **Reevaluation of Tibet Policy**- India needs to reassess its approach and maintain a balanced, independent Tibet policy that serves its strategic interests without compromising sovereignty or diplomatic relations.

**Topic- -Effect of policies and politics of developed and developing countries on India's interests.**

### **China's proposal for a treaty on the no-first-use of nuclear weapons**

**Context:** The article discusses China's proposal at the United Nations for a treaty on the no-first-use of nuclear weapons by nuclear-armed states. It examines the skepticism around China's intentions, given its past actions, and argues that a no-first-use policy could improve global nuclear security. The article also highlights the role India could play in this initiative.

For detailed information on **Nuclear Deterrence** [read this article here](#)

**Why is there skepticism about China's intentions?**

1. **Historical Context:** China has historically claimed to adhere to a no-first-use policy for nuclear weapons. However, its actions have often contradicted this stance.
2. **Proxy Use:** China has been known to utilize proxies like Pakistan and North Korea, which threaten nuclear action against strategic rivals such as India and the USA, respectively. This technique allows China to extend its strategic influence without direct engagement.
3. **Nuclear Expansion:** Despite its no-first-use claim, China is actively expanding its nuclear arsenal and enhancing its delivery mechanisms, actions that seem inconsistent with a commitment to limit the use of nuclear weapons.

**Why is a no-first-use policy considered important?**

1. **Reduces Risk of Nuclear War:** A no-first-use policy can decrease the likelihood of nuclear escalation among nuclear-armed states by establishing a clear norm against the initial use of nuclear weapons.
2. **Environmental Impact:** Even a limited nuclear exchange could have severe environmental consequences. A study by Mark Z. Jacobson from Stanford estimated that a small nuclear exchange could release over 690 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub>, which is more than the UK's annual emissions.
3. **Global Stability:** Implementing a no-first-use policy contributes to global stability by preventing the catastrophic humanitarian and environmental effects of nuclear warfare.

### How is the global response shaping up?

- 1. United States:** The Biden administration appears open to discussing China's no-first-use proposal. However, significant action is unlikely before the presidential election on November 5, indicating a cautious approach.
- 2. United Kingdom:** Likely to align with the U.S. position, showing a tendency to follow the lead of its close ally rather than initiating independent policy movements.
- 3. Russia:** Appears supportive of China's proposal, reflecting strengthened ties between Moscow and Beijing, which could influence other discussions on global security.

### What role could India play?

- 1. Crucial Participant:** India's involvement is deemed necessary for the success of a global no-first-use treaty, as their participation could lend significant weight to the initiative.
- 2. Potential to Influence China:** If China invites India to partake in no-first-use discussions, it would signal a genuine commitment from Beijing and potentially enhance the proposal's credibility.
- 3. Counteracting Regional Tensions:** India's support for the treaty could help stabilize regional nuclear dynamics, particularly with neighboring countries like Pakistan.

## Significance of diplomatic resolution of India US trade dispute

**News:** Recently, a decade old trade dispute between India and the U.S. was resolved at the World Trade Organization (WTO). This dispute originated in 2012 when the U.S. challenged India's import restrictions on poultry products, imposed due to concerns over avian influenza.

### What was the issue?

In this dispute, US alleged that India deviated from internationally recognized standards, by not providing scientific justification for restrictions.

Both the WTO panel and the Appellate Body ruled in favor of the U.S., stating that India's measures were inconsistent with WTO rules.

It required India to modify its measures. However, compliance issues prolonged the dispute until a recent diplomatic breakthrough led to its resolution.

The dispute was resolved diplomatically, leading to withdrawal of claims by both countries, from WTO. As part of the settlement, India agreed to reduce tariffs on certain U.S. products like cranberries, blueberries, frozen turkey, and premium frozen duck meat.

### What is the significance of this diplomatic resolution between India and US?

It showcases the effectiveness of bilateral negotiations in resolving trade disputes. The resolution of this dispute represents a major diplomatic achievement, particularly given its long duration and complexity.

WTO rules encourage countries to resolve disputes amicably, with litigation only to be pursued as a last resort.

The significance of diplomatic solutions increases, especially in the absence of a functional WTO Appellate Body.

By this agreement, India is able to avoid a \$450 million annual claim from the U.S., awarded by WTO to it. It showcases the ability of major trading partners to navigate complex domestic compulsions and find



common ground, even on the most sensitive trade matters.

This milestone reinforces the growing significance of the India-U.S. partnership, particularly in the context of the recently launched Indo-Pacific Economic Framework.

### Limitations of the existing Laws on Mercenaries

**Context:** The article discusses the recruitment of Indian citizens by the Russian Army to fight in Ukraine, often under false pretenses of good pay and citizenship. It highlights the deaths of two such recruits and the Indian government's efforts to manage and prevent such situations.

#### How Did the Indian Government Respond to such recruitment?

1. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) acknowledged the deaths and recruitment of Indian nationals by the Russian Army and has been actively engaging with Russian authorities to address the issue.
2. The Indian Embassy in Moscow raised concerns with the Russian Ambassador in New Delhi seeking intervention for the release of Indian nationals.
3. In response to the crisis, the MEA issued a press note advising Indians to exercise caution when seeking employment opportunities in Russia.
4. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) filed a First Information Report (FIR) against 15 individuals and four companies involved in trafficking Indians to Russia under false employment promises.

#### Who Are Mercenaries?

1. Mercenaries are individuals recruited from third-party states to fight in conflicts, mainly for personal gain rather than patriotism or loyalty to a cause. They differ from conventional combatants, who are members of the armed forces of a party to the conflict.
2. Under international humanitarian law, particularly **Article 47 of Additional Protocol I to the Geneva Conventions**, a mercenary must meet **six criteria**: recruited to fight in the conflict, taking direct part in hostilities, motivated by significant financial gain, not nationals or residents of the conflict states, not members of the involved armed forces, and not sent on official military duty by their home country.
3. The **Organization of African Unity Convention** (1977) expanded this to include civil wars.
4. In 1989, the **UN General Assembly** broadened it further to cover acts undermining governments and state integrity.
5. Despite these definitions, **mercenaries do not qualify for prisoner-of-war status if captured** but must be treated humanely under international humanitarian law.

#### What are the limitations of the existing Laws on Mercenaries?

1. **Ambiguity in Definition:** The Geneva Conventions' definition excludes foreign military personnel integrated into another state's armed forces, like the Gurkhas.
2. **Domestic Law Gaps:** Most countries do not criminalize mercenary activities.
3. **Lack of Accountability:** No mechanisms to hold foreign advisors and trainers accountable.
4. **PMSC Loopholes:** Private Military and Security Companies (PMSCs) operate under loosely defined legal frameworks, relying on domestic laws. For example, the Wagner Group in Russia has not been formally acknowledged by the Kremlin, complicating accountability.
5. **Non-signatory States:** Countries like **India and Russia have not signed the Montreux Doctrine for regulating PMSCs.**

### What should be done?

- 1. Develop Robust Policy Framework:** Implement policies to address distress migration and human trafficking. Focus on both long-term and immediate measures.
- 2. Long-Term Measures:** Target economic factors driving people to leave India. Create more domestic job opportunities and improve economic conditions.
- 3. Immediate Measures:** Educate the public about risks of overseas job offers and implement strong pre-travel vetting for Indians going to Russia or other conflict zones.
- 4. Pre-Travel Approval:** Require pre-travel approval from the MEA to identify and prevent trafficking cases.
- 5. Learn from Examples:** Nepal banned its citizens from working in Russia or Ukraine due to similar issues. India can consider similar measures.

### Migrant Workers in GCC States

**Context:** The article discusses the death of 49 migrant workers in a fire in Kuwait, caused by poor living conditions and employer negligence. It criticizes Kuwait's weak enforcement of worker protections and the Kafala system, which limits migrants' rights and keeps them vulnerable.

#### Why Are Migrant Workers Vulnerable in GCC States?

**1. Dependence on Employers:** The Kafala system ties workers' visas to employers, making workers dependent and vulnerable. Employers provide housing, food, and transportation, keeping workers in a state of perpetual dependency.

For detailed information on **Kafala system** [read this article here](#)

**Note:** The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) brings together six Arab countries – Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates.

- 2. Low Wages:** Migrant workers earn very low wages, often below the cost of decent living (KD200), leading to financial insecurity.
- 3. Poor Living Conditions:** Workers live in crowded, unsafe, and unhygienic accommodations, increasing their risk during emergencies, as seen in the Mangaf fire that killed 49 workers.
- 4. Limited Rights:** Workers cannot organize or unionize to demand better conditions, as GCC states do not allow labor organizing.
- 5. Family Separation:** Low-income workers cannot bring their families due to high minimum salary requirements (KD800) to sponsor family members.

**Way forward-**Although Kuwaiti officials promised to improve safety standards and enforce stricter penalties, real change is unlikely without systemic reforms that empower workers and improve their rights and living conditions.

## Topic- Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests

### Aukus alliance aims to enhance military capabilities against China

**Context:** The article discusses the Aukus alliance between the US, UK, and Australia, which aims to enhance military capabilities against China, particularly by sharing nuclear submarine technology and other advanced technologies. It also mentions India's exclusion from this technology sharing and suggests that France could be an alternative partner for India in developing submarine technology.

For detailed information on **AUKUS Security Alliance** [read this article here](#)

#### What is the Aukus alliance?

1. The Aukus alliance, formed in September 2021, is a partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. It focuses on military cooperation, especially in the Indo-Pacific region, to counter China's growing influence.
2. The alliance plans to provide Australia with nuclear-powered submarines that are conventionally armed.

#### What technologies are shared under Aukus?

- 1. Nuclear Submarine Propulsion:** Aukus facilitates the unprecedented transfer of nuclear submarine propulsion technology to Australia. This is significant as it's the first time the U.S. has shared such technology outside the UK.
- 2. Advanced Technologies:** The partnership extends into eight high-tech military domains: Artificial intelligence (AI), Quantum technologies, Cyber warfare, Undersea warfare, Hypersonic and counter-hypersonic technologies, Electronic warfare, Innovation and information sharing. For example, the first tangible Aukus technology to be utilized is a trilateral algorithm that enhances the sharing of sonobuoy data from P-8 Poseidon aircraft, used for submarine tracking.

#### How does Aukus impact other allies?

- 1. India's Position:** Although India operates 12 P-8 Poseidon aircraft, similar to those used by Aukus nations for submarine tracking, it was not offered participation in the nuclear technology sharing aspect of Aukus. The US has traditionally never shared nuclear submarine technology with India, reserving this for closer allies.
- 2. Japan's Considerations:** Japan, with significant technological expertise, especially in areas covered by Aukus's Pillar 2, debates whether its participation would result in giving or receiving more benefits. Japan evaluates its involvement based on its own capabilities and strategic needs in the region, especially concerning potential confrontations with China.

#### What could be an alternative for India?

1. Given the limitations with the US, the article suggests that France could be a strategic partner for India, especially in developing nuclear submarine technology.
2. France's nuclear technology uses low-enriched uranium, which aligns with non-proliferation standards, making it a suitable option for India.
3. The strategic relationship between France and India, spanning defense, space, and culture, could support this partnership.

## Successes and challenges in the India-U.S. relationship

**Context:** The article discusses the ups and downs in the relationship between India and the U.S. over the past year since Prime Minister Modi's visit to the U.S. It highlights the good progress in strategic areas but also points out disagreements and slow progress in some aspects, like multilateral cooperation and sensitive political issues.

For detailed information on **Recent Development in India-US Relations** [read this article here](#)

### What has been successful in India-U.S. relations?

**Strategic Trust and Agreements:** Over the past decade, India and the U.S. have solidified their strategic trust, finalizing foundational agreements that enhance military cooperation and interoperability.

**Military and Security Collaboration:** The two countries have conducted numerous joint military exercises and coordinated maritime operations, demonstrating growing strategic alignment.

**Reduction of Past Irritants:** Historical issues such as concerns over Jammu and Kashmir and the relationship dynamics with Pakistan (de-hyphenation) have been effectively managed, smoothing bilateral relations.

**Shared Global Perspectives:** The collaboration extends to global platforms like the Quad, where both countries, along with Japan and Australia, address shared concerns about China's aggressive stance in the Indo-Pacific region.

**Expanding Dialogues:** India and the U.S. have expanded their dialogues to cover a wide range of areas, including climate change, green energy, critical and emerging technologies, and outer space, fostering comprehensive strategic ties.

### What challenges remain in the India-U.S. relationship?

**Differences over Russia's actions:** The U.S. and India disagree on how to handle Russia's invasion of Ukraine. While the U.S. emphasizes international law and humanitarian issues, India considers the impact on global south countries, like disruptions in food and energy supplies.

**Delayed high-level meetings:** Logistical issues and the U.S.'s internal politics, such as the cancellation of planned visits by key U.S. officials due to the Gaza crisis and other scheduling conflicts, have slowed down cooperation within the Quad and other strategic initiatives.

**Tensions over diplomatic comments:** Critical comments from the U.S. State Department about India's state of democracy and religious freedom, along with U.S. Ambassador Eric Garcetti's remarks on Manipur and human rights, led to a diplomatic spat. In response, India summoned a senior U.S. diplomat.

**Alleged assassination plot:** The discovery of an alleged plot involving Indian security officials targeting a U.S. citizen has added a layer of distrust and complicated the bilateral relationship.

**Way forward** -India and the U.S. should focus on resolving diplomatic tensions by addressing concerns over democracy and alleged plots. They must also prioritize high-level meetings and strategic cooperation, like the initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) review, to maintain momentum in their relationship, despite internal and external challenges.



## Issue with Meloni's Privatization Plan

**Context:** The article discusses Italy's hosting of the G7 summit, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's Africa-centered development plan, and the contradiction in her government's privatization strategy. It criticizes the short-term approach, lack of innovation, and failure to honour Mattei's legacy.

For detailed information on **Significance of G7 summit** [read this article here](#)

### What is the Mattei Plan?

- 1. The Mattei Plan** is an ambitious development initiative unveiled by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, focusing on partnerships with African nations.
- 2. Named after Enrico Mattei**, the founder of Italian oil giant Eni, the plan draws inspiration from Mattei's 1950s policies, which disrupted the oil industry by offering more equitable profit-sharing agreements to developing countries.
- 3. Key Objectives:** The plan targets international development with a focus on energy, growth, and immigration.
- 4. Historical Context:** In the past, Mattei enabled developing economies to retain 75% of oil profits, contrasting with the less favorable terms from other oil companies.
- 5. Recent Unveiling:** This initiative was introduced at the Italy-Africa Summit earlier this year, reflecting a continuation of Italy's engagement with Africa.

### What is the Issue with Meloni's Privatization Plan?

- 1. Focus on Short-Term Debt Reduction:** Giorgia Meloni's privatization plan aims to reduce Italy's public debt by selling shares of state-owned enterprises, like Eni, valued at €20 billion (\$21 billion). This strategy emphasizes immediate debt relief over sustainable economic growth.
- 2. Reduction in Research and Development:** Historical data shows that privatization leads to decreased investment in innovation. For example, after privatizing, Telecom Italia reduced its R&D spending from 2% of its revenues to just 0.4%.
- 3. Economic Short-Termism:** The plan reflects a broader trend of prioritizing short-term financial outcomes at the expense of long-term industrial strategy and economic health.

### What are the Broader Implications of these Policies?

- 1. Impact on Industrial Strategy:** The lack of a coherent, mission-oriented industrial strategy hinders the development of sustainable industries and technological capabilities, as seen in the decline of strategic sectors post-privatization in the 1990s.
- 2. Global Trend of Austerity:** The adherence to outdated fiscal rules that prioritize asset sales over industrial innovation aligns with a broader global trend criticized by the IMF for not effectively reducing debt-to-GDP ratios and stifling economic growth.
- 3. Undermining Private Capital Influx:** The criticism of Meloni's plan suggests it misses the opportunity to use public investment as a tool to attract private capital, a mechanism known to stimulate economic growth when public investments are increased.



## The new pact between Russia and North Korea

**Context:** The article discusses a new military pact between Russia and North Korea. This agreement promises immediate military support if either country is attacked. The pact strengthens their alliance, raises security concerns in South Korea and Japan, and impacts global geopolitical dynamics.

### What is the historical context of Russia-North Korea relations?

After World War II, the Soviet Union supported the establishment of a communist regime in North Korea. The USSR provided military aid to North Korea during the Korean War.

In 1961, the USSR and North Korea signed the Russo-North Korea Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance.

Relations declined after the Soviet Union dissolved in 1991.

Russia and North Korea's relations improved in the early 2000s under Putin.

In 2022, Russia's invasion of Ukraine further strengthened their alliance.

### What is the new pact between Russia and North Korea?

**1. Immediate Military Assistance:** Russia and North Korea agreed to provide immediate military support if either is attacked.

**2. Historical Context:** The pact echoes the 1961 Russo-North Korea Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation, and Mutual Assistance.

**3. Article 4:** According to Article 4, if either nation is attacked, the other will provide military and other assistance without delay, in line with Article 51 of the UN Charter and the laws of both nations.

**4. Technological Cooperation:** The pact includes unspecified technological assistance, likely crucial for North Korea's missile and nuclear programs.

### What are the impacts of the new pact between Russia and North Korea?

**1. Technological Support:** It involves technological assistance, potentially helping North Korea improve missile guidance and nuclear capabilities.

**2. Regional Security Concerns:** South Korea and Japan perceive this as a direct threat, prompting them to reconsider their defense strategies and potentially strengthen military capabilities.

**3. Global Diplomatic Reactions:** NATO and the U.S. have expressed concerns. This pact could lead to further military alliances between authoritarian states, increasing global tensions and nuclear proliferation risks.

**4. China's Dilemma:** While the pact strengthens the anti-Western bloc, it might reduce China's influence over North Korea, complicating regional politics.

## Topic- Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests

### The New Eurasian Geopolitics

**Context-** Recent events, including Russian President Vladimir Putin's visits to North Korea and Vietnam, along with the US presidential debate between Joe Biden and Donald Trump, underscore the deepening

interconnections between European and Asian security. These developments present new strategic opportunities for middle powers like India.

### **What are the four dimensions of the New "Eurasian" Geopolitics?**

#### **1) Asia's Active Role in European Geopolitics-**

A) Asian countries have now become influential in European geopolitics. Russia and Western Europe are actively seeking Asian support to influence the narrative on the Ukraine conflict. For ex- the Ukraine peace conference attempted to gain political and diplomatic support from non-Western countries to reverse the Russian occupation.

B) Asia's role as a major arms supplier in European conflicts is strengthening. For ex- North Korea is supplying ammunition to Russia, South Korea is supporting Ukraine, and Japan may increase missile production and relax export controls to contribute further.

**2) Emerging Asian Diplomatic Dynamics-** Major powers are trying to make relations with Asian nations stronger amidst current conflicts. For ex-

A) Vladimir Putin's recent trips to Pyongyang and Hanoi signal Russia's renewed involvement with North Korea. His treaty with North Korea seeks to enhance security cooperation, which could impact regional dynamics and pose challenges to Western interests.

B) Vietnam has hosted leaders like Biden, Xi Jinping, and Putin in recent past. This reflects its efforts to manage economic ties with both China and the US, while also seeking security cooperation with Russia to balance regional interests.

**3) Navigating Asia's Geopolitical Shifts-** Growing maneuverability among Asian nations complicates Western decision-making, highlighting a fault line in US foreign policy debates.

Historically, the US dominated both regions after World War II. However, the recent Russia-China alliance and their combined influence across Europe and Asia have compelled the US to rethink its primary challenges.

**4) Asia's Growing Role Amid Europe's Strategic Challenges –** Europe is hesitant in encountering China and enhancing its defense capabilities internally. Economic connections with China are also causing European leaders to hesitate in directly challenging Beijing. Whereas countries in Asia such as Australia, India, Japan, and South Korea are becoming more inclined to contribute significantly to regional security.

### **What are the opportunities for middle powers like India in this evolving landscape?**

1) Significant changes are happening as Europe and Asian are becoming more connected. This highlights the rise of middle powers like India and others whose influence is growing across Eurasia.

2) The United States is actively seeking strong security alliances with these middle powers to counterbalance the increasing influence of China and Russia. US has adopted a strategy called "integrated deterrence," that gives middle powers like India a unique opportunity to enhance their overall national strength, including military capabilities.

**Read more-** [Successes and challenges in the India-U.S. relationship](#)

**Way forward-** India's bureaucracy needs to act quickly to take advantage of current international opportunities to modernize its defense industry and expand domestic arms production rapidly. Achieving self-sufficiency in arms production is important for maintaining India's "strategic autonomy."

## Topic- Important International Institutions, agencies and fora - their Structure, Mandate.

### Significance of upcoming G7 summit

**News:** After the beginning of his 3<sup>rd</sup> term, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's first international trip will be to attend the G7 summit in Fasano, Italy. This visit is crucial for revitalizing India's relations with Western nations, particularly the US and Europe.

The G7 summit, celebrating its 50th anniversary, occurs amidst growing global tensions, particularly between the Western countries and the Sino-Russian alliance. Following the G7, Modi will also attend the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit in Kazakhstan to engage with Chinese and Russian leaders.

#### What is significance of upcoming global events like G7 for India?

- 1. Strengthening ties with west:** In the recent years, India has strengthened India's relationships with Western nations. The G7 summit provides an opportunity to further these ties amidst new global challenges.
  - 2. Electoral Validation:** Present government's re-election, with a reduced mandate, holds importance for Western democracies, alleviating some concerns about India's democratic trajectory.
  - 3. Enhanced Multilateral Engagement:** Active participation in forums like the G7 and SCO can help India address global issues such as climate change, trade, and security.
- Food and energy Security:** India will also have much interest in the discussion on food and energy security, a major item on the G7 agenda in Italy. In

#### What are the challenges and Opportunities for Indian Diplomacy

- 1. Navigating Global Tensions:** The G7 summit highlights the growing rift between Western countries and the Sino-Russian alliance, presenting diplomatic challenges for India. India must adeptly navigate these tensions to maintain its strategic interests.
- 2. Engagement with Adversaries:** PM Modi's participation in the SCO summit will involve direct engagement with Chinese and Russian leaders. Balancing these relationships while strengthening ties with the West is crucial.
- 3) Strategic Autonomy:** India needs to pursue a policy of strategic autonomy, maintaining independent relations with countries like Russia and China.

#### What should be done?

**Balancing Act:** India should strike a balance between relationships with competing global powers, avoiding over-reliance on any single bloc.

**Domestic Reforms and Global Image:** Addressing domestic concerns regarding democracy and human rights can enhance India's global standing and credibility.

## GS Paper 3

### Subject: Indian Economy

**Topic- Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.**

#### GST Data and Private Consumption

**Context-** The article highlights the strong performance of Goods and Services Tax (GST) collections in India, with net collections outpacing nominal GDP growth in the previous financial year (FY24). The highest-ever monthly GST collection of ₹2.1 trillion in April 2024 shows how GST data can provide insight about private consumption trends.

#### What is the significance of GST data in providing insights into private consumption trends?

- 1) GST is a consumption-based tax, accruing to the state where goods are consumed, rather than where they are produced. Thus, state-level GST data can indicate sub-national private consumption trends, which is beneficial because high-frequency data on private consumption is lacking in India.
- 2) Analyzing GST data from different states reveals consumption nuances and economic trends. This provides valuable information for both policymakers and businesses.
- 3) GST data can become a more real-time measure of consumption expenditure and provide data-led insights into the economy at both national and state levels.
- 4) GST data can yield valuable insights into consumption patterns, import contributions, and consumption of climate-sensitive items across states. This will help in enhancing understanding about the economy.
- 5) GST compensation cess data that is imposed on luxury and harmful goods can help in understanding the consumption trends associated with these products. For ex- Kerala had the smallest amount of compensation cess collected per person, while Chhattisgarh had the largest, mainly because of the state's significant use of tobacco and coal.

#### What is the correlation between GST data and private consumption?

- 1) There is a strong positive correlation between per capita GST collections and per capita incomes across states, indicating that richer states have a higher propensity to consume.
- 2) There is a positive relationship between the share of urban population and per capita GST collections, implying that urbanization propels private consumption.

#### Strategies for India's new government to boost economic growth

**Context:** The article discusses various strategies for India's new government to boost economic growth. It also suggests keeping in mind the rapidly changing global backdrop while taking these steps.

For detailed information on **India's economic outlook and strategies** [read this article here](#)

#### What steps should be taken by the new government to boost economic growth?

1. **Address Disguised Employment in Agriculture:** Shift workforce to industries or services to reduce underemployment in agriculture.
2. **Reduce Manufacturing Costs:** Use increased PSU market cap for strategic divestments to absorb subsidies in power and logistics, enhancing manufacturing competitiveness.
3. **Boost Consumption:** Implement a gold monetization scheme to bring hidden gold into the mainstream economy, thus boosting liquidity and consumer spending.
4. **Develop Agriculture:** Expand successful cooperative models like Amul to other commodities and increase exports, as seen with the Netherlands' success in agri-products.
5. **Promote Free Labor Movement:** Include labor movement clauses in Free Trade Agreements to enhance remittances and support Indian workers abroad.
6. **Enhance Skills:** Establish institutions like the plumbing institute in Odisha to supply skilled labor both domestically and internationally.
7. **Expand Manufacturing through PLI Schemes:** Focus on sectors like garments, automobiles, and jewelry to create jobs and increase exports.
8. **Support Services Sectors:** Develop tourism, education, and healthcare through integrated approaches and engage the diaspora as brand ambassadors.
9. **Unlock Investment in Infrastructure:** Improve judicial infrastructure and streamline land acquisition and labor laws to attract more investment.
10. **Enhance Judicial Infrastructure:** Reduce case backlogs and improve the rule of law to attract more investment.
11. **Simplify Doing Business:** Implement reforms in land acquisition and labor laws and create special economic zones.
12. **Foster Technology Investment:** Quickly operationalize funds for future technologies like artificial intelligence and pharmaceutical research.
13. **Advocate for Environmental Compensation:** Pursue international compensation for India's low per capita carbon emissions compared to historical contributions.
14. **Implement Responsible Mining Policies:** Balance local interests and industrial needs, especially in states like Odisha.
15. **Improve Education and Healthcare:** Utilize technology and public-private partnerships to enhance service quality and accessibility.
16. **Educate Investors:** Increase financial literacy to prevent poor investment choices like cryptos and Ponzi schemes.
17. **Promote Sustainable Practices:** Leverage green energy and push for global cooperation on environmental issues.

For detailed information on **the new government in India needs to focus on Indian economy** [read this article here](#)

### The Employment Crisis in India

**Context-** The article highlights the issue of unemployment in India. As per Periodic Labour Force Surveys, India has one of the lowest employment rates globally, with only 30.5% of people above the age of 15 years receiving remuneration for their work in 2022-23. Among men, the ratio was 48.1%, while shockingly, it was only 13% for women, one of the lowest employment rates for women worldwide.

**What is the impact of this rising unemployment?**



- 1) In a rapidly expanding economy with growing inequality, this situation is a crisis. It's a significant issue in a nation where many people still lack adequate living conditions, and the development efforts are incomplete.
- 2) It is also becoming a socio-political problem due to an aspirational younger generation being denied opportunities to live up to its potential.

### **What approach has the government adopted to deal with the issue of unemployment?**

The government's approach was to incentivize big business in the hope that it would result in more private investment, boosting the real economy and creating employment through a "trickle-down" effect.

### **What is the impact of this approach?**

- 1) Employment hasn't grown, and real wages haven't gone up in the past decade.
- 2) According to the 2024 India Employment Report by the ILO, certain workers, such as those in construction and regular employment, have experienced declines in their wages.
- 3) The majority of employment positions are informal, with more than 90% of workers not receiving the advantages of formal legal and social safeguards. Additionally, over half of the workforce are self-employed, earning modest incomes.
- 4) Women are particularly disadvantaged, whether they're paid or unpaid workers or self-employed.

Read more- [Employment status in India](#)

### **What are immediate measures for employment generation?**

- 1) There are about 1 million job openings in the central government and likely many more in state governments combined. Filling these vacancies would not only increase employment but also enhance public services in areas like health, education, and sanitation, improving everyone's quality of life.
- 2) Regularizing millions of women working in essential public service delivery schemes would benefit them and provide a fillip to domestic demand.
- 3) Greater emphasis on public spending for care activities would have positive multiplier effects on demand and employment.
- 4) Reviving the rural employment scheme by clearing arrears, ensuring proper funding, and avoiding partisan approaches that have denied resources to states ruled by Opposition parties.
- 5) Implementing an urban employment guarantee scheme with components for urban rejuvenation, skill training, and apprenticeships.

### **What are the medium-term measures?**

- 1) There is a need to develop a package to revive and strengthen micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs), including access to credit, technology, inputs, and marketing, and providing incentives like those for large firms.
- 2) There is a need to focus on agriculture by ensuring viable cultivation through policies like legal MSP, public investment in relevant technologies, access to water and inputs, post-harvest storage and processing etc.
- 3) The government should consider the influence of increasing temperatures and climate change in all policy decisions.

## Concerns with RBI's Draft Guidelines on infrastructure financing

**Context-** The article discusses the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) draft provisions for infrastructure lending, which have caused a stir in the infrastructure financing world.

It is important to recognize that infrastructure investments have been and will continue to be the main driver for economic growth. This underlines the significance of striking the right balance in regulating infrastructure financing.

### What are RBI's recent draft guidelines?

- 1) Banks must set aside 5% of the loan value as provisions for infrastructure and commercial real estate projects that are under construction. This is significantly higher than the current rates, which range from 0.4% to 1% depending on the project type.
- 2) Banks are mandated to classify loans as "non-performing" if projects exceed a six-month delay of completion from the original deadline.

### What is the rationale behind the introduction of draft guidelines by RBI?

- 1) The RBI aims to tighten the prudential framework for project financing to address concerns over non-performing assets (NPAs) due to defaults on infrastructure projects.
- 2) Furthermore, "Twin Balance Sheet Problem," affect both banks and companies, posed a big challenge to India's banks. Thus, RBI does not want to repeat it.

Read more- [Status of Non-Performing Assets](#)

### What are the concerns associated with these guidelines?

- 1) The National Highways Authority of India and the National Highways Builders Federation are concerned about the potential financial burden of the RBI's proposals.
- 2) Bankers fear that the proposed 5 percent provisioning rule may raise interest rates and discourage lending.
- 3) Developers are concerned about funding sustainability, expecting a ripple effect throughout the sector due to increased provisioning requirements during both construction and operational phases of projects.
- 4) The blanket six-month moratorium on all projects is drawing criticism for its extremely stringent stance. This heavy-handed approach may hamper infrastructure investment growth.
- 5) A senior official from a public sector bank disagreed with the necessity of updated provisioning rules, stating that since the government is the primary partner in most projects, a single approach to project financing isn't suitable.

Read more- [RBI, inflation targeting, and the limits of monetary policy](#)

### What should be the way forward?

Finance Minister has emphasized the importance of thorough discussion and consideration of all viewpoints before deciding on the draft guidelines.

- 1) A more tailored approach would be preferable over general tightening of provisioning norms to balance financial health and sustainable growth.
- 2) The RBI needs to carefully balance protecting the banking system's financial health with promoting an environment that supports long-term growth.

## Repo Rate Kept Unchanged

**Context-**The article discusses reasons behind the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) decision to keep the benchmark repo rate unchanged for the eighth consecutive time during its latest bi-monthly monetary policy review.

### What is a Repo Rate?

**Definition-**The repo rate is the interest rate at which the RBI lends money to commercial banks.

**Impact-**A) A lower repo rate incentivizes economic activity by making it cheaper for banks to borrow from the RBI and lend to customers.

B) A higher repo rate disincentivizes economic activity by making it costlier for everyone in the economy to borrow money. Movements in the repo rate have a significant impact on the EMIs (Equated Monthly Installments) paid for car, home, or business loans.

### What is the goal of RBI's monetary policy?

1) **Price Stability-**The primary goal of RBI's monetary policy is to maintain price stability in the economy by targeting an inflation rate of 4%. This goal is mandated by the law.

2) **Promote Economic Growth-**When the economy needs a lift, such as after the COVID pandemic, the RBI lowers the repo rate. This makes borrowing money easier for both consumers and producers, encouraging spending.

Conversely, when inflation rises significantly above 4%, like during the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the RBI raises the repo rate to lessen the demand for borrowing money, thus reducing excessive spending fueled by credit.

Read more- [Monetary Policy – Basics Simplified](#)

### What are the reasons for not cutting interest rates?

Despite the retail inflation rate coming closer to the 4% target and staying within the RBI's comfort zone of 2-6% since September 2023, the RBI has not changed the repo rate since February 2023. The reasons for this are:

1) **Sticky Inflation-** While the inflation rate has dropped, it hasn't reached 4% since January 2021, and the decline has been slow. The RBI is concerned about this persistent inflation, which stayed around 5% in the first four months of 2024.

2) **Commitment to Durable Inflation Targeting-** The RBI wants to keep inflation around 4% consistently and doesn't reduce rates immediately when inflation falls below this target for just one month. The RBI believes that any future drop in inflation below 4% will only be temporary.

3) **Strong Economic Growth-** India's GDP growth rate has been unexpectedly strong recently, leading the RBI to raise its forecast for the current financial year from 7% to 7.2%. With this strong economic growth, it's unlikely that the repo rate is hindering India's economic activity.

4) **Fiscal Deficit Concerns-** The RBI's choice might be affected by the upcoming Union Budget and how much the government plans to borrow from the market. This borrowing could impact inflation or interest rates.

## The risks associated with this rapid credit expansion

**Context:** The article discusses how rapid growth in lending in India is leading to financial instability. It warns that excessive borrowing, particularly by households, is creating a risky economic situation that could lead to a financial crisis similar to those experienced in other countries.

For detailed information on **Issues with credit system in India** [read this article here](#)

### What is the current state of credit growth in India?

1. India is experiencing rapid credit growth, particularly in the household sector, which is rising at an annual rate of 25% to 30%.
2. In 2023, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) praised India's financial sector for robust bank lending and low non-performing assets.
3. A review by the National Council of Applied Economic Research in March 2024 noted a 20% increase in bank lending from the previous year, with a significant rise in personal loans.
4. The surge in lending is primarily directed towards consumer spending rather than productive investments, contributing to economic vulnerabilities.

### What are the risks associated with this rapid credit expansion?

1. **Financial Instability:** Rapid credit growth historically leads to financial crises. Previous booms ended when new loans couldn't cover old debts.
2. **Unsecured Borrowing:** Almost a quarter of household loans are unsecured, increasing financial system stress. Credit card debt surged from 20 million cards in 2011 to 100 million in 2024.
3. **Economic Contraction:** High debt burdens reduce household spending, leading to economic slowdown. Indian households' debt-service-to-income ratio is 12%, one of the highest globally.
4. **Inefficient Lending:** Financial institutions focus on consumer loans instead of productive investments. This can lead to economic downturns when consumer spending slows.
5. **Job Shortage:** The ongoing job crisis will worsen, pushing more people back to agriculture, reflecting deeper economic regression and increasing inequality.

### What should be done?

1. **Improve financial regulation:** Strengthening oversight is necessary to prevent rogue behavior among financial institutions. The rise in unsecured loans, approaching a quarter of household loans, indicates a poorly regulated financial sector. Fintech companies have led the charge in offering high-interest loans to households, contributing to financial stress.
2. **Weaken the rupee:** A weaker exchange rate can boost exports, helping to cushion the economic downturn. Historical data shows that rapid credit growth and an overvalued exchange rate are a lethal combination.
3. **Focus on job creation:** Address the deep-rooted jobs deficit to ensure sustainable economic growth. Current policies have led to more workers returning to agriculture, highlighting the urgent need for job-rich growth.

### How India should review and improve its trade policies to boost exports

**Context:** The article discusses how India should review and improve its trade policies to boost exports. It highlights the need to reduce high tariffs, join trade agreements, invest in human capital, and diversify export destinations to achieve sustainable growth and competitiveness.

For detailed information on **Boost to India's Export** [read this article here](#)

### What is the Current State of India's Trade?

- 1. Global Share:** India's contribution to global merchandise exports was only 1.8% in 2023.
- 2. Comparison with Other Countries:** This is significantly lower than the shares of the US and China, which stood at 8.5% and 14.2% respectively.
- 3. Export Decline:** In the fiscal year 2023-24, India's merchandise exports witnessed a decrease of 3.09%.
- 4. Services Sector:** India is the seventh-largest exporter of services globally, showing resilience amid global economic fluctuations. Despite strengths, the growth rate of services exports fell to a three-year low of 4.9% in 2023-24.

### Why Is Trade Important for India's Growth?

- 1. Boosts Aggregate Demand:** International trade drives aggregate demand, essential for rapid growth.
- 2. Reduces Dependence on Foreign Savings:** Higher exports decrease reliance on foreign savings.
- 3. Job Creation:** Expanding exports generates jobs for India's growing workforce.

### What Are the Current Challenges in India's Trade Policy?

- 1. High Tariffs:** High tariffs reduce the competitiveness of domestic manufacturers, especially affecting small and medium enterprises.
- 2. Lack of Major Trade Agreements:** India is not part of significant trade agreements like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), limiting its integration into global value chains.
- 3. Dependence on Chinese Imports:** Despite avoiding RCEP, India has not reduced its reliance on Chinese imports.
- 4. Regulatory Challenges:** New measures like the European Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism could restrict Indian exports further.

### What should be done?

- 1. Address Climate Concerns:** Prepare for regulations like the European Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism to avoid restrictions on exports.
- 2. Invest in Human Capital:** Services exports rely on skilled workers. Significant investment in education, training, and research is needed. India saw a 60% increase in global capability centers from 2015-16 to 2022-23.
- 3. Diversify Export Destinations:** Reduce reliance on the US and Canada, which account for over half of India's services exports, to mitigate economic risks.

## High food price despite slight decrease in inflation

**Context:** The article discusses how food prices in India, especially for vegetables and pulses, remained high last month despite a slight overall decrease in inflation. Prices for items like tomatoes, onions, and potatoes increased significantly both at retail and wholesale levels.

For detailed information on **Inflation in India- Reasons and Solutions** [read this article here](#)

### What Is the Current Status of Retail Inflation?

Retail inflation eased to a 12-month low of 4.75% in May.  
Food price inflation remains high at 8.69%, driven by vegetables and pulses.



## 9 PM Compilation June 2024

Vegetable inflation stayed above 27% for six months, reaching 27.3% in May. Prices for tomatoes, onions, and potatoes increased by 1.5%, 0.5%, and 15.1% respectively. Cereal prices rose, with rice up 13%, wheat 5.7%, and wheat flour 4.7% year-on-year. Pulse prices, including gram dal, tur, urad, and moong, increased by 17%, 27%, 13%, and 8.5% respectively.

### What are the concerns related to inflation in India?

- 1. Urban Areas Hit Harder:** Urban consumers are experiencing higher food inflation, with a recent high of 8.83% in cities and towns.
- 2. Impact of Weather on Prices:** The India Meteorological Department noted a rainfall deficit of 12% since the start of June, which could influence future food prices, despite predictions of an 'above normal' monsoon.

## Indias Expenditure Path

**Context-**The article discusses the fiscal policy challenges facing the new government in India. It highlights the importance of stabilizing the public debt-to-GDP ratio for achieving rapid economic growth with macroeconomic stability.

The pandemic led to a massive increase in public debt across major economies, including India, where the ratio shot up by over 13 percentage points in 2020-21 to 88.4%. Although it has gradually declined to 82.2% in 2023-24, it is still higher than the ideal level for India.

### What factors contributed to the recent decrease in India's public debt ratio?

It was driven by favorable dynamics such as higher nominal GDP growth compared to government borrowing costs and a reduction in the primary fiscal deficit. This is because economic conditions have improved post-pandemic.

### What is the importance of monitoring fiscal deficit for Indian economy?

The fiscal deficit is closely monitored because it impacts various economic factors, including aggregate demand and interest rates. It plays an important role in influencing conditions for businesses, home buyers, job seekers, bond traders, and other economic agents.

### What are the challenges that India face in its fiscal policy?

- 1) India's Urgent Spending Priorities-** India faces pressures to increase military spending amidst geopolitical tensions, invest in a green transition to mitigate climate impacts, and enhance spending on public goods and services.
- 2) Electoral Pressure for Increased Spending-** It is important to understand that the 2024 election results could pressure the government to increase spending to please the electorate. This is because there are not enough quality jobs.
- 3) Fiscal Federalism-** Fiscal policy, including the concept of fiscal federalism, has transformed into a competitive bargaining process involving diverse interest groups, ministries, and levels of government.
- 4) Minimal Tax Liabilities -** More people are filing income tax returns, and more firms are covered by GST, showing that the tax base is expanding. However, many individuals still report no tax liabilities.

**Read more-** [Five Years of GST: Achievements, Challenges and Way Ahead](#)

### What should be the way forward?

1) **Tax Reforms**- Tax reforms are necessary to boost the tax-to-GDP ratio, which has stayed relatively stable in India despite economic shifts. The recommendation includes keeping direct tax rates low, steady, and predictable, while simplifying the GST structure and aiming for a higher average rate.

2) **Fiscal Consolidation**- There is a need to create fiscal space by reducing unnecessary spending and increasing revenue.

3) **Capitalizing on Economic Advancement** - India's expected transition from a lower-middle-income to an upper-middle-income country by the World Bank's definition by the end of this decade highlights an opportunity. Upper-middle-income economies generally collect more tax revenue per unit of economic output compared to lower-middle-income countries. This transition presents India with a chance to increase its tax-to-GDP ratio as incomes rise.

### Importance of Foreign Trade for India's Economy

**Context**- India's foreign trade, amounting to \$1.63 trillion in the fiscal year 2023-24, accounted for 41% of its Gross Domestic Product (GDP), highlights its important role in the country's economy and employment generation. The article discusses both challenges and recommendations aimed at enhancing India's exports.

#### What are the issues with India's export?

1) **Decline in labor-intensive exports**- Exports from labor-intensive sectors such as garments, textiles, leather products, footwear, diamonds, and gold jewelry were lower in 2023 than in 2015. Bangladesh and Vietnam have surpassed India in these sectors by adopting strategies such as using imported fabric for garment manufacturing.

2) **Lack of diversification in service exports**- Seventy-five percent of India's service export earnings come from two sectors: software & IT and business services. In contrast, India holds a smaller global share (1.9%) in other service sectors such as transport, travel, maintenance and repair, insurance, financial services, and intellectual property use.

3) **Overdependence on imports from China**- China accounts for around 30% of India's imports in industrial products like telecom equipment, electronics, chemicals, and pharmaceuticals. This has resulted in a large trade deficit with China, exceeding \$387 billion cumulatively over six years from 2019 to 2024.

4) **Impact of inverted duty structure and FTAs**- Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) have created an inverted duty structure where import duties on finished goods are lower than those on raw materials. This hampers local manufacturing efforts.

**Read more-** [India's New Foreign Trade Policy \(FTP\) and its significance – Explained, pointwise](#)

5) **Quality concerns and export rejections**- Indian exports, especially food and agricultural products, encounter rejections from markets such as the EU and US. This is due to issues like surpassing maximum residue limits (MRLs) for pesticides and other quality-related problems.

6) **European climate regulations**- Regulations such as the EU's deforestation rules, carbon border adjustment measures (CBAM), foreign subsidies regulation, and German Supply Chain Due Diligence Act may harm India's exports to the EU and create uncertainty.

#### What should be the way forward?

1) **Reviving Labour-intensive Exports**- These sectors such as garments, textiles, leather products, footwear generate more jobs per unit of investment compared to others. It is important to conduct a genuine assessment of the sector rather than relying on consultants' reports that offer optimistic projections far into

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the future.

2) **Diversifying Service Exports**- India needs to enhance its share in other services like transport, travel, maintenance and repair, insurance, financial services, and intellectual property to achieve a stable service export performance.

3) **Reducing Dependence on China**- The US, EU, and Australia are implementing measures to decrease imports from China. India must conduct a strategic review, diversify its sources of imports, and strengthen its domestic production capabilities in response.

#### 4) **Addressing Issues with Free Trade Agreements**-

A) The rise in FTAs has made things more complex by enabling zero-duty imports on many industrial products. This encourages imports over local purchases. The government should ensure that FTAs do not worsen the inverted duty structure.

B) The government should publish data on the performance of India's 14 comprehensive FTAs and six preferential trade agreements to assess their effectiveness and aid ongoing trade negotiations.

5) **Countering European Climate Regulations** - India should develop a strategy to respond to EU regulations and possibly reduce imports from the EU in an equal measure.

6) **Improving Quality Systems**-To address concerns raised by Hong Kong, Singapore, and the United States regarding the quality of spices from leading Indian brands, India should align its quality standards with international norms, expand farm-to-fork blockchain tracing for major exports, issue quality control orders in consultation with industry, and establish mutual recognition agreements with key export partners.

7) **Ease of Doing Business**- Improving the government-business interface to focus more on businesses, setting up a user-friendly online National Trade Network for compliance, investing in modern ports, efficient logistics, and digital systems can make doing business easier and increase exports.

8) **Other Export Promotion Measures**-The government should promote export of high-value goods to current markets, assist small businesses in expanding globally, enhance their access to finance, encourage e-commerce exports, and reduce non-tariff barriers in critical markets.

### **Impacts of the USA decoupling its economy**

**Context:** The article discusses the new tariffs imposed by President Biden on Chinese imports, emphasizing their political rather than economic motivations. It highlights the potential long-term global economic impacts, including increased protectionism, delayed green transitions, and challenges for various economies dependent on China.

For detailed information on **protectionism** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#), [Article 3](#)

#### **Why is the USA decoupling its economy?**

**1. Political motivations:** The tariffs reflect political goals, like supporting domestic unions and industries, rather than economic benefits, indicating a shift towards protectionism.

**2. Economic independence:** By increasing tariffs, the USA aims to grow independent, particularly in sectors like healthcare, where China has been a primary equipment supplier, nearly \$640 million worth in 2023.

**2. Geopolitical rivalry:** The decoupling also stems from geopolitical tensions and the belief that economic interdependence is not mutually beneficial, which could lead to China weaponizing economic dependencies.

#### **What are the impacts of the USA decoupling its economy?**

- 1. Increase in Consumer Costs:** The tariffs on Chinese goods, like medical devices, lead to higher prices for U.S. consumers. For example, China supplies \$640 million in medical equipment to the U.S.
- 2. Impact on Green Transition:** New import restrictions on Chinese clean energy products could slow down global green transition goals.
- 3. Global Economic Risks:** Protectionist measures could exacerbate economic slowdowns. For instance, China's slowing growth impacts countries like Australia and Brazil, potentially lowering iron-ore prices due to reduced Chinese demand.
- 3. Challenge to Global Trade Norms:** The U.S. distancing from the World Trade Organization (WTO) norms threatens the global trade system, paralyzing dispute resolution mechanisms by blocking appointments to the WTO Appellate Body.

### How will the USA decoupling of its economy impact India?

- 1. Impact on India's Manufacturing:** The U.S. decoupling from China could benefit India as companies look for alternative manufacturing locations. However, India's manufacturing sector is still developing and faces competition from Southeast Asian nations.
- 2. Consumer Market Opportunities:** With its large consumer base, India might attract businesses shifting away from China, though gaining a significant global market share will take time.
- 3. Economic Challenges:** Despite potential benefits, India's economic ties with China are deep. India imports significant amounts of goods from China, making decoupling a complex process that could disrupt existing trade and economic relations.

## 7 Years of GST

**Context-** The article discusses the performance of GST since its inception. GST has proven to be a game-changer for India's digital economy. It has moved the country closer to the vision of "one nation, one tax." This tech-driven tax system, supported by automation adopted by both government and businesses, has shown significant benefits.

### What have been the achievements of GST in the last 7 years?

- 1) Digital Infrastructure-** The effectiveness of GST relied on a strong compliance framework, made possible by the GST Network (GSTN), which simplified the processes of registration, tax payments, and filing returns for taxpayers.
- 2) Enhanced Compliance-** GSTN has made compliance easier for businesses and tax authorities, equipping them with data analytics to detect and prevent tax evasion. Automation of tasks such as e-waybills, e-invoicing, and monthly returns has transformed tax compliance, setting an example for other countries to adopt similar practices.
- 3) Benefits for MSMEs -**
  - A) MSMEs have greatly benefited from the simplified GST system. Measures like quarterly returns and relaxed GSTR-9C requirements have encouraged MSMEs to register under GST, leading to an increase in the taxpayer base.
  - B) GST has facilitated improved access to credit for MSMEs, which has accelerated their growth.
- 4) Unified Market and Competitiveness-**
  - A) GST has introduced a unified system, established a common market, and eliminated tax cascading. This has enhanced the competitiveness of Indian businesses in both domestic and global markets.



B) GST has removed entry taxes and checkpoints at state borders. This has ensured smooth movement of goods, faster transit times, and reduced logistics costs for businesses.

**What are the challenges in its implementation?**

- 1) There are concerns related to some sectors that deal with an inverted duty structure.
- 2) Petroleum products have not been kept under the GST regime.
- 3) The GST law is still evolving, leading to disputes on various issues due to unfamiliarity and divergent positions

**What should be the way forward?**

- 1) **Establishing a National Advance Ruling Authority**-A National Advance Ruling Authority could ensure uniform interpretation of the law across the country, reducing uncertainty for businesses and minimizing disputes.
- 2) **Dispute Resolution**- A functional Goods and Services Tax Appellate Tribunal (GSTAT) could reduce the burden on High Courts. This can lead to faster and more efficient dispute resolution for businesses.

**Read more-** [Five Years of GST: Achievements, Challenges and Way Ahead](#)

- 3) **Clarifying GST Complexities** -Reintroducing FAQs tailored to specific sectors could offer clear guidance on the intricate details and complexities of GST.
- 4) **Integration of Petroleum Products into GST** -Including petroleum products in the GST system could ensure smooth input tax credit (ITC) flow across the supply chain. This will benefit both businesses and the overall economy.
- 5) **Rate Rationalization and Simplification**- Rate rationalization, simplification of the multi-tier rate system, and an amnesty scheme for regularizing initial period transactions could further improve the GST system.

**The changing role of the Global South in the global economy**

**Context:** This article discusses the changing role of the Global South in the global economy. It highlights the need for better financial support, digital infrastructure, and climate financing to boost growth. It also suggests reforms in the global financial system to address these challenges.

For detailed information on **India and Global South** [read this article here](#)

**What is the Current Economic Outlook?**

1. The current global economic growth forecast by the World Bank and IMF is steady at around 3 percent.
2. This growth rate is the lowest in decades.
3. The forecasts indicate that nearly three-fourths of global growth in the next two to three decades will originate from middle- and low-income countries, particularly from Asia.

**How Have Recent Global Events Affected Growth?**

1. **Globalization and Social Safety Nets:** As globalization deepened, social safety nets did not keep pace, impacting social cohesion and support for multilateral systems.
2. **Pandemic Impact:** COVID-19 disrupted markets, trade, and supply chains, stalling global growth. This was



a major setback from the usual expansion beneficial to global growth.

**3. Geopolitical Tensions:** The war in Ukraine and rising strategic competitions have led to policy-driven fragmentation, worsening global cooperation and economic stability.

### What Challenges Does the Global South Face?

**1. High Capital Costs and Short Tenures:** The Global South struggles because it attracts capital at prohibitive rates and for short durations, making sustainable financing a key barrier to growth.

**2. Inadequate Financial Systems:** The current international financial architecture is described as ill-suited to support the growth potential of the Global South, emphasizing the need for change.

**3. Vulnerability to Global Headwinds:** The Global South is most affected by various global challenges such as climate change, cost of living crises, and unmet Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which impact its economic stability more severely than more developed regions.

**4. Technological Disparities:** Countries lacking digital public infrastructure (DPI) struggled during the pandemic, while those with effective DPI could provide emergency services, highlighting the need for digital transformation to support growth and resilience.

### What should be done?

To support global growth, three key actions are needed.

**First,** improve climate financing by leveraging public and multilateral resources and focusing on capital markets. For example, only 1% of publicly listed companies are responsible for 40% of greenhouse gas emissions.

**Second,** enhance liquidity provisions for Global South. Strengthening the IMF can help provide significant liquidity beyond current levels, addressing the lack of US dollar swap lines for countries like India and Indonesia.

**Third,** develop a global digital public infrastructure. Effective DPIs can support emergency responses, health, education, and commerce, as shown during the pandemic.

These measures will address current challenges and promote sustainable growth in the Global South and beyond.

## India's Rank on the Global Gender Gap Index 2024

**Context:** The article discusses India's ranking on the Global Gender Gap Index, highlighting improvements and persistent gender gaps in health, education, economic participation, and political empowerment. It stresses the need to mainstream gender equality into economic policies for better outcomes.

For detailed information on **Global Gender Gap Index 2024** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

### What Does the Global Gender Gap Index Measure?

1. The Global Gender Gap Index was introduced in 2006.
2. It measures gender gaps in four areas: economic participation, educational attainment, health and survival, and political empowerment.
3. The index ranges from 0 to 1, with 1 indicating complete parity.

### What is India's Rank on the Global Gender Gap Index 2024?

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1. In 2024, India is ranked 129th out of 146 countries on the Global Gender Gap Index. This position places India 18th from the bottom. In 2021, India was 17th from the bottom out of 156 countries.
2. India's "Health and Survival Score" is 0.951, meaning 95.1% of the gender gap is closed.
3. In educational attainment, 96.4% of the gap is closed. Despite these scores, India ranks 112th in education and 142nd in health among 146 countries.
4. India scores 39.8% in economic participation, ranking 142nd among 146 countries.
5. India has closed 25.1% of the gender gap in political participation, ranking 65th globally. This rank has worsened from 51 in 2021.
6. South Asia ranks 7th out of eight regions globally. India ranks 5th within South Asia, with Bangladesh leading the region at 99th globally.

### What Are the Economic Costs of Gender Inequality?

1. Gender-based discrimination could cost the global economy up to \$12 trillion, according to the OECD.
2. Reducing gender discrimination can increase GDP growth.
3. Gender equality should be part of economic policy making, not an afterthought. Equality in the economic sphere requires society to treat women as independent and capable adults. Women should be free to make choices and included as equals in decision-making at all levels.

### Reasons for the rural-urban inflation gap

**Context:** The article discusses the issue of high inflation rates in rural India compared to urban areas. It explains that the differences in energy usage and access to LPG gas, as well as economic shifts like rural-urban migration and changes in industrial output, contribute to this inflation gap. The article also mentions how these inflation trends affect the Reserve Bank of India's monetary policies.

For detailed information on **Inflation In India** [read this article here](#)

### What are the reasons for the rural-urban inflation gap?

- 1. Diverse Energy Sources:** Rural areas use a variety of unregulated, locally available fuels such as coal, coke, charcoal, firewood, and dung cakes, unlike urban areas that primarily rely on electricity and LPG. This has resulted in rural 'fuel and light' inflation averaging 7.5 percentage points above urban inflation over the last three months.
- 2. Limited Access to LPG:** As of 2020-21, less than half of all rural households had access to LPG, compared to over 90% in urban areas. Despite government efforts to increase LPG use through price cuts, high global energy prices in 2022 reduced LPG consumption, forcing rural households to revert to cheaper, traditional fuels.
- 3. Impact of Migration Trends:** The pandemic triggered a significant urban-to-rural migration, which has not fully reversed. This has increased demand in rural areas, straining local supply chains and pushing up prices on items like vegetables and cereals.
- 4. Economic Shifts:** Slow recovery in sectors like textiles, garments, tobacco, and leather, which typically account for about 15% of manufacturing and employ one-third of India's industrial workforce, has affected rural areas significantly as these sectors have not yet reached pre-pandemic output levels. This slow recovery, combined with high migration rates from rural to urban areas, affects wage levels and spending patterns, influencing inflation rates.

## Need to Revive Manufacturing Sector in India

**Context-**The article highlights the need to revive the manufacturing sector. It suggests that the government must align policies to augment domestic investment, improve domestic value addition and export competitiveness.

The manufacturing sector's contribution to GDP stood at 16.1% in 2014-15 at current prices but declined by three percentage points to 13.1% by 2022-23. At constant prices, it marginally decreased to 15.6%.

Policymakers believed that excessive capital and labor regulations deterred investors from establishing businesses. They aimed to reduce this "regulatory cholesterol" by aligning regulations with global standards like the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business Index (EDBI).

### What are the challenges faced by India's Manufacturing Sector?

- 1) Negative Impact of EDBI Improvements on Investments** - Improvements in EDBI rankings did not lead to increased investments anywhere. On the contrary, it has only benefitted employers who have got the opportunity of self-certification for some mandatory compliance by compromising the interest of workers.
- 2) Limited Value Addition**-There was a reported increase in production and exports of mobile phones due to the introduction of Production Linked Incentive Scheme.However,it has mainly led to a shift from importing finished goods to importing their basic components that resulted in minimal domestic value addition.
- 3) Disparity Between GVA and GDP Growth**- From 2014 to 2022, the industrial growth rate, as measured by gross value added (GVA), averaged a modest 3% annually according to credible estimates from the Annual Survey of Industries. This is significantly lower compared to the GDP growth rate of 6-7% over the same period.
- 4) Inability to Increase Fixed Investment**- Government policies have not succeeded in raising the overall rate of fixed investment (gross fixed capital formation), which stands at approximately 30% of GDP at current prices, according to national accounts data. Investment has increasingly favored services, especially in telecommunications and infrastructure, while the manufacturing sector's share has remained stagnant at 18% or slightly decreased.
- 5) Industrial Investment and Manufacturing Sector Performance** -The actual lack of industrial investment is more severe than indicated by national account figures. Recent discussions on GDP estimates have emphasized that the performance of the manufacturing sector was overstated in the current National Accounts Statistics (NAS).
- 6) Discrepancies Between NAS and ASI Data** -Comparing NAS and Annual Survey of Industries (ASI) data up to 2021-22 reveals large discrepancies. According to NAS, gross fixed capital formation (GFCF) and net fixed capital formation (NFCF) grew annually by 5.3% and 6.9%, respectively, from 2014-15 to 2021-22 at constant prices. In contrast, ASI estimates indicate declines of -1.6% and -9.6% per year over the same period.
- 7) Stagnant Net Fixed Investment** -Since 2014-15, there has been minimal growth in the net fixed investment rate, leading to stagnation in manufacturing capacity.

**Read more-** [Semiconductor manufacturing in India: significance and challenges](#)

### What should be the way forward?

- 1) Need for a Well-designed Industrial Policy-**

- A) Address the lack of net investment growth in manufacturing
- B) Prioritize productive investment over speculative property development
- C) Align trade and industrial policies to augment domestic investment

2) **Improve domestic value addition and export competitiveness-**

- A) Support for Small Industries
  - B) Implement localized, context-specific, and "last-mile" interventions
  - C) Focus on boosting productive employment in small industries
- 3) **Statistical Improvements**-There is an urgent need for the National Statistical Office to correct shortcomings in GDP estimation.

### Issues with India's FTA

**Context:** The article discusses India's need to reform its FTA strategy. It suggests focusing on deep trade agreements to integrate with global value chains. This involves reducing tariffs, improving manufacturing competitiveness, and negotiating investment, intellectual property, and environmental standards. The "Chintan Shivir" initiative, organized by the Ministry of Commerce, aims to address these issues by developing new strategies and standard operating procedures for future FTA negotiations.

For detailed information on **India's Foreign Trade Agreements (FTAs)** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

#### What is deep FTA?

1. Deep FTA covers extensive regulatory policy issues including the liberalization of investment, protection of intellectual property rights, and environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues.
2. These agreements extend beyond commitments made at the World Trade Organization and often include aspects not covered by the WTO, which helps anchor domestic producers in global value chains (GVCs).

#### What are the various Provisions in FTAs?

- 1. Tariff Reductions:** FTAs typically include substantial reductions or complete elimination of tariffs on traded goods between member countries to promote bilateral trade.
- 2. Intellectual Property Rights (IPR):** Deep FTAs often enhance protection beyond WTO commitments, safeguarding innovations and creative outputs which are crucial for competitive edges in global markets.
- 3. Investment Liberalization:** These provisions facilitate foreign direct investment by providing a clearer and more secure legal framework for investors, essential for integrating into global value chains.
- 4. Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) Standards:** FTAs increasingly include ESG issues, addressing sustainability and ethical practices within trade agreements to ensure comprehensive regulatory alignment.
- 5. Service Sector Liberalization:** Many FTAs also focus on liberalizing trade in services, expanding market access for service providers in partner countries.

#### What Are the Current Issues with FTA?

- 1. Negotiation Delays:** India's FTA negotiations with the European Union and the UK have faced repeated delays, showing inefficiencies.



**2. High Tariffs and Trade Deficits:** India's high MFN tariffs, especially in manufacturing, create significant preferential margins (10-15%) in FTAs, leading to trade deficits favoring partner countries.

**3. Skepticism in Negotiations:** Past experiences of increased trade deficits with FTA partners have led to a skeptical approach, affecting deeper engagements.

**4. Lack of Deep Provisions:** India struggles to negotiate deep provisions like investment liberalization and ESG issues, limiting the effectiveness of its FTAs, as seen with the Australia-India agreement lacking an investment chapter.

#### What should be done?

**1. Focus on Deep FTAs:** India should prioritize deep FTAs that integrate regulatory policies, ensuring alignment with global value chains and enhancing export competitiveness.

**2. Reduce MFN Tariffs:** Aligning India's MFN tariffs closer to the global average of 0-5% can reduce preferential margins and balance bilateral trade.

**3. Calibrate Preferential Tariffs:** India should strategically set preferential tariffs in FTAs to benefit sectors that are dynamic in global value chains.

**4. Address Non-Trade Issues:** Negotiating deeper provisions like investment liberalization and ESG standards is essential, moving away from viewing these areas as non-trade issues to remain competitive globally.

### Issues with India's capital gains tax regime

**Context:** The article discusses the need to simplify India's capital gains tax. It highlights the inconsistencies in tax rates across different asset classes and calls for a uniform, fair, and straightforward system to make investment planning easier and stimulate more investments.

For detailed information on **concerns related to India's income tax system** [read this article here](#)

#### What are the issues with India's capital gains tax regime?

**1. Complexity and Inconsistency:** India's capital gains tax rates differ by asset classes. This variation makes investment planning difficult.

**2. Short-term vs. Long-term Gains on Listed Shares:** Gains on listed shares or equity mutual funds held for less than 12 months are taxed at 15%, while long-term gains (over 12 months) are taxed at 10% if annual gains exceed ₹1 lakh.

**3. Debt Mutual Funds:** These are taxed at the marginal rate of income tax, regardless of the holding period.

**4. Real Estate:** Gains on property sold within two years are taxed at the marginal rate; after two years, they are taxed at 20% (with inflation adjustment). Reinvesting the proceeds in another property can avoid this tax.

**5. Gold Investments:** Physical gold gains are considered long-term only after three years, with different tax treatments for ETFs and sovereign gold bonds.

#### What should be done?

**1. Simplify the Regime:** Simplifying India's capital gains tax regime can make investment planning easier.

**2. Uniform Cut-off Period:** Use a common cut-off period of one year for all short-term holdings. This ensures consistency and fairness.

**3. Standard Rates:** Apply the same tax rates for short-term and long-term gains across all asset classes. This removes confusion and aligns investment incentives.



**4. Inflation Adjustment:** Provide inflation adjustments for gains on holdings longer than five years to account for value changes over time.

**5. Consistency Across Assets:** Ensure similar tax treatment for comparable assets. For example, treating gold ETFs the same as physical gold to avoid distortions in investment choices.

### India needs to develop a unique economic strategy

**Context:** The article discusses the need for India to develop a unique economic strategy that is sustainable and not resource-heavy like China's. It emphasizes joining global trade groups, reducing tariffs, and supporting the informal sector to boost manufacturing and overall economic growth.

For detailed information on **Indian Development Model** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

#### What is India's external economic footprint?

1. Currently, India accounts for 1.8 per cent of world exports and is ranked 18th.
2. It accounts for 2.8 per cent of global imports and ranks ninth worldwide.

#### Why should India not follow the China growth model?

**1. Resource and Energy Demand:** China's growth relied heavily on extensive resource and energy consumption. This model is unsustainable for India, given global resource limits and the world's inability to support another such heavy consumer.

**2 Ecological Sustainability:** The Chinese model is incompatible with the needs for ecological sustainability and addressing climate change. India requires a growth strategy that significantly reduces environmental impact.

**3. Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** China may have peaked in terms of its greenhouse gas emissions. In contrast, India's emissions are set to increase, which will lead to international pressure to curb them.

#### How can India enhance its global economic influence?

**1. Expand Foreign Trade:** India aims to become the third-largest trading power by expanding its foreign trade, aligning with its current status as the fifth-largest economy.

**2. Join Major Trade Groups:** Engaging with major trade groups like the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and applying to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) will integrate India more deeply into global trade dynamics.

**3. Reduce Tariffs:** Lowering high custom tariffs, which have increased since 2014, will facilitate India's participation in global and regional supply chains, essential for being a global trading power.

**4. Support the Informal Sector:** Simplify GST procedures and reconsider the Production-Linked Incentive scheme to bolster small and medium enterprises, which are vital for employment and economic resilience.

### Concerns related to the "Washington Consensus" approach

**Context:** The article discusses the need for India to shift its focus from solely aiming for GDP growth to actively creating jobs through state intervention and smart policies. It criticizes the reliance on free markets and suggests adopting strategies similar to East Asian countries to boost industrial growth and employment.

For detailed information on "Washington Consensus" [read this article here](#)

### What are the concerns related to the "Washington Consensus" approach?

- 1. Limited Job Creation:** Despite high GDP growth rates post-1991 reforms influenced by the "Washington Consensus," job creation has been inadequate. The focus on free markets didn't lead to the expected employment benefits.
- 2. Comparison with China:** In 1991, India's per capita income and technological status were similar to China's. However, unlike India, China used state-driven policies for industrialization and export success, now being significantly ahead economically.
- 3. Market Forces Limitations:** Relying solely on market forces has shown limitations, as seen in India's underperformance in job creation compared to its potential and historical economic strategies.

### What should be done?

- 1. Intervene in Currency Markets:** Reserve Bank of India need to intervene in currency markets to prevent the appreciation of the real exchange rate, which harms domestic value addition and job creation.
- 2. Reduce Business Costs:** Address high logistics costs, which are about 50% higher than those of competitors, and rationalize high diesel taxes that nearly double the highest GST rates.
- 3. Implement Sector-Specific Policies:** Follow the successful example of the Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme, which turned India into a significant manufacturing hub for Apple, creating approximately 150,000 jobs.
- 4. Identify labor-intensive sectors** in manufacturing and services where India can compete globally. Governments can help firms create competitive advantages and attract foreign direct investment.
- 5. Implement sector-specific measures** that yield results within two to three years. Use tools like concessional finance, cheap land, public investment, and import duty adjustments as needed.
- 6. Focus on a few sectors initially** to achieve a critical mass and self-sustaining growth. **Avoid spreading resources too thinly.** Success in the domestic and export markets should move together.
- 7. Favor producers who create jobs and workers over consumers and traders.** A balanced approach in the globalized economy is necessary for job creation and economic growth

## Topic- Effects of Liberalization on the Economy, Changes in Industrial Policy and their Effects on Industrial Growth.

### Hybrid vs Electric Vehicles

**Context-** The article provides an overview of the debate surrounding electric and hybrid vehicles in India. The International Energy Agency notes that India's road transport sector contributes about 12% of the country's CO2 emissions. Which makes it the third-largest greenhouse gas emitter after energy and agriculture.

Since 2015, the government has been working on reducing carbon emissions through initiatives such as FAME (Faster Adoption and Manufacture of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles).

It started with incentives for electric and hybrid vehicles, but the policy has gradually shifted away from supporting hybrids and now emphasizes electric vehicles (EVs).

### What are the arguments in favor of adoption of hybrid vehicles?

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- 1) Little attention is paid to hybrid trucks, even though freight trucks, which make up only 5% of vehicles, contribute 34% of emissions. Hybrids in passenger cars offer 25-30% better fuel efficiency compared to internal combustion engines (ICE), despite being less common in the market.
- 2) Hybrids have smaller battery packs and slightly higher total ownership costs because of tax differences, although they are currently taxed more than ICE vehicles.
- 3) Hybrids tend to have the least environmental impact among the ICE and Electric vehicle options.

### **What are the arguments against the adoption of Electric Vehicle?**

- 1) In India, more than 75% of electricity is generated from coal, which causes emissions when charging EVs. When assessing policies for ICE, hybrids, and EVs, it's important to carefully consider their impact on reducing emissions.
- 2) Examining lifecycle emissions (LCA), kilometer usage, production, mining, recycling, and total cost of ownership (TCO) reveals that electric vehicles often emit more than both ICE vehicles and hybrids in many instances. In India, the focus mainly remains on emissions and costs during the usage phase, with less attention given to factors like battery replacement costs.
- 3) Sourcing raw materials such as cobalt, nickel, and lithium for battery electric vehicles poses challenges.

**Read more-** [Adoption of EVs: Challenges and Solutions](#)

### **What should be the way forward?**

- 1) There is a need to adopt a balanced approach in the context of the shift towards cleaner grids and promoting the electrification of transport.
- 2) Enhancements in efficiency of electric vehicles (EVs) should be recognized, and policies should be adopted that accommodate technological advancements and shifts in industry sectors.
- 3) FAME 3 policies should treat hybrids equally for subsidies to support a range of technological solutions aimed at achieving zero-emission objectives.

## **Topic- Infrastructure: Energy, Ports, Roads, Airports, Railways etc.**

### **Challenges in India's current energy policy**

**Context:** The article discusses the need for India to update its energy policy to better manage fossil fuels and boost renewable energy, while also considering global competition and security concerns, especially with China's dominance in green technology and supply chains.

For detailed information on **India's Energy Policy** [read this article here](#)

### **What is the current energy policy in India?**

1. India's energy policy is dual-pronged, focusing on both fossil fuels and renewable energy.
2. The fossil fuel strategy emphasizes reducing import dependency on petroleum through diversified import sources, strategic reserves, domestic exploration, demand conservation, efficiency, and environmental protection.
3. The renewable strategy is aimed at accelerating the shift to clean energy, with a long-term goal of net-zero carbon emissions by 2070 and a medium-term target of generating 500 GW from non-fossil fuels by 2030.

### What are the challenges in the current structure?

1. The current structure of India's energy policy is highly compartmentalized, with each ministry operating within narrow and rigid boundaries.
2. The existing setup involves multiple ministries such as Petroleum, Coal, Renewables, Power, Heavy Industry, Mines and Minerals, IT, Information, and Environment, making coordination and streamlined decision-making challenging.
3. There is no formal executive forum for integrated discussions on energy policy. This hampers India's ability to meet its publicly announced decarbonization and sustainability targets.

### What global dynamics influence India's energy policy?

1. The resurgence of great power competition, reminiscent of a new Cold War between the US and its allies against China and Russia, influences India's energy policy.
2. China's near monopoly on essential materials for green energy and its dominance in producing low-cost solar wafers and wind turbines affect India's strategies.
3. The geopolitical tensions and supply chain vulnerabilities impact India's approach to securing and diversifying its energy sources.
4. National security concerns regarding the dependency on Chinese supplies have led India to impose duties on Chinese imports and promote domestic manufacturing through incentives like the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme.

### What should the next government do?

1. The next government should develop a strategic framework that integrates fossil fuels and renewable energy policies into a **unified approach**.
2. It should **prepare a strategic document** titled "Energy strategy: Towards convergence, security, and sustainability" to guide policy integration.
3. The strategy should address the relationship between hydrocarbon public sector enterprises and other energy companies to avoid duplicity of efforts and resources.
4. A clear strategy for **securing supplies of critical minerals** like copper, lithium, nickel, and cobalt is necessary due to forewarned market volatility and potential shortages.
5. The government must also **create incentives for private investment in green energy** to mitigate risk aversion among investors.

## The container ship Dali crashed into the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, USA

**Context:** The article discusses a major accident where a ship called Dali hit a bridge in Baltimore, USA, causing deaths and massive damage. The ship was managed by an Indian company, and its crew was mostly Indian. There are concerns about the crew's actions leading to the accident.

### What happened with the ship Dali?

1. On March 26, 2024, the container ship Dali collided with the Francis Scott Key Bridge in Baltimore, USA.
2. The crash was one of the most high-profile maritime accidents in the U.S. since the Exxon Valdez oil spill in 1989.
3. The crash resulted in at least six fatalities and extensive damage worth millions of dollars.



4. The ship was managed by Synergy Maritime Group, a company with significant Indian leadership and operations.
5. Insurance experts predict the accident might lead to a record insurance payout, potentially surpassing the \$1.5 billion paid for the Costa Concordia disaster.
6. Early investigations suggested crew errors related to two onboard blackouts might have contributed to the crash.

#### What are the implications of this accident for India?

1. Indian seafarer **remittances contribute 15%** of India's foreign direct investment annually.
2. Synergy Maritime Group, managing the Dali, employs thousands of Indian seafarers. Concerns arise over potential negligence, which could harm the reputation of Indian seafarers. **Negative perceptions could impact employment opportunities** for Indian seafarers globally.
3. The involvement of Indian seafarers in the Dali accident brings attention to their training and certification processes, which are usually rigorous to ensure competent ship operations. The final report **may influence the global perception of Indian seafarers' competence and certification.**

#### What actions did the Indian government take?

1. **Impleaded as a Substantially Interested State:** The Indian government took swift action by impleading India as a Substantially Interested State under the Casualty Investigation Code of the International Maritime Organization. This allowed India to be directly involved in the investigation of the Dali accident.
2. **Participation in the Investigation:** Indian shipping officials were included as part of the on-site investigation team. This involvement ensured that India could monitor the investigative process closely.
3. **Review and Comment on the Final Report:** Before the release of the final report, Indian officials will have the opportunity to review and contest any findings that could potentially damage the reputation of Indian seafarers.

#### What did the U.S. government do?

1. **Presidential Praise:** U.S. President Joe Biden publicly praised the Indian seafarers on the Dali for their quick response in alerting the authorities after losing control of the ship, which helped mitigate further damage by enabling the immediate shutdown of the bridge.
2. **Reducing Tensions:** Biden's commendation was intended to counteract any potential anti-Indian sentiments that might arise from the incident, reflecting a diplomatic effort to maintain good bilateral relations.

### Solutions for better energy management

**Context:** The article discusses the problem of too many separate departments in the Indian government handling energy policies, which leads to inefficient and conflicting actions. It suggests merging departments, creating a single Ministry of Energy, and establishing groups to better coordinate efforts on climate transition.

For detailed information on **Challenges in India's current energy policy** [read this article here](#)

#### What is the current problem with government departments in India?



**1. Multiple Departments with Conflicting Goals:** India's energy sector is fragmented across multiple departments with conflicting objectives. For instance, the Ministry of Coal promotes coal usage, whereas the Ministry of Renewable Energy advocates for reduced coal dependence. This misalignment affects coherent policy formulation.

**2. Policy Incoherence:** The lack of a unified approach causes policy incoherence, complicating both domestic governance and international relations concerning energy transition and environmental commitments.

### What are the proposed solutions for better energy management?

**1. Rethink Departments:** Merge similar departments like the Ministry of Coal and the Department of Atomic Energy into two departments—one for carbon-based fuels and one for carbon-free fuels. This can streamline operations and reduce redundancy.

**2. Unified Ministry of Energy:** Create a single Ministry of Energy that includes all energy-related departments. This ministry would have multiple departments headed by secretary-rank officers, led by one minister and one energy secretary. Although it simplifies the structure, some departmental issues may persist.

**3. Group of Ministers for Climate Transition:** Form a Group of Ministers (GoM) to coordinate climate policies. This group should be chaired by the Finance Minister, supported by a technical secretariat composed of research organizations, to ensure informed decision-making.

**4. Rethink Regulators:** Reevaluate the structure and role of regulators, who currently wield significant power by combining executive, legislative, and judicial functions. This is crucial for effective energy transition management.

**5. Unified Parliamentary Standing Committee:** Establish a single Parliamentary Standing Committee on Energy Transition to consolidate the efforts of multiple committees. This committee should be supported by a group of research organizations to enhance its effectiveness and coherence.

### How do other countries manage their energy policies?

**Germany:** The Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action (BMWK) oversees energy transition policies.

**France:** The Ministry for the Ecological Transition focuses on climate change and energy policies.

**Spain:** The Ministry for the Ecological Transition and the Demographic Challenge handles energy transition.

**Uruguay:** Energy transition falls within the Ministry of Industry, Energy, and Mining.

**Indonesia:** The Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources manages energy transition.

**United States:** John Podesta serves as the "climate czar," coordinating energy and climate policies.

### Vadhavan Port Project

**Context-** The Vadhavan port project, recently approved by the Union Cabinet, marks a significant development for India's maritime infrastructure. Located in Dahanu, Maharashtra, it will be the country's first major port since JNPA, commissioned in 1989, and will address longstanding challenges faced by Indian ports due to geographical limitations.

In India, no new major government-run ports have been established in over 50 years, although the private sector port at Mundra was commissioned 25 years ago. Presently, there are initiatives to upgrade Deendayal and Paradip ports into mega ports, with plans also set for a mega port at Galathea Bay in the Nicobar Islands.

### What are the challenges posed by Indian Coastline?

- 1) Large oil tankers and container ships cannot approach India's coastline due to its sprawling beaches, forcing them to unload their cargo primarily at Colombo. Occasionally, they conduct mid-sea transfers of goods closer to Indian ports.
- 2) Currently, most of India's major ports offer depths ranging from 14 to 14.5 meters do not have adequate depth to accommodate large vessels effectively. Capesize ships, which are ultra-large carriers typically carrying around 170,000 deadweight tonnes (DWT), require a minimum water depth of at least 18 meters to safely navigate and dock at ports.

Read more- [Port Infrastructure: Issues and Challenges](#)

### What is the significance of VadHAVAN Port Project?

**1) Economic Significance:** - Mega port status: A mega port is a huge maritime facility that manages large amounts of cargo and can handle very large ships like Capesize vessels. These ports handle at least 300 million metric tonnes of cargo per year and are crucial hubs for global trade and shipping. It is going to be the first Indian port to begin as a true mega port (300+ MMTPA capacity). Its economic advantages are-

- a) Lower freight costs per unit with larger volumes.
- b) Ability to handle a wider range of goods than smaller ports, which are typically focused on dry or bulk cargo like JNPA and Mundra.
- c) Capacity to host diverse suppliers, industrial complexes, and logistics firms, promoting economies of agglomeration.
- d) Competition among operators, leading to reduced handling charges.
- e) Feeding smaller ports in a hub-and-spoke model, where the mega port manages global maritime traffic and distributes cargo to smaller ports.

#### 2) Trade implications:

- A) Potential to handle projected sea-based EXIM trade of \$1.6-2 trillion by 2030.
- B) Could reduce dependence on foreign ports for transshipment.

3) **Strategic importance:** It is crucial node for IMEEC (India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor) and INSTC (International North-South Transport Corridor).

### What are some challenges and considerations?

#### Infrastructure requirements:

- A) Extensive gantries, yard management capabilities, storage facilities.
- B) Inland connectivity network.
- C) Labor and capital for construction.

2) **Environmental concern-** An earlier proposal in 1998 was turned down because of environmental concerns. The current project needed to conduct 18 studies on environmental impact assessments.

## Issues and status of the Kavach Signaling System

**Context:** The article discusses a recent train accident in India involving deaths and injuries. It critiques Indian Railways' safety practices, the slow implementation of a new signaling system called Kavach, and the need for better management and technology use to prevent future accidents.

For detailed information on **The Issue of Indian Railway Safety** [read this article here](#)

### How has Indian Railways improved safety?

- 1. Track Maintenance:** Indian Railways has focused on maintaining tracks better, reducing the risk of accidents.
- 2. Closing Unmanned Level Crossings:** Efforts have been made to close unmanned level crossings, which has decreased accidents.
- 3. Government Investment:** The Union government allocated nearly 25% of its total capital expenditure to railways, ensuring funding for safety improvements.
- 4. Kavach System:** The indigenous Kavach signaling system, designed to prevent collisions, was tested over 1,400 kilometers on the Southern Central Railway and is being implemented on key routes.
- 5. Prioritizing Safety Roles:** Despite issues, Indian Railways has revised recruitment targets for critical safety positions to reduce staff shortages.

### What are the issues with railway safety?

- 1. Insufficient Implementation of Safety Measures:** Despite the government allocating nearly 25% of its capex to railways, the implementation of safety measures like the Kavach signaling system has been slow.
- 2. Miscommunication and Premature Blame:** The premature declaration of the cause of accidents by high-level officials leads to misinformation, as seen when the Chairperson of the Railway Board incorrectly announced details about the train crew involved in the accident.
- 3. Staffing Shortages:** There are nearly 20,000 vacancies in critical safety roles like loco pilots, contributing to overwork and potential safety lapses, with only a recent adjustment in recruitment targets following public pressure after the accident.

### What is the status of the Kavach Signaling System?

- 1. Slow Implementation:** Kavach, an indigenous signaling system, was chosen over the European ETCS Level II system three years ago.
- 2. Limited Rollout:** Despite successful trials over 1,400 kilometers on the Southern Central Railway, implementation has been slow.
- 3. Missed Targets:** The system is under implementation on the Delhi-Howrah and Delhi-Mumbai sections, but completion targets have been missed.
- 4. Industry Capacity Issues:** The Railway Board Chairperson cited limited industry capacity as a reason for the slow rollout.
- 5. Safety Recommendations:** The Commissioner of Railway Safety (CRS) recommended prioritizing Kavach in Automatic Signaling territories and faster installation in locomotives to prevent collisions.

## Investing in pumped-storage hydropower (PSH)

**Context:** The article discusses Adani Group's plan to invest in pumped-storage hydropower (PSH) dams to help India's transition to clean energy. These dams store energy and provide electricity consistently, even when renewable sources like wind and solar are not available.

### What is Pumped-Storage Hydropower?

Pumped storage hydropower (PSH) plants are storage systems based on hydropower operations between two or more reservoirs (upper and lower) with an elevation difference. At the time of demand, downward water flow generates electricity with a hydraulic turbine, and water is pumped back to the upper reservoir using power from grid or RE sources, with an overall efficiency of 75-80%.

For more information on **Pumped storage hydropower** [read this article](#)

### Why is Pumped-Storage Hydropower Important?

- 1. Consistent Energy Supply:** Pumped-Storage Hydropower (PSH) dams store energy and deliver it consistently, unlike solar and wind sources which are dependent on weather conditions.
- 2. Control Over Output:** PSH allows for adjustable power output to meet varying electricity demands, acting as a reliable backup for renewable energy sources.
- 3. National Impact:** PSH can help manage India's peak electricity demands, aiming to support the country's 2030 goal of 500 gigawatts from non-fossil sources

For more information read [article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

### What investments have been made in pumped-storage hydropower technology?

- 1. Adani Green Energy Ltd** has committed to investing between ₹25,000 and ₹27,500 crore in pumped-storage hydropower (PSH) projects over the next five years. Their initial target is to achieve a PSH capacity of 5 gigawatts, aiming to eventually expand to 25 gigawatts.
- 2. The Union environment ministry** earlier approved PSH projects totaling over ₹80,000 crore, highlighting the government's support for this technology to enhance India's renewable energy capacity.
3. Other major companies like Tata Power, JSW, and NTPC are also planning investments in PSH dams, indicating a significant industry trend towards utilizing this technology to stabilize and supplement the renewable energy supply in India.

## Selecting Routes for Vande Metro Train

**Context-** The article discusses the introduction Vande Metro trains in India. The Vande Metro aims to run up to 250 kilometers between major cities and nearby towns. The first Vande Metro prototype, with 12 coaches and amenities **like Vande Bharat trains**, was produced by the Rail Coach Factory in Kapurthala, Punjab.

### What are the challenges with the Vande Bharat trains?

- 1) Low Passenger Numbers-**The Vande Bharat trains have captured the nation's imagination. However, out of the 51 origin-destination pairings served by 82 Vande Bharat rakes introduced by Indian Railways, at least 10 pairs have very low passenger numbers.



- 2) **Financial Loss**-Estimates suggest that Indian Railways has incurred losses of approximately ₹100 crore due to poor patronage on some of the Vande Bharat routes.
- 3) **Lack of Analysis**-Indian Railways did not systematically analyze each route to ensure sufficient passenger demand before launching the Vande Bharat trains.

#### **What is the significance of the introduction of Vande Metro Train?**

- 1) **Facilities**-Vande Metro trains, like Vande Bharat trains, feature a continuous, fully air-conditioned gangway that allows passengers to move freely between coaches and use bio-toilets.
- 2) **Safety**-Doors are closed that prevents accidents often seen during boarding and disembarking on other types of trains like EMU and MEMU.

#### **Read More- [The Issue of Indian Railway Safety](#)**

- 3) **Speed**-They can run with maximum design speed of 130 kmph, averaging between 75 kmph and 90 kmph depending on the route. This promises quicker and more comfortable journeys, secure boarding and disembarking, and modern restroom facilities.
- 4) **Convenience**- Buses traveling distances up to 250 km are generally not luxurious, and while cars offer faster travel, they are not economically feasible for middle-class passengers. Therefore, the Vande Metro train aims to offer a comfortable and affordable travel experience for passengers in this segment.

#### **What are the financial issues with the introduction of Vande Metro trains?**

- 1) **High Energy Cost**-Vande Metro trains have higher energy costs compared to non-air-conditioned second-class carriages.
- 2) **High Manufacturing Cost**- The prototype Vande Metro coach costs ₹8 crore to manufacture, significantly more than second-class suburban coaches. Due to these higher costs, Indian Railways cannot operate Vande Metro trains at fares comparable to second-class trains currently in service.
- 3) **Fare Disparities and Passenger Preferences**- Passengers in second-class pay 45 paisa, 22 paisa, and 18 paisa per kilometer on mail/express, ordinary, and EMU/MEMU trains, respectively. Traveling at a low cost is a behavior many rail travelers adopt. Whether these passengers would switch to more expensive air-conditioned Vande Metro trains is uncertain.
- 4) **Underwhelming Response**-The introduction of air-conditioned coaches on certain suburban trains in Mumbai did not meet expectations due to factors such as passengers traveling without valid tickets and a disappointing response from commuters.

#### **What should be the Way forward?**

- 1) **Conduct Proper Analysis of Demand Projection**-Indian Railways should learn from the mistakes of the Vande Bharat trains when planning the Vande Metro. Conducting a methodical analysis of demand projections for different origin-destination pairs before finalizing routes for Vande Metro trains would be beneficial.
- 2) **Enhancing Utilization through Passenger-Centric Planning**- This approach should consider passengers' willingness and ability to pay. This will lead to higher patronage and improved utilization of train services

#### **Agriculture**

**Topic- Major Crops - Cropping Patterns in various parts of the country, - Different Types of Irrigation and Irrigation Systems; Storage, Transport and Marketing of Agricultural Produce and Issues and Related Constraints; E-technology in the aid of farmers.**



## Shift in Cropping Patterns

**Context-**India is expecting a normal monsoon this year, which will boost agricultural production. However, groundwater depletion in certain states may limit the impact of the monsoon. The states of Punjab and Haryana have witnessed severe groundwater depletion due to the wheat-paddy cultivation cycle. Paddy, a water-guzzling crop, occupies around 88% of the kharif cropped area in Punjab and 52% in Haryana. Groundwater extraction rates in Punjab and Haryana are alarmingly high at 163.76% and 135.74%, respectively, compared to the national average of 59.26%.

### What environmental legislation have state governments enacted to address groundwater depletion?

To address groundwater depletion, Punjab and Haryana enacted Punjab Preservation of Subsoil Water Act (PPSWA) and the Haryana Preservation of Subsoil Water Act (HPSWA).

Objective- These laws aimed to make sure farmers planted paddy when the monsoon started by stopping them from planting too early.

### What are the unintended consequences?

- 1) They had an unintended consequence of increasing stubble burning and air pollution in northern India.
- 2) The shift in paddy transplantation by over a month led to a shorter window between harvesting and planting the next rabi crop, forcing farmers to burn crop residue.
- 3) Stubble burning coincides with low wind speeds in northern India, exacerbating air pollution.

**Read more-**[Challenges faced by Indian Agriculture](#)

### Why were these laws rendered ineffective?

- 1) The laws became ineffective because of the high minimum support prices (MSP) set for paddy and the subsidies on inputs, which encouraged farmers to increase paddy cultivation. This resulted in excessive extraction of groundwater and an increase in stubble generation.
- 2) The government has taken steps to encourage crop diversification, such as proposing to procure alternative crops like masoor, urad, arhar, maize, and cotton at MSP over the next five years. However, the assured procurement of wheat and paddy for the central pool, coupled with higher returns, prevents farmers from diversifying.

### What should be the way forward?

Instead of doing away with the laws, there is a need for crop diversification, adoption of direct seeded rice, paddy straw management, and raising MSP and assured procurement for alternative crops.

**Topic- Issues related to Direct and Indirect Farm Subsidies and Minimum Support Prices; Public Distribution System - Objectives, Functioning, Limitations, Revamping; Issues of Buffer Stocks and Food Security; Technology Missions; Economics of Animal-Rearing.**

**Issue of Wheat Import by India**

**Context:** India is considering reducing wheat import duties due to lower domestic supplies and high market prices. The government might need to import wheat to stabilize prices, despite having more wheat this year compared to last year. Improving wheat yields is suggested as a long-term solution.

For detailed information on **How India's agricultural exports fell** [read this article here](#)

**What is the current situation in the Indian wheat market?**

India is facing high wheat prices in the market, which are much higher than the government's minimum support price. For instance, prices reached around ₹3,000 per quintal in some parts of Madhya Pradesh, while the official price is ₹2,275 per quintal. Due to this increase, there is a discussion about reducing the 44% import duty on wheat to allow imports and help stabilize prices.

**Why might India consider importing wheat?**

1. The consideration for importing wheat, potentially 2 to 4 million tonnes, comes as domestic procurement has not met the target of 30 to 32 million tonnes for three years.
2. This shortage in state procurement and the high market prices have led to discussions on easing import norms to bring down prices and discourage hoarding.

**What is the government's strategy?**

1. The government might have nearly 8.5 million tonnes of wheat to manage market prices this year, compared to 10 million tonnes last year.
2. This wheat will be used in open market operations and possibly through schemes like the Open Market Sale Scheme to control prices.
3. The overall production is also reported to be better than last year, with an estimate showing an increase of 2.4 million tonnes.

**What are the long-term solutions?**

- 1. Increase Wheat Yields:** Boost the average yield from the current 3.7-3.8 tonnes per hectare to at least 5 tonnes per hectare. Competing countries like Mexico and China have yields close to 6 tonnes per hectare.
- 2. Address Agricultural Challenges:** Implement measures to combat losses due to weeds and pests, which can reduce potential yield by 20 to 30 percent, and correct nutritional imbalances.
- 3. Enhance Wheat Varieties:** Develop and distribute varieties that can resist terminal heat and other climatic challenges

## Subject: Science & Technology

### Topic- Science and Technology- Developments and their Applications and Effects in Everyday Life, Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology; Indigenization of Technology and Developing New Technology.

#### Impact of industrial revolution on India's economy

**Context:** The article discusses how the invention of the spinning jenny in Britain started the Industrial Revolution, which significantly impacted India's economy and independence movement. It compares this historical event with modern challenges in India, such as the focus on IT services over product innovation, and the education system's issues, including the trend of students studying abroad.

For detailed information on **India has an opportunity to lead the fourth industrial revolution** [read this article here](#)

#### What triggered the Industrial Revolution?

- 1. Invention of the Spinning Jenny:** James Hargreaves created the spinning jenny in 1764, allowing one person to spin multiple threads simultaneously. This innovation drastically improved the efficiency of cotton production.
- 2. Impact on Further Inventions:** The spinning jenny inspired further technological advancements, such as Samuel Crompton's spinning mule and Charles Babbage's weaving machine, accelerating the pace of industrial development.
- 3. Catalyst for the Industrial Revolution:** These innovations collectively triggered the Industrial Revolution, transforming industries by enhancing production capabilities and reducing the need for manual labor, marking a significant turn in manufacturing history.

#### Why wasn't the Spinning Jenny invented in India?

- 1. Economic Conditions:** Economic historian Robert Allen notes that high wages relative to capital costs in Britain made inventions like the spinning jenny profitable there but not in India.
- 2. Lack of Financial Incentive:** In India, lower labor costs compared to Britain meant there was less economic incentive to invest in labor-saving technologies, which deterred innovation in mechanized cotton production.

#### What are the current educational and economic challenges in India?

- 1. Educational System Challenges:** The emphasis on coaching for entrance exams, like those for the IITs, detracts from genuine learning and innovation. Only about 10,000 out of 200,000 applicants are admitted annually, highlighting intense competition and high rejection rates.
- 2. Study abroad:** Annually, approximately 450,000 Indian students choose to study abroad, driven by limitations in domestic educational opportunities, with families spending significant amounts on overseas education.
- 3. Shift in Tech Industry Focus:** Initially, protective policies enabled local hardware development. However, with lobbying by NASSCOM in 1991, tax exemptions were introduced for software exports, and import duties were significantly reduced. This led to a dependency on service-based revenue over innovation in product development.

## How does the shift to AI impact India's tech industry?

**1. Potential Missed Opportunities:** As the global tech industry pivots towards artificial intelligence (AI), India is likely to continue its role primarily as a supplier of IT workforce rather than leading in AI product innovation. This could limit India's position in the global tech hierarchy.

**2. Economic Impact:** India's tech industry currently generates substantial revenue by providing IT services, earning about \$250 billion and employing over 5 million people. This success in service provision, however, might be overshadowed if AI reduces the need for a large tech workforce.

## Recommendations for development of Artificial general intelligence in India

**News:** Artificial General Intelligence (AGI) is poised to revolutionize various sectors and potentially alter the global balance of power. This technology promises vast benefits but also poses significant risks.

Historically, technological advancements have been key to global dominance. The British Empire leveraged naval technology and the industrial revolution to establish its supremacy. Similarly, control over AGI could dictate future global power dynamics.

In 2017, Russian President Vladimir Putin highlighted the transformative potential of AI, predicting that the leader in AI technology would rule the world.

In March 2024, the Indian Cabinet approved the 'India AI Mission' with a funding of over ₹10,000 crore across five years. This initiative aims to develop AI infrastructure accessible to startups, academia, and industry, positioning India as a significant player in the global AI race.

### What is Artificial General Intelligence (AGI)?

AGI refers to an AI system that can match or surpass human cognitive abilities to understand, learn, and apply knowledge across a wide range of tasks. It can reason, learn from experience, and solve novel problems.

AGI, unlike current AI systems which are designed for specific tasks, will possess general intelligence comparable to human cognitive abilities.

AGI can itself extend its abilities to solve any problem, including those it has not been specifically programmed for.

**Read More – [Artificial General Intelligence](#)**

### Applications of AGI

**In healthcare,** AGI could monitor health metrics in real-time, predict potential issues, and provide customized care.

**In urban management,** it could optimize energy use and minimize waste.

AGI could also address **global challenges like climate change** through advanced predictive modelling.

### What are the risks and challenges of AGI?

The development of AGI carries risks, including misuse in surveillance, autonomous weaponry, and significant economic disruptions.

AGI could radically transform job markets and economic structures.

Human nature tends to under-prepare for rare but catastrophic risks, which are not immediate. This tendency is known as the availability heuristic. Policymakers must proactively safeguard against AGI's potential threats.

### What should India do to prepare for AGI Race?

**Dedicated AI Department:** India should establish a central authority for coordinating AI-related activities, akin to the urgency once applied to nuclear capabilities and space research. This department should set standards, guidelines, and drive AI policies aligned with national interests.

**Data Democratization:** To stimulate AI development, India should liberate and democratize access to vast datasets across public and private sectors. This approach will encourage robust AI models tailored to India's unique demographic and socio-economic landscape.

**Strategic AI Ecosystem:** Focus on developing an AI ecosystem for defense, drone technology, and cybersecurity. Support the creation of companies in these fields, similar to the US government's backing of Palantir and Israel's support of Elbit Systems.

**AI Skilling Initiative:** Launch a comprehensive initiative to train 50 million people in AI usage skills, with a focus on data literacy, AI ethics, and applications in various sectors. Additionally, it should aim to train 1 million individuals in advanced AI development skills.

**Educational Partnerships:** Forge partnerships with universities and technical institutes to integrate AI-focused curricula, launch specialized degree programs, and promote continuing education. Collaborate with online platforms to provide scalable access to courses and industry for practical training.

### Topic- Awareness in the fields of IT, Space, Computers, Robotics, Nano-technology, Bio-technology and issues relating to Intellectual Property Rights.

#### Significance of the successful test flight of Agnibaan

**News:** The article discusses the successful test flight of Agnikul Cosmos's rocket, Agnibaan, on May 30. It highlights Agnikul's role in advancing India's commercial space capabilities, compares its progress with ISRO's developments, and underscores the importance of collaboration and innovation in enhancing space technology in India.

#### What is Agnibaan?

1. Agnibaan is a two-stage launch vehicle designed by Agnikul Cosmos.
2. It weighs 14 tonnes and is built to lift small satellites to low-earth orbits.
3. Both stages of Agnibaan are powered by semi-cryogenic engines.
4. Many components, including the engines, are 3D-printed.
5. Agnikul plans to produce one rocket per month.
6. The first test flight, named 'Suborbital Tech Demonstrator' (SOrTeD), occurred on May 30 after four previous attempts were canceled due to suboptimal conditions.

This success marks a step forward in India's commercial space services.

#### What challenges does Agnikul face?

1. **Launch Attempt Failures:** Agnikul faced significant challenges with its initial attempts, having to cancel the first four due to suboptimal launch conditions before successfully conducting the test flight.
2. **Communication of Flight Parameters:** A specific area where Agnikul needs to improve is the communication regarding the parameters of its test flights. This has been a challenge not just for Agnikul but also for ISRO, suggesting it's a broader issue in India's space sector that needs addressing.



### How does this affect India's space industry?

- 1. Expansion of Launch Services:** Agnikul's successful test flight of Agnibaan aims to expand India's commercial launch services. This market is currently dominated by ISRO's Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), and Agnikul's entry caters to the growing market for small satellites.
- 2. Innovation Through Collaboration:** The collaboration between ISRO and startups like Agnikul speeds up innovation. For example, shared technical knowledge from ISRO has helped reduce time and costs for private missions.
- 3. Enhanced Payload Capacities:** Innovations like ISRO's new carbon-carbon composite nozzles increase payload capacities, demonstrating the benefits of technological advancements.

### AI and Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI)

**Context-** The article highlights the potential of AI to enhance India's digital public infrastructure by addressing various challenges. An event was held in Bangalore that attracted companies from the AI sector to showcase their developments and to understand ongoing work in the field.

#### What major insight did the event offer?

- 1) Computer resources need not be centralized in large data centers but could be distributed across multiple micro data centers accessible through an interoperable protocol.
- 2) Companies don't have to wait for a new AI law to be enforced. Instead, every Indian AI company can commit to following a code of conduct that directs their innovation in this area.

**Read more-** [European Union adopts first AI Law](#)

- 3) The most impactful idea was the potential for AI to significantly enhance the reach of digital public infrastructure (DPI).

#### What are the issues with the current digital public infrastructure (DPI)?

DPI solutions are built using standardized protocols to ensure consistent and reliable services at a population scale. However, standardized solutions are not able to handle diversity well, so while they work for a lot of people, they don't adapt easily to different situations.

#### What is the essential feature of the DPI playbook?

The essential feature of the DPI playbook is the unbundling of traditional processes to rebuild them as DPI solutions. This transformation is necessary to scale existing services effectively to reach a broad population.

#### How can AI contribute to enhancing existing DPI solutions?

- 1) AI can dynamically adapt to individual preferences and contexts. It can make public service delivery more responsive and user-centric by adjusting to users' engagement modes.
- 2) It can accommodate linguistic and cultural diversity. It can also improve DPI solutions by providing personalized and user-friendly interfaces.

**For ex-** Setu, a finance company, showed an AI-powered personal finance app at the event. This app, made in a WhatsApp bot, uses the Account Aggregator system to study how users handle money and give them helpful advice. Its chat interface makes it easy to use, even for people who have limited knowledge about finances.

3) With the increasing integration of AI into DPI solutions by various companies, India's digital public infrastructure has the potential to cater to diverse needs and preferences of every citizen.

### India's efforts to boost its space industry by involving private companies

**Context:** The article discusses how the retirement of NASA's Space Shuttle led to growth in the U.S. private space sector and compares it to India's current efforts to boost its space industry by involving private companies in producing rockets like the LVM3.

For detailed information on **Indian Space Policy 2023 and its significance** [read this article here](#)

#### What happened when NASA retired the Space Shuttle?

- 1. End of the Space Shuttle Program:** NASA retired the Space Shuttle in 2011, which had been used for 30 years to carry astronauts and satellites and to help build the International Space Station (ISS).
- 2. Lack of Immediate Replacement:** Initially, there was no direct substitute for the Space Shuttle, causing NASA to rely on Russia's Soyuz spacecraft for transporting astronauts to the ISS.
- 3. Rise of Private Sector:** The retirement opened opportunities for private companies like SpaceX. This shift resulted in the development of the Crew Dragon spacecraft, which launched from US soil in 2020, ending a nine-year gap in US crewed space launches.
- 4. Cost Reductions and Innovation:** The transition allowed NASA to focus on more ambitious missions and fostered innovation in the private sector, significantly reducing launch costs by 95% and enhancing spacecraft capabilities.

#### What is India doing in space?

1. Similar to the U.S., India is shifting some space responsibilities from its government space agency, ISRO, to private companies.
2. This includes making rockets like the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV), Small Satellite Launch Vehicle (SSLV), and Launch Vehicle Mark-III (LVM3).
3. The goal is to make ISRO focus on more advanced projects like human spaceflight and a new generation of launch vehicles.

#### What impact could this have for India?

- 1. Enhancing Launch Capabilities:** By involving private companies, ISRO aims to increase its annual production of LVM3 rockets from two to six. This increase is intended to meet the rising global demand for launch services.
- 2. Cost Reduction:** By involving the private sector, India aims to reduce the costs associated with space missions, similar to how the U.S. reduced launch costs by 95% during the post-Space Shuttle era through innovations like reusable spacecraft.
- 3. Boost in Innovation:** The transfer of LVM3 production to private companies is expected to spur innovation, leading to upgrades in rocket technology and making the space industry more competitive globally.

## Subject: Environment

### Topic- Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

#### The global plastics problem

**Context:** The article discusses the need for a global treaty on plastic pollution to support informal waste workers. These workers, often overlooked, play a crucial role in recycling. It highlights the importance of integrating and protecting their contributions in new legal frameworks.

For detailed information on **the UN Treaty on Plastic Pollution** [read this article here](#)

#### What is the global plastics problem?

- 1. Massive Increase in Plastic Waste:** Global production of plastic waste has reached 353 million tonnes in 2019, more than double since 2000, and is expected to triple by 2060.
- 2. Low Recycling Rates:** Only 9% of the plastic waste produced globally is recycled. The majority is either incinerated (19%), dumped in landfills (50%), or disposed of at uncontrolled sites (22%).
- 3. Contribution of Informal Sector:** Informal recycling workers, who make up a significant part of the recycling workforce, manage to recycle 85% of this small percentage. They play a key role in reducing the plastic in landfills and preventing environmental leakage.
- 4. These workers are vulnerable** to job losses due to privatization and new public policies like waste-to-energy projects. They are often not included in formal waste management discussions and policies.
- 5. Environmental Impact:** About 60 million tonnes of plastic from municipal solid waste end up polluting the environment, including water bodies, largely due to inadequate waste management services. Without the efforts of the informal sector, this figure would be even higher.

#### What is the Global Plastics Treaty?

1. The Global Plastics Treaty is a crucial international initiative aimed at reducing and eventually eliminating plastic pollution globally.
2. It was kick-started in 2021 when an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) was established during the fifth UN Environment Assembly in Nairobi, Kenya.
3. Since its inception, the treaty has progressed through several meetings held across the world—in places like Dakar, Senegal; Uruguay; Paris, France; Nairobi, Kenya; and Canada—with the final meeting scheduled to take place in South Korea.
4. A key aspect of these discussions has been the active participation of the International Alliance of Waste Pickers, who advocate for the inclusion and consideration of informal waste pickers in the treaty to ensure sustainable waste management and fair policies.

#### Why is India's role important?

- 1. Balanced Approach:** India advocates for managing plastic through repair, reuse, refill, and recycling methods, without completely eliminating plastic use.
- 2. Local Adaptations:** The country emphasizes the importance of adapting the treaty to suit country-specific conditions and capacities, ensuring that the global policies are practical and effective locally.
- 3. Support for Informal Sector:** India highlights the critical role of informal waste pickers in the recycling

process. Their inclusion in treaty discussions is vital to ensure that these workers are not marginalized by new international regulations.

### ITLOS advisory on marine pollution

**Context:** The article discusses the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea (ITLOS) advisory opinion. It includes outlining states' obligations under UNCLOS to mitigate climate change, specifically by addressing marine pollution from greenhouse gas emissions. This opinion emphasizes the importance of taking necessary measures based on the best available science.

#### About COSIS:

1. Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (COSIS) was established on the eve of COP 26 to develop international law on climate change.
2. COSIS membership is open to all members of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).
3. The mandate of the Commission shall be to promote and contribute to the definition, implementation, and progressive development of rules and principles of international law concerning climate change.

#### What is the significance of the ITLOS advisory?

##### 1. New Finding

ITLOS accepted a request from the Commission of Small Island States on Climate Change and International Law (COSIS).

ITLOS confirmed that human-released carbon dioxide is a pollutant under UNCLOS. This aligns with scientific findings that oceans absorb about a quarter of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, causing acidification and temperature rise.

##### 2. Legal Implication

ITLOS's opinion emphasized countries' obligations under Article 194(1) of UNCLOS to prevent marine pollution from greenhouse gases.

Measures should be based on the best available science and international agreements like the Paris Agreement.

For detailed information on **United Nations convention of the sea (UNCLOS)** [read this article here](#)

##### 3. Standard for State Obligation

ITLOS described the obligations as due diligence but with a high standard due to serious risks. States must gradually reduce GHG emissions; immediate cessation is not required.

##### 4. Collective Interest

The Opinion supports the principle that climate change is a collective interest, not just a bilateral issue. This approach adds a new chapter to international environmental law.

## 5. Other

The opinion's political significance is notable, despite lacking legal force.

The Netherlands Supreme Court's Urgenda case shows the need for concrete emission reduction targets, like reducing emissions by 25% below 1990 levels by 2020.

The ITLOS advisory opinion gains more attention due to upcoming ICJ proceedings on states' climate change obligations.

For detailed information on **international courts and climate change** [read this article here](#)

### What are the limitations of the ITLOS opinion?

**1. Lack of Concrete Methodology:** ITLOS did not provide a clear method to assess state actions, unlike the detailed targets set in the Urgenda judgment by the Netherlands Supreme Court.

**2. Equity Considerations:** The opinion states measures depend on states' capabilities and available means, emphasizing fairness but potentially limiting strict action.

**3. Advisory Nature:** The opinion is advisory and not legally binding, limiting its direct influence on state actions but retaining political significance.

## Issues with Growing Tourism in Antarctic

**Source-**This post on **Issues with Growing Tourism in Antarctic** has been created based on the article “**The last continent must remain a pristine wilderness**” published in “**The Hindu**” on 17 June 2024.

**Context-** The 46th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM-46), held in Kochi, Kerala, recently discussed Antarctic tourism and sought to bring in a regulatory framework but fell short of a definitive solution. However, ATCM-46 made progress by starting a new working group to develop a flexible and thorough plan for overseeing tourism and other activities in the next year.

At ATCM 44 in 2022, India voiced concerns about how tourism affects Antarctic research, conservation, and the environment. India stressed the need for monitoring these impacts and took strong action by passing its own Antarctic Law in 2022, even without global agreement.

**Read more-** [Antarctic Bill, 2022 passed in LS](#)

### What is the current state of tourism in Antarctica?

1) Antarctic tourism has witnessed a dramatic surge in tourist numbers, from a few thousand in the early 1990s to over 1,00,000 in the 2022-23 season, with an estimated 1,18,089 tourists in 2023-2024.

2) The United States and China account for more than 40% of tourists to the Antarctic. This growth is attributed to increased global interest in adventure travel and a desire to experience Antarctica's unique landscapes and wildlife.

3) **Benefits-**Antarctic tourism offers educational and economic benefits but also raises significant environmental concerns.

### What are the issues with growing tourism in Antarctica?

1) **Environmental Concerns-**



- A) Increased human presence disrupts wildlife, damages fragile ecosystems, and risks introducing invasive species.
- B) Ship traffic pollutes pristine waters, and tourism adds to the global carbon footprint.
- C) Climate change exacerbates these issues by opening new areas for tourism while increasing ecosystem vulnerability.

## 2) Governance Challenges-

A) The current governance framework for Antarctic tourism is fragmented and lacks clear regulations. The Antarctic Treaty prioritizes peaceful use and scientific research, while the Madrid Protocol offers broad environmental guidelines but lacks specific tourism regulations.

B) The International Association of Antarctica Tour Operators (IAATO) manages day-to-day operations through self-regulation, but many stakeholders find these guidelines insufficient to address mounting environmental pressures.

C) ATCM-46, the main global forum for Antarctic issues, recognized the need for strict tourism rules but couldn't get all countries to agree. The rule needing unanimous approval often delays decisions, letting countries' own interests block progress.

3) **Current Geopolitical Scenario-** The limitations of the consensus rule and the current geopolitical climate further complicate international cooperation on Antarctic governance.

## What should be the way forward?

- 1) There is a need to ensure a sustainable future for Antarctic tourism that involves improving environmental protection, setting up strong monitoring programs, and promoting international cooperation.
- 2) Recent initiatives at ATCM-46 provide a ray of hope. By emphasizing decisions based on scientific evidence and involving all stakeholders, Antarctica as an untouched wilderness can be preserved.

## Climate Change and Cooperative Federalism

**Context-** India has seen significant innovations recently, such as Digital Public Infrastructure (DPI) like Unified Payments Interface (UPI) and Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT), which have greatly improved financial inclusion. These achievements highlight India's capacity to solve complex issues through innovative solutions. Despite these successes, one of India's most pressing challenges is its insufficient response to climate change. The slow action in adapting to climate change threatens India's future, risking the progress made in other areas.

## What is the multi-dimensional impact of Climate Change?

1) **Environment and Ecology:** -Climate change manifests in India through erratic monsoons, extreme heatwaves, rising sea levels, and increased natural disasters. The country faces risks of longer-lasting heat waves and wildfires in forest areas.

2) **Agriculture and Food Security** -It presents an existential crisis for India, home to a significant portion of the global population. The majority of Indians are vulnerable to climate change-induced disasters, especially those dependent on agriculture for livelihood and food security, which heavily relies on favorable climatic conditions.

## What are the issues with Climate Change management in India?

### 1) Governance and Policy-

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- A) Initiatives such as the National Action Plan on Climate Change (NAPCC) have been slow, fragmented, and underfunded, focusing more on prevention than adaptation.
- B) The Prime Minister's Council on Climate Change (PMCCC) operates infrequently and lacks adequate staffing.
- C) At the policy level, India lacks formal climate legislation, hampering coordinated efforts across federal and state levels.

### 2) Lack of Financial Capacity of States-

- A) State-level units lack the capacity and financial resources to act, despite their responsibility for implementing India's international commitments.
- B) State action plans on climate change, including targets like achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2070, suffer from insufficient leadership and limited progress due to resource shortages.
- 3) **Lack of Comprehensive Data**- Many Indian workers labor outdoors, risking their safety, productivity, and daily income. Currently, there's little to no cohesive plan for dealing with extreme heat waves or comprehensive data on illnesses from severe weather patterns.
- 4) **Implementation Gaps in HAPs Across India**- Currently, only two out of 37 HAPs in India conduct vulnerability assessments to identify and assist impacted communities. Moreover, HAPs lack the establishment and institutionalization of monitoring systems to ensure adherence.

### Read more-[Heat Action Plans](#)

5) **India's Development vs. Climate Priorities**- India's main development agenda focuses on helping the poor, while the climate agenda appears more targeted at international forums and wealthy domestic groups. There is a concern that such actions could alienate powerful industrial interests and disrupt the current political and industrial status quo.

### What should be the way forward?

- 1) India must implement strong water conservation measures, building strategic reservoirs, transferring water between basins, and replenishing groundwater through effective policies.
- 2) Climate-resistant crops must be swiftly developed for each region's climate conditions, without delay in moving from lab to field.
- 3) There is a need to invest in long-term programs for afforestation and improve green spaces in urban areas.
- 4) A national awareness and action plan must be developed involving experts, and it should encourage the private sector to innovate with affordable local solutions.
- 5) India's climate adaptation efforts are largely reactive as opposed to being pro-active. Thus, there's a need for better coordination and resources for local and state-level adaptation plans.
- 6) Cooperative federalism is essential for the decarbonization of industrial assets and for the adaptation efforts needed to mitigate climate change. Therefore, prioritizing climate adaptation should be a key agenda item for the newly established 16th Finance Commission.
- 7) Climate action should be treated as a national security issue and integrated into development agendas at all levels of government.

## Unsustainable development in the Indian Himalayan Region (IHR)

**Context-** The Indian Himalayan Region (IHR) serves as India's primary source of water and provides essential ecosystem services. However, there is a significant disparity between the region's unique development needs and the current development practices being pursued, which threaten to undermine its economic viability.

The article highlights the need for a sustainable development model in the Indian Himalayan Region that balances economic growth with environmental preservation and disaster resilience.

### What approach has the Supreme Court recently regarding environmental conservation?

There is a shift towards a rights-based regime for sustainable development

- 1) **State of Telangana vs Mohd. Abdul Qasim-** The court emphasized adopting an ecocentric perspective where nature is central. It stated that humanity, as an enlightened species, must act as Earth's trustee
- 2) **Ashok Kumar Raghav vs Union of India:** The Supreme Court asked the central government and the petitioner to propose a way forward for the Court to issue directions on the carrying capacity of Himalayan States and towns.
- 3) **Great Indian Bustard case:**

- A) The court acknowledged the right to be protected from the negative effects of climate change. It explored the intersection of Articles 14 and 21, addressing both development rights and climate adaptation.
- B) The court emphasized that a stable, pollution-free environment is important for ensuring the right to life. Failure to support marginalized communities in adapting to climate change violates their rights to life and equality. Articles 14 and 21 mandate sustainable, strong infrastructure to ensure equal opportunities across the country.

A more detailed article on SC Ruling on right against Climate Change can be [read here](#).

### What are the issues with the current developmental model?

- 1) Hydroelectric power stations are rapidly multiplying along rivers and streams in the IHR, ignoring the rights of these water bodies.
- 2) Existing hill roads are being recklessly widened to four lanes in the name of development, often washed away during river floods.
- 3) A post-disaster assessment by the National Disaster Management Authority on the 2023 floods in Himachal Pradesh identified rampant construction violations on riverbeds, flood plains, steep slopes, seismic zones, and landslide-prone areas.
- 4) The Teesta dam breach in Sikkim and monsoon floods in Himachal Pradesh in 2023 underscore the environmental and ecological havoc caused by current development practices in the mountains.

### What should be the way forward?

#### 1) Adopting an ecocentric approach:

- A) The idea of giving nature fundamental rights highlights that natural elements like rivers, forests, and mountains have the right to exist, survive, persist, and regenerate their essential cycles.
  - B) This approach advocates for an ecocentric perspective where human development aligns with scientific principles and respects the rights of both humanity and the natural environment.
- 2) **Integrated approach:** Involving policymakers, planners, scientists, and local communities in addressing

environmental challenges ensures that decisions are based on research, compliance with policies, and meet local needs and concerns.

3) **Need for sustainable infrastructure**-There is a need to develop resilience against climate change impacts and disasters because it ensures that everyone has a fair chance to access opportunities and achieve equality and equity in their lives.

4) **Coordinated Planning for Disaster and Climate Resilience**- Different authorities must urgently coordinate their planning stages to ensure that every development plan includes provisions for disaster preparedness and climate resilience. Projects should proceed to implementation only after obtaining approval in these essential areas.

### Opposition to NITI Aayog's Great Nicobar Development Project

**Context:** The article discusses opposition to NITI Aayog's development project in Great Nicobar. Concerns include environmental impact, tribal rights violations, and potential seismic risks. The island, home to endangered species and tribal communities, faces significant ecological and social threats from the project.

For detailed information on **Concerns related to the infrastructure project planned for Great Nicobar** [read this article here](#)

#### Where is Great Nicobar, and who lives there?

##### A. Location and Description of Great Nicobar:

1. Great Nicobar is located at the southernmost tip of India, part of the Andaman and Nicobar archipelago.
2. The island spans 910 sq km and features lush rainforests, beaches, and diverse wildlife, including the endangered giant leatherback turtle and Nicobar megapode.

##### B. Communities Living on Great Nicobar:

1. **Shompen Tribe:** Approximately 250 people, classified as a Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Group. They mostly live in the interior forests and are hunter-gatherers.
2. **Nicobarese Community:** Includes Great Nicobarese and Little Nicobarese, practicing farming and fishing. Post-tsunami, many were resettled in Campbell Bay.
3. **Settlers:** Around 6,000 people from various Indian states, including retired military servicemen and their families, moved here between 1968 and 1975.

#### What is the NITI Aayog Project?

NITI Aayog's Great Nicobar Development plan aims to promote the holistic development of Greater Nicobar. Based on that, the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) **denotified the entire Galathea Bay Wildlife Sanctuary** for building port and other related infrastructure.

For more detailed information [read this article](#)

#### Why is there opposition to NITI Aayog's Great Nicobar Development Project?

- 1. Ecological Impact:** The project requires the diversion of 130 sq km of forest land and the felling of 10 lakh trees. Galathea Bay, a critical nesting site for the giant leatherback turtle, will be affected.
- 2. Wildlife Concerns:** The government denotified Galathea Bay and Megapode wildlife sanctuaries for the project. The giant leatherback turtle and Nicobar megapode, both protected under Indian law, will lose their habitats.
- 3. Tribal Rights Violations:** The project encroaches on the ancestral lands of the Great Nicobarese. The Tribal Council withdrew its no-objection certificate, citing concealed information and rushed consent processes.
- 4. Health Risks for Shompen:** Increased contact with outsiders risks exposing the Shompen tribe to diseases they have no immunity against.
- 5. Seismic Risks:** The Andaman and Nicobar archipelago is in a seismically active zone. Researchers criticize the project for lacking adequate earthquake risk assessments.
- 6. Local Concerns:** The Campbell Bay panchayat raised concerns about the social impact assessment for land acquisition.

### How the PESA has boosted forest conservation in India

**Context:** This article discusses the conflicts between conservation and resource extraction in India. It proposes that giving political representation to marginalized communities, through policies like PESA, can improve forest conservation and support the economic interests of these communities.

For detailed information on **Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas (PESA) Act, 1996** [read this article here](#)

#### What is the conflict in conservation efforts?

1. The conflict in conservation efforts in India primarily revolves around two issues: **conservation versus local resource extraction and conservation versus economic development**.
2. The central government **often prioritizes large-scale economic projects** like mining and dam construction over forest conservation, influenced by the political elite's interests.

#### How the PESA has boosted forest conservation in India?

- 1. Mandated Representation:** PESA mandates that all chairperson positions and at least half of the seats on local government councils in Scheduled Areas be reserved for Scheduled Tribes (STs). This political empowerment has directly influenced forest conservation efforts.
- 2. Increase in Tree Canopy:** According to the study, areas with ST representation under PESA saw an average increase in tree canopy by 3% per year. This demonstrates a direct positive impact on forest cover.
- 3. Reduction in Deforestation:** The same study found a significant reduction in the rate of deforestation in areas with ST representation. This indicates that when STs are involved in governance, there is a more pronounced commitment to preserving forests.
- 4. Resistance to Mining:** With increased ST representation, communities were better able to resist mining and other large-scale commercial operations that lead to deforestation. Areas close to mines saw greater reductions in deforestation rates after PESA elections.
- 5. Comparison with FRA:** The study shows that the Forest Rights Act (FRA) did not have additional impacts on conservation beyond those achieved by PESA, highlighting the effectiveness of PESA's approach to mandated political representation for conservation.



### What should be done?

- 1. Implement PESA effectively:** Ensure full application of PESA rules to empower Scheduled Tribes (STs) through local governance, especially in regions like Gujarat where implementation has lagged.
- 2. Empower Scheduled Tribes through PESA:** Enhance the representation of STs in local governance by fully implementing PESA, which mandates significant electoral quotas for STs. This empowerment leads to better forest stewardship, demonstrated by increased tree canopy and reduced deforestation rates, and equips ST communities to effectively resist destructive industrial activities such as mining.
- 3. Focus on democratic decentralization:** Enhancing representative and accountable local governance involves giving local actors discretionary power over resource management, proving more effective than merely administrative approaches.
- 4. Establish a single umbrella institution:** Create a centralized institution that empowers marginalized voices, balancing development and conservation efforts. This would consolidate power into a meaningful democratic authority, ensuring more effective management of forest resources and better representation of vulnerable communities' interests.

### Causes of drought in Maharashtra

**Context:** The article discusses the drought in Marathwada, Maharashtra. It explains how the rain-shadow effect and climate change worsen water scarcity. It highlights the problems with water-intensive crops like sugarcane and suggests solutions like better water management and crop diversification.

For detailed information on **Water Crisis in India** [read this article here](#)

### What are the causes of drought in Maharashtra?

- 1. Rain-shadow Effect:** Marathwada lies in the rain-shadow region of the Western Ghats, receiving only 600-800 mm of rainfall compared to 2,000-4,000 mm on the western side.
- 2. Climate Change:** A 2016 IIT Gandhinagar study found increasing drought severity and frequency in central Maharashtra, worsening the situation.
- 3. Water-intensive Crops:** Sugarcane, which requires 1,500-2,500 mm of water, occupies 4% of cropped area but consumes 61% of irrigation water. Government support has expanded its cultivation despite recommendations to ban it in low-rainfall areas.
- 4. Soil and Topography:** Marathwada's clayey black soil (locally called "regur") has a low infiltration rate, causing water runoff instead of groundwater recharge. This soil retains water, leading to logging or runoff, not percolation.
- 5. Geographic Disadvantage:** Upland areas face severe water scarcity as groundwater moves to valleys, leaving upland wells dry a few months after the monsoons.

### What should be done?

- 1. Implement Supply-Side Solutions:** Build water-conserving structures like contour trenches, earthen bunds, and gully plugs to capture rainwater runoff. Maharashtra has 1,845 large dams, but more small-scale structures are needed to manage water better.
- 2. Promote Water-Efficient Crops:** Shift from water-intensive crops like sugarcane, which occupies 4% of cropped area but uses 61% of irrigation water, to drought-resistant crops like pulses and millets.

- 3. Government Policy Change:** Follow the Maharashtra Water and Irrigation Commission's recommendation to ban sugarcane in areas with less than 1,000 mm of rainfall.
- 4. Use Employment Schemes:** Utilize funds from the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme to design silt-trapping mechanisms and train farmers on desilting techniques.
- 5. Diversify Agriculture:** Encourage high-value, low-water-using crops and diversify livelihoods to reduce dependency on water-intensive farming.
- 6. Address Groundwater Variability:** Provide special support to upland areas where wells dry up after monsoons.

## Subject: Internal Security

### Topic- Security Challenges and their Management in Border Areas - Linkages of Organized Crime with Terrorism.

#### Implications of terror attack in Raesi

**News:** The Raesi attack on a bus full of pilgrims in Jammu & Kashmir (J&K), resulting in nine deaths and 33 injuries, underscores the persistent threat of Pakistan-sponsored terrorism in the region. This incident occurred during a period of national celebration in India, highlighting the ongoing strategy of terrorist groups to exploit significant national events to convey their messages. The attack, claimed by The Resistance Front (a front for Lashkar-e-Taiba), signifies a renewed effort by Pakistan to destabilize J&K and challenge India's sovereignty. India's security apparatus must adapt to the evolving tactics of terrorist groups. The focus should be on preventing future attacks and ensuring the safety of civilians, especially during major events.

#### What are the implications of the Raesi Attack?

##### 1. Symbolic Timing:

The attack coincided with India's democratic celebrations, including the inauguration of the NDA government and the presence of a strong opposition, reflecting the terrorists' strategy to undermine such occasions. It conveys Pakistan's ongoing commitment to its "war by a thousand cuts" strategy in J&K.

##### 2. Message of Persistence:

The attack is intended to show that despite a reduction in the strength of terrorist groups, Pakistan remains invested in its J&K strategy. It aims to prevent the perception that the J&K issue has been resolved in favor of India.

#### What should be done?

##### Strengthening Local Governance:

Conducting assembly polls in J&K should not be delayed as it symbolizes India's clear intent and commitment to democratic processes.

Empowering local governance can help address the root causes of unrest and reduce the appeal of extremist ideologies.

### **Comprehensive Counter-Terrorism Strategy:**

Developing a comprehensive counter-terrorism strategy that includes military, political, and socio-economic dimensions.

Engaging local communities in counter-terrorism efforts and promoting development and integration of J&K into the national mainstream.

### **Enhanced Security Measures:**

Redoubling security efforts, particularly in vulnerable areas and during significant national events, is crucial. This includes better intelligence, surveillance, and quick response mechanisms to thwart potential attacks.

### **Diplomatic Pressure:**

India must continue to apply diplomatic pressure on Pakistan to curb its support for terrorist activities. Engaging international allies and organizations to hold Pakistan accountable for its actions in J&K is essential.

## **Topic - - Various Security forces and agencies and their mandate**

### **Different view on India's new carrier IAC-2**

**Context:** The article discusses the Indian Navy's progress towards acquiring a third aircraft carrier. Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL) will soon start constructing the Vikrant-class IAC-2. This new carrier aims to maintain naval capabilities and avoid losing shipbuilding expertise.

For detailed information on **Significance of aircraft carrier** [read this article here](#)

### **Why India needs new aircraft carrier?**

- 1. Strategic Deployment:** Fulfill the Navy's requirement for one carrier for each seaboard and one in reserve, supporting INS Vikramaditya and INS Vikrant.
- 2. Avoid High Costs of Skill Revival:** Learn from the costly revival of submarine-building expertise at Mazagaon Dock Shipbuilders after a 10-year gap (1995- 2025), which was necessary due to the unresolved corruption scandal with German submarines.
- 3. Counter A2/AD Threats:** Address the increasing anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities developed by China and Pakistan, which pose significant threats to carrier operations.
- 4. Indigenisation of Shipbuilding:** The IAC-2 will have more local content and upgrades compared to IAC-1 Vikrant, promoting self-reliance and strengthening India's domestic shipbuilding industry.

### **What are the different views on India's new aircraft carrier?**

- 1. High-Cost Concern:** The new carrier's estimated cost of around \$5-6 billion is seen as a major financial burden.
- 2. Operational Efficacy:** The carrier's operational effectiveness is questioned due to the advanced anti-access/area denial (A2/AD) capabilities of China and Pakistan.
- 3. Alternative Strategies:** The Navy is divided on whether to pursue a 'sea denial' strategy using submarines or a 'sea control' approach with carrier battle groups. Submarines are seen as cheaper and less vulnerable.
- 4. Resource Allocation:** Critics argue that resources should instead address shortages in critical areas like

submarines, corvettes, mine-sweepers, destroyers, frigates, naval utility helicopters, UAVs, and other ordnance.

**5. Air Force Perspective:** The Indian Air Force (IAF) believes land-based fighters like the Jaguar IM and Su-30MKI, equipped with advanced maritime strike capabilities, offer a more cost-effective and secure solution than carriers.

### India's response to China's PLA reforms

**Context:** The article discusses China's military reforms, focusing on the PLA's Western Theater Command (WTC). It highlights the WTC's combat training, air superiority efforts, and transportation capabilities in harsh terrains. India needs to assess and counter these developments.

#### What is the China's PLA recent reforms?

**1. Joint Network-Centric Force:** Since 2015, China's PLA has been focusing on integrating its services, arms, and systems into a joint, network-centric force tailored for the Information Age. This includes training and operational strategies that reflect modern warfare technologies and tactics.

**2. Combat Training and Simulations:** The PLA heavily invests in realistic combat training and simulations to improve their readiness. For instance, in August 2018, an anti-aircraft artillery unit from the Xinjiang Military District conducted a live-fire exercise in the Tian Shan mountains to test and refine their integrated combat capabilities.

**3. Air Superiority and Transportation:** Building air superiority is a central focus, demonstrated by their continued development of air defense systems and the introduction of advanced aircraft like the Xi'an Y-20 "Kunpeng." This aircraft enhances their capability to quickly transport essential supplies to troops stationed in remote high-altitude areas.

#### How is India Responding?

**1. Integrated Theatre Commands (ITCs):** India is working towards creating ITCs to promote joint military culture, not service-specific culture. This is seen as a response to the PLA's jointness efforts.

**2. Defense Minister's Priority:** Rajnath Singh, re-appointed as defense minister, prioritizes military modernization and ITCs creation. He acknowledges that theaterization in some countries has taken over two decades, indicating a long-term approach for India.

**3. Chief of Defence Staff's Role:** General Anil Chauhan positions ITCs as essential for India's combat preparedness, mirroring the PLA's jointness efforts.

**4. Air Defence Investments:** India invests in Very Short-Range Air Defence Systems (VSHORADS) and Man-Portable Air Defence Systems (MANPADS) to bolster its Army Air Defence capabilities.

**5. Aerial Superiority:** As of 2020, Indian fighter jets outnumber Chinese jets 250 to 157, underscoring India's emphasis on aerial dominance.

For detailed information on **India's Defence Modernisation** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

## Importance of written National Security Strategy (NSS)

**Context:** The article discusses the Chief of Defence Staff's comment on India's National Security Strategy (NSS). He noted that while policy, processes, and practices exist, a written policy is missing. This raises questions about the prolonged drafting process and the need for an official NSS to ensure clarity, accountability, and effective defense planning.

For detailed information on **National Security Strategy of India** [read this article here](#)

### Why Is There a Debate on the NSS?

- 1. Missing Written Policy:** The Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) mentioned that India lacks a written NSS, questioning the necessity of having one.
- 2. Prolonged Drafting Process:** For the past two decades, multiple drafts of the NSS have been circulated without finalization.
- 3. Unclear Progress:** The Defence Planning Committee, set up in 2018, was tasked with formulating the NSS, but its progress remains unknown.
- 4. Current Directive Inadequate:** India relies on the RM's Operational Directive, which is seen as insufficient.

### How Do Other Countries Handle Their NSS?

**China:** China publishes periodic white papers on its National Security Strategy (NSS), despite being generally opaque in its policies.

**Pakistan:** Pakistan has released its first National Security Policy for 2022-26.

**Israel:** Israel does not have a written NSS document but manages its security strategy effectively.

**India's Context:** Unlike these countries, India currently relies on the RM's Operational Directive, which is seen as cryptic and inadequate. The lack of a written NSS in India raises concerns about operational clarity, decision-making, and the need for a coherent national security framework.

### Why is a Written NSS Important?

- 1. Clear Strategy:** A written NSS would foster a "whole of nation" approach, ensuring synergy in harnessing comprehensive national power (CNP).
- 2. Milestone Setting:** It helps set clear milestones for capability-building, modernization, infrastructure development, and the Atma Nirbhar mission.
- 3. Accountability:** The present system of reviews by the Parliamentary Standing Committee and Auditor General is sub-optimal. A written NSS would allow for better reviews and audits using net-assessment and statistical tools.
- 4. Operational Clarity:** The NSS would provide clear-cut ends, ways, and means, fostering initiative, innovation, and improvisation at the operational level.
- 5. Leadership and Command:** A clearly spelled-out NSS would foster initiative, innovation, and improvisation at the cutting-edge level, essential for the operationalization of theatre commands and transformation.

### What should be done?

- 1. Adopt a Written Policy:** India should have a written NSS to foster a whole-nation approach and ensure strategic clarity.



**2. Improve Defense Planning:** Stabilize the new Integrated Capability Plan and Defence Capability Acquisition Plan to provide clear milestones for modernization and infrastructure development, as the current transition state is concerning.

**3. Enhance Decision Making:** Implement the NSS to reduce over-centralization and foster a decentralized Directive Style of Command, encouraging initiative and innovation at the operational level.

## Subject: Disaster Management

### Topic- Disaster and Disaster Management.

#### Arguments for and against recognizing heatwaves as a disaster under India's Disaster Management Act

**Context:** The article discusses the debate over classifying heatwaves as a recognized disaster under India's Disaster Management Act. This change would allow states to use specific disaster funds for heatwave management. Currently, heatwaves aren't included, leading to funding and resource challenges for states.

For detailed information on **Disaster Management Act 2005** [read this article here](#)

#### What are Notified Disasters?

1. Notified disasters are specific disasters recognized under the Disaster Management (DM) Act, 2005. The DM Act was created after the 1999 Odisha super-cyclone and the 2004 tsunami.
2. It defines disasters as events causing substantial loss of life, property, or environmental damage beyond the community's coping capacity.
3. Recognized disasters allow states to use the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) and State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF). In 2023-24, only two states drew money from the NDRF.

For detailed information on **National Disaster Response Fund** [read this article here](#)

#### What are the arguments for recognizing heatwaves as a disaster under India's Disaster Management Act?

- 1. Increasing Frequency and Severity:** Over the last 15 years, heatwaves have become more severe and frequent, posing greater risks to public health and safety. The rising number of heat-related illnesses and deaths, especially among those who work outdoors, underscores the need for heatwaves to be recognized as disasters.
- 2. Improved Disaster Response Funding:** Recognition would allow states to use funds from the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) and potentially the National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) for heatwave management, including financing Heat Action Plans (HAPs). These plans involve creating shaded spaces, ensuring water availability, and adjusting work and school schedules to mitigate heatwave impacts.

For detailed information on **Heat Action Plan** [read this article here](#)

#### What are the arguments against recognizing heatwaves as a disaster under India's Disaster Management Act?

- 1. Financial Constraints:** Recognizing heatwaves as a national disaster could significantly increase financial burdens. The 15th Finance Commission expressed that the existing list of notified disasters covers the needs of the states to a large extent, suggesting that the financial implications of adding heatwaves could be substantial.
- 2. Compensation Costs:** Official recognition would require the government to compensate for heatwave-related fatalities and injuries. This year alone, more than 500 heat-related deaths have been reported, and official recognition could lead to higher compensation costs.
- 3. Attribution Challenges:** Determining if a death was directly caused by a heatwave is complex, as heat often exacerbates pre-existing conditions rather than being the sole cause, making direct attribution difficult.
- 4. Existing Provisions for Local Disasters:** The enabling provision by the preceding Finance Commission allows states to use up to 10% of their State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF) for local disasters like heatwaves. States such as Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, and Kerala have already designated heatwaves as local disasters, utilizing this provision for management and relief, which may reduce the urgency for national recognition.

### Learning from Ahmedabad Heat Action Plan

**Context-** The article talks about recent severe heatwaves across India, where temperatures in some cities reached nearly 50°C. It underscores the growing danger of climate change and stresses the importance of taking proactive steps to safeguard people from extreme heat.

#### What are the lessons that can be learnt from Ahmedabad's Heat Action Plan?

- 1) Monitoring All-Cause Mortality-** In the 2010 heatwave in Ahmedabad, the overall number of deaths exceeded expectations, despite fewer reported cases of heat stroke. This highlighted the need to monitor all causes of mortality, not just heat stroke cases, for a more accurate assessment of heatwave impacts.
- 2) Simple and Well-Implemented Measures-** Ahmedabad's Heat Action Plan includes simple measures like early warning systems, interagency coordination, public awareness campaigns, and readiness of medical services. The important aspect is to ensure these measures are effectively implemented and accessible to the entire community, especially vulnerable groups.
- 3) Dedicated Nodal Officer-** They have appointed a dedicated nodal officer for heat action planning with a long-term role, enabling effective leadership, learning, and coordination. This officer receives meteorological warnings, shares alerts, and supervises the implementation of departmental measures based on alert levels (yellow, orange, and red).
- 4) Involvement of Facilitating Agencies-** They have involved local public health institutions, international knowledge partners, NGOs, and community-based organizations. These agencies brought expertise, helped with media outreach, and assisted municipal authorities in taking ownership and coordinating efforts.
- 5) Continuous Improvement and Evaluation-** The Ahmedabad Heat Action Plan is continuously reviewed and enhanced based on evaluations after each season. These evaluations analyze mortality and temperature data, compare it with previous periods, and identify areas for improvement. This iterative process has resulted in the addition of new elements and improvements in planning and implementation over time.

**Read more-**[Heat Action Plan](#)

#### What should be the way forward?

- 1) There is no universal heat action plan that fits every location. Thus, each city and district must customize the framework according to their specific requirements, environment, and available resources.

2) Tailored plans implemented diligently can safeguard people from extreme temperatures and enhance resilience against climate change. Thus, there is a need to prioritize the development of such resilience measures in response to this year's heatwave.

### Causes of forest fires in Himachal Pradesh

**Context:** The article discusses the severe forest fires in Himachal Pradesh, their causes, and the historical changes in Himalayan forestry practices. It suggests involving local communities in forest management and implementing various strategies to prevent fires and manage forests better.

For detailed information on **forest fire** read [Article 1](#), [Article 2](#)

#### What is the current situation of forest fires in Himachal Pradesh?

- 1. Extent of Damage:** Himachal Pradesh is experiencing severe forest fires, with 1,684 instances reported since April 15. These fires have affected 17,471 hectares of forest land.
- 2. Impact on Wildlife and Environment:** The fires have caused significant harm to wildlife and are contributing to the release of pollutants like black carbon, which accelerates glacier melting in the Himalayas.
- 3. Historical Data:** From 2001 to 2023, Himachal Pradesh lost 957 hectares of tree cover specifically due to fires, emphasizing the recurring nature of this issue.

#### What are the major causes of forest fires in Himachal Pradesh?

- 1. Dry Conditions:** Fires in the Himalayas often occur during the pre-monsoon summer period when moisture levels are low due to depleted snowmelt water.
- 2. Human Activities:** Common causes include unattended campfires and discarded cigarettes.
- 3. Historical Forestry Practices:** The shift from Banj oak to Chir pine, driven by commercial interests, has increased fire vulnerability. For example, from 1910 to 1920, the number of trees tapped for resin rose dramatically.
- 4. Faulty Forestry Practices:** Treating forests purely for their utilitarian value without community involvement has exacerbated fire risks.

#### What should be done about forest fires in Himachal Pradesh?

- 1. Involve Local Communities:** Ensure people living around forests participate in management to quickly respond to fires.
- 2. Reduce Chir Pine Trees:** Replace Chir pine, which covers 17.8% of forest area, with mixed forestry to reduce fire risk.
- 3. Implement Water Conservation:** Build check dams and revive water springs to improve moisture conditions.
- 4. Improve Forestry Practices:** Move away from commercial forestry practices that prioritize timber over ecological balance.
- 5. Seek Financial Support:** Advocate for disaster mitigation funds from the 16th Finance Commission to support these initiatives.