

**9pm**  
**Compilation**

**July, 2021 (Fourth Week)**

## 9 PM Compilation for the Month of July (Fourth Week), 2021

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# General Studies Paper - 1

General Studies - 1

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1. **Conjugal rights before Supreme Court**

**Source:** [Indian Express](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 1 – Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India

**Relevance** – Laws related to marriage are very important to save individual's from exploitation. All obsolete laws must be reconsidered.

**Synopsis:**

A petition has been filed in the Supreme Court (SC) challenging a **provision in the Hindu personal law related to the restitution of conjugal rights**. As per the petition, a grave violation of sexual and privacy rights happens whenever the right to restitution of conjugal rights is exercised by one spouse over another.

**Background:**

In the coming week, the SC may hear a fresh challenge to the provision allowing restitution of conjugal rights under Hindu personal laws. In 2019, a three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court had agreed to hear the pleas.

**About Conjugal Rights:**

- They are rights created by marriage, i.e. the right of the husband or the wife to the society of the other spouse.
- The law recognises these rights— both in personal laws dealing with marriage, divorce, etc and in criminal law requiring payment of maintenance and alimony to a spouse.
- The concept of restitution of conjugal rights is codified in Hindu personal law now, but has colonial origins and has genesis in ecclesiastical law.
- Similar provisions exist in Muslim personal law as well as the Divorce Act, 1869, which governs Christian family law.
- Incidentally, in 1970, the United Kingdom repealed the law on restitution of conjugal rights.

**What is the provision under challenge?**

- **Section 9 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955**, deals with restitution of conjugal rights and is under challenge.
- It states that when either the husband or the wife has withdrawn from the company of the other without a reasonable cause, then the aggrieved party may apply for restitution of conjugal rights. This provision requires a person to cohabit with another against their will.
- A petition for restitution can be filed in district court. The court, after being satisfied with the truth of such a petition or absence of legal ground to forbid restitution, may decree restitution of conjugal rights accordingly.
- **Normally, when a spouse files for divorce unilaterally**, the other spouse files for restitution of conjugal rights if he or she is not in agreement with the divorce. The provision is seen to be an intervention through legislation to strike a conciliatory note between sparring spouses.

### Why has the law been challenged?

- **Section 9 violates the fundamental right to privacy** which is now a fundamental right under article 21 of the constitution.
- Further, court-mandated restitution of conjugal rights amounted to a “coercive act” on the part of the state, which violates one’s **sexual and decisional autonomy**.
- Although the law is gender-neutral since it allows both wife and husband to seek restitution of conjugal rights, the provision **disproportionately affects women**.
  - Women are often called back to marital homes under the provision and given that marital rape is not a crime, leaves them susceptible to such coerced cohabitation.

### What has the court said about the law earlier?

- In 1983, the Andhra Pradesh High Court (HC) and the Delhi HC delivered opposite judgments on the restitution of conjugal rights.
  - The Andhra HC struck down the provision in the case of **T Sareetha v T Venkatasubbaiah** and declared it null and void.
  - The Court said it violated privacy rights and recognised that compelling “sexual cohabitation” would have “grave consequences for women”.
  - However, the Delhi HC upheld the provision in the case of **Harvinder Kaur v Harmander Singh Chaudhry**.
  - The court said it is in the interests of the State that family life should be maintained and that homes should not be broken up by the dissolution of the marriage of parents.
- Later, in 1984, the Supreme Court upheld Section 9 of the Hindu Marriage Act in the case of **Saroj Rani v Sudarshan Kumar Chadha**. It said that the provision “serves a social purpose as an aid to the prevention of break-up of marriage”.
- Thus, the Supreme Court upheld the Delhi High Court view and overruled the Andhra Pradesh High Court verdict.

### Conclusion:

Although the provision of restitution of conjugal rights has been upheld in the past, legal experts have pointed out that the landmark verdict in the privacy case has set the **stage for potential challenges to several laws**. This includes criminalisation of homosexuality, marital rape, restitution of conjugal rights, the two-finger test in rape investigations, and others.

## 2. Why UP’s proposed population control bill is bad as policy and politics

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 1 – Population and associated issues

**Relevance:** UP’s Population control policies have to be rational and focus on the welfare-based approach

### Synopsis:

UP’s population control measures **should tackle the socio-economic issues** in the UP rather than seeking a stringent approach towards **population control**.

### Introduction:

A [new draft Bill prepared by the Uttar Pradesh \(UP\) Law Commission](#) seeks to control the population by introducing a two-child policy.

**Read more:** [Sudden interest in ‘population control’ in Assam and UP points to political bad](#)

[faith](#)

#### Challenges with UP's Population control policies:

- Unlike in the past, the **population is growing not because couples have more children, but because we have many more young couples today.**
- The argument that **controlling the population will increase the natural resource base is also faulty.** The **rich consume far more natural resources** and contribute much more to greenhouse gas emissions **than the poor.**
- The **law discriminates against the youth.** As the draft bill did not cover, all couples with three or more children, who have completed their reproductive lives, will not fall under the ambit of the law. So, all older persons are automatically exempt, younger couples will be at risk of population control.

**Read more:** [Population control measures in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

### 3. Clean energy: How AI can help spot the copper we need

**Source:** [Down To Earth](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 1 – Distribution of key natural resources across the world

**Relevance:** Artificial Intelligence can help discover copper deposits

#### Synopsis:

Artificial Intelligence can help discover copper deposits formed along with ancient mountain ranges over the past 80 million years.

About Copper resources:

The global need for copper, however, could increase by 350 per cent by 2050, according to a 2016 study published in journal Science Direct. The study also underlined that the current reserves could deplete between 2035 and 2045, as wind and solar energy gains more traction and more people shift to electric vehicles.

So, the world is going to need massive quantities of copper

#### Applications of Copper:

- Copper is an **excellent conductor of thermal and electrical energy**; the power systems that utilise copper generate and transmit energy with high efficiency and with minimum environmental impacts. The use of copper in energy systems helps reduce carbon dioxide emissions.
- It can also be **recycled completely many times over without any loss in performance.**
- Copper is a highly efficient mineral used in renewable energy systems to generate power from solar, hydroelectric, thermal and wind energy.

#### Formation of Copper resources:

The hot magmatic fluid inside the mantle has copper, which, after millions of years of further plate movement, moves closer to the surface and can be extracted.

Generally, copper deposits are locked up in remote locations, including the volcanic mountain chains such as the Andes and the Rocky Mountains.

When tectonic plates converge, one plate slides beneath the other and descends into the Earth's mantle at rates of 2-8 centimeters a year (subduction). The process creates a variety of magmatic rocks (formed through the cooling and solidification of magma or lava) and copper deposits along the edge of the continent.

#### How AI can help locate Copper resources?

GPlates software is software that **uses machine learning to understand the link between copper deposits and the evolution of the subduction zone.**

Artificial intelligence measures how fast the tectonic plates are moving towards each other, how far the plate is from the subduction zone, how much copper there is in the crust, etc.

#### Terms to know:

- [International Energy Agency](#),

#### 4. Accepting radical otherness

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 1 – Salient features of Indian Society, Diversity of India.

**Relevance:** Religious tolerance is essential to preserve and protect Indian diversity.

**Synopsis:** The U.S.-based Pew Research Center's survey has thrown up an interesting finding on religious tolerance in India.

Introduction:

Pew Research Center has recently released the results of the survey titled 'Religion in India: Tolerance and Segregation'. The survey takes a closer look at religious identity, nationalism, and tolerance in Indian society.

Key findings of the survey:

- Most Indians (84%) surveyed said that **respecting all religions is very important to them** and all religious groups must be allowed to practise their faith freely.
- Yet, a considerable number of them also said they **preferred to have religious groups segregated and live and marry within their own community.**

**Read more:** [The Pew study's glazed picture of our religious tolerance](#)

Impact of the survey:

- This curious finding has **resulted in a BBC Asia report stating that India is neither a melting pot** (diverse cultures blending into one common national identity) **nor a salad bowl** (different cultures retaining their specific characteristics while assimilating into one national identity) **but a thali** (an Indian meal comprising separate dishes on a platter).
- How to preserve Indian Diversity?
- Sociologist Ashis Nandy had developed a framework in the 2000s to understand Religious diversity.
- In his framework, he said that, in regions that have **to accommodate not just diversities but "radical diversities everyday mechanisms of coping have to be evolved.**
- This has resulted in a **unique form of cosmopolitanism** where differences can be accommodated without pressuring members of one community to be like the other **based on a notion of universal brotherhood.**

Kochi model of diversity observed by Ashis Nandy:

- On the other hand, another aspect is also possible, where **members of one community can go to extraordinary lengths to help members of the other community** maintain their own customary practices including their separate dining and dietary habits.

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- This type of diversity is based on **tolerance that is built into people's everyday rhythms**, is not backed by any ideological justification. He termed it an “**unheroic form of tolerance**”.
- He observed this kind of **cosmopolitanism** in Kochi. Furthermore, he said this is the reason why the city, which has close to 15 diverse communities, had not witnessed any major religious strife in its 600 years of recorded history.
- This model of cosmopolitanism, where people accept “the otherness of the others” is different and easy to achieve than the Enlightenment version which teaches us to divest ourselves of all prejudices.

### Terms to know:

- [Melting pot diversity](#)
- [Salad bowl diversity](#)

### 5. Getting all Indian tap water may be desirable. But what's really needed is safe drinking water

**Source** – [The Indian Express](#)

**Syllabus** – **GS 1**- Distribution of key natural resources across the world (including South Asia and the Indian sub-continent)

**Relevance** – Clean drinking water is a basic human necessity. It must be ensured by resolving all the challenges.

**Synopsis** – Clean and safe drinking water situation in India and possible solutions to improve water stressed situation.

### About Jal Jeevan Mission [National Rural Drinking Water Mission]

- Announced on August 15, 2019.
- **Aim**
  - To supply 55 litres of water per person per day to every rural household through Functional Household Tap Connections (FHTC) by 2024.
  - The objective is also part of the Sustainable Development Goals.
- **The actual goal, however, should be** to provide clean and safe drinking water, which can be obtained through taps, wells, or other sources.
- **In Kerala**– people get safe drinking water through wells.
- **In Meghalaya** – People get safe drinking water through streams.
- **Is India facing a water-stressed situation?**
- **Yes, India is facing a water emergency**, it has 16% of the world population, but only 4% of freshwater resources.
- Water availability in the country was about 5,000 cubic metres per capita per year at the time of independence. It was greater than what was necessary. India has failed to generate such additional availability over time.
  - The global norm for a water-stress situation is 1700 cubic meters of water available per person.
  - In India, The Central Water Commission estimates 1,486 cubic metres for 2021, while the World Bank estimates 1,100 cubic metres, both of which are below the world average.

**Reasons behind the water-stressed situation in India-**

- Population explosion
- Inefficient collection of water and its inefficient use (such as in agriculture).
- **Possible solutions to overcome water stress situation-**
- Need to sort inter-state issues and required well define water rights (contrast surface water rights with groundwater rights).
- **Water conservation** is absolutely necessary to reduce extreme pressure from groundwater and to supply water for consumption.
- **Rework irrigation and cropping patterns** – there is a need to employ agricultural practices such as planting crops that require less water, setting up better irrigation systems, and developing farm-based water conservation structures.
- Water can be correctly priced, environmental regulations can be revamped, local capacity can be developed, and water user groups can be established.

**6. Population populism: UP draft population bill fails tests of necessity, intrusiveness**

**Source:** Down To Earth ([Article 1](#), [Article 2](#))

**Syllabus:** GS 1 – Population and associated issues

**Relevance:** It is a critical analysis of the UP's new proposed population policy.

**Synopsis:**

UP's new population policy and draft law try to use punishment as a tool to control fertility levels. However, evidence shows that focusing on the education and empowerment of women can yield better results.

Read More: [Family mis-planning](#)

**Challenges with the Draft:**

- The UP Law Commission drafted the bill without being asked either by the state government or constitutional courts.
- **Against women rights:** UP has already undermined their agency by denying them the right to choose their spouses through love jihad laws, and this bill now tries to control even their reproductive choices. Further, the reference in Section 8 of the bill to **'whoever procreates'** clearly applies only to women.
- **Against international commitment:** The Human Rights Committee of the United Nations has categorically mandated that state parties to ICCPR cannot adopt policies that are compulsory, coercive or discriminatory.
  - Being a signatory to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), India has to abide by the international norms on population control.
- A five-state study by a former senior Indian Administrative Service officer showed that coercive policies are ineffective in reducing fertility. The study, instead, revealed the following results.
  - There was a **rise in sex-selective and unsafe abortions** in states that adopted the two-child policy;
  - Men **divorced their wives to run for local body elections** and **families gave up children for adoption** to avoid disqualification.
- **Against well known internal and external examples to reduce population.** Such as,
  - Sri Lanka brought down its fertility rate via greater investments in girl-child education and a robust family planning programme.

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- Bangladesh did so by expanding the basket of contraceptive choices available to men and women.
- In Kerala, the state was able to bring total fertility rate (TFR) down to 1.6 by investing in girl-child education, employment opportunities, women's empowerment and a strong healthcare system.

**Read More:** [Population control measures in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

So, the focus should be on increasing socio-economic benefits and addressing the unmet need for contraception. This will contribute towards population stabilisation.

### Terms to know:

- [National Family Health Survey \(NFHS\)](#)
- [National Human Rights Commission](#)
- [National Population Policy](#)
- [Total Fertility Rate \(TFR\)](#)

# General Studies Paper - 2

General Studies - 2

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1. Sensitive and precise

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States

**Relevance:** To eliminate trafficking, India needs legislative action and welfare schemes for vulnerable sections should go hand in hand.

**Synopsis:** The draft Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill needs to be comprehensive and include causative factors.

Introduction

The draft Trafficking in Persons (Prevention, Care and Rehabilitation) Bill, 2021 is well-intentioned, to stamp out exploitative trafficking. But the bill lacks few nuances.

Salient provisions of the bill

- The bill aims at **preventing and countering trafficking in persons**, particularly women and children.
- The bill provides for care, protection and rehabilitation to the victims, while respecting their rights, and **creating a supportive legal, economic and social environment** for them.
- Furthermore, the Bill has expanded the area under coverage to include offences taking place, **not only within India but also outside of India.**
- Apart from that, the bill also envisages the **setting up of anti-trafficking committees at the State and national levels** to implement the provisions
- **Reporting of offences has been made mandatory**, the bill also prescribes penalties for non-reporting.
- Major criticisms with the draft Trafficking in Persons Bill
- **Does not include contributing factors:** The bill aims to rehabilitate trafficked persons, but misses the situations that led to trafficking. Such as vicious poverty, debt, lack of opportunity, and lack of development schemes.
- **Authority of NIA:** The bill hand over the investigation of trafficking crimes to the NIA. This has raised few challenges. Such as,
  - The move would **burden the already stretched NIA** unit further.
  - The move would remove the local enforcement agencies from the picture. Thus, it is an **attack on federalism.**
- The bill **does not consider consensual sexual activity for commerce:** This would only land up **criminalising sex work** and **victimisation of the exploited.**
- **Penalty provisions:** This provision did not consider when victims often do not want a complaint to be recorded.

Suggestions

- The Bill was up in the public domain for comments, civil society activists and legal experts. The Government **should incorporate the responses to its Bill** in order to ensure that the fence does not eat the crop.  
While sexual exploitation and trafficking can be ghastly crimes, invoking public horror. Passing an act without enough safeguard would be equally horrific.

**Terms to know:**

- [National Investigation Agency \(NIA\)](#)

**2. Why India is missing its vaccine targets**

**Source:** [The Indian Express](#)

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

**Relevance:** India's problem of vaccine shortage needs large scale capacity building and government commitments.

**Synopsis:** The production capacity of vaccines has not risen as claimed by the Centre. Several other issues are leading to vaccine shortage in India.

**About Vaccine Shortage:**

India's problem of vaccine shortage is not yet resolved. Currently, India produces two vaccines: Covishield by the Serum Institute of India (SII) and Covaxin by Bharat Biotech (BB).

**Read more:** [COVISHIELD and COVAXIN](#)

Recently, the health ministry has revised the target for July 2021 from 12 crore doses to 13.5 crore doses. But to achieve that, the vaccination rate should rise to 43.5 lakh doses per day.

But there are few challenges in achieving these targets. These are,

- The **supply of vaccines** remains considerably **lower than the demand** for vaccines.
- The current **rate of vaccination is not ramped up**. At present, India's vaccination rate was around 39.6 lakh doses per day.
- **Poor performance of State and private players:** [Under the previous Vaccine policy](#), 75% of Vaccines would be procured by the Centre and 25% would be available for private players. But State and private players have not purchased the vaccines. Even [after the new procurement policy](#), Private is not procuring enough.
  - So far, State governments and private hospitals directly purchased only about 4.2 crore doses
- **Delaying external vaccine procurement:** The procurement of other vaccines like Sputnik V, Corbevax and Zydus-Cadilla are getting delayed. For instance, [Indemnity issues are holding up U.S vaccine donation](#).

**Read more:** [What is "Indemnity" and why vaccine manufacturers are demanding that?](#)

**3. Towards freedom of expression**

**Source:** [Business standard](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Structure, Organization, and Functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

**Relevance** – Laws linked to national security need reconsideration due to their coercive nature.

**Synopsis:**

Reviewing the validity of Sedition law should be seen as a starting point for reviewing inhumane provisions of other laws like UAPA and NSA. This would uphold freedom of expression and strengthen constitutional spirit in governance.

**Background:**

- The Supreme Court agreed to hear a plea challenging the constitutional validity of the sedition law under Section 124A of the Indian Penal Code.
- A review was long overdue, given the conspicuous misuse of the sedition law by the Central and state governments.

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- It could mark the start of a belated process to strengthen Indian citizens' right to freedom of expression that is stifled by many Draconian laws.

### Other laws that demand review:

- **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act:** The UAPA, the country's anti-terror law, is particularly egregious as it requires the accused to prove themselves innocent.
  - A situation that makes bail a near impossibility, as the appalling treatment of the late Stan Swamy highlighted. Further, it also extends pre-chargesheet custody for 180 days.
  - Many have courageously pointed to the basic flaw in the application of the UAPA in conflating protest with terrorism.
- **National Security Act:** It is also a variation of colonial-era laws (including the infamous Rowlatt Act). It allows governments to **detain a citizen deemed** a threat to national security for up to 12 months or longer if the government finds evidence.
  - This law strips a person of basic rights: To consult a lawyer and to be informed of the reason for her arrest within five days. It gives the government the power to withhold information in the name of national security.
  - This law has been used to detain people associated with an alleged cow-slaughter case, and a Manipuri journalist for a controversial Facebook post.

### Conclusion:

India would benefit if these laws, too, were read down from the statute books. Doing so would help India, which signed a joint statement supporting freedom of expression at the G7 meeting as recently as June 2021, regain something of its tarnished global reputation.

### Terms to know:

- [Sec 124A \(Sedition law\)](#),
- [Kedarnath case](#),
- [National Security Act \(NSA\)](#)
- [Four fatal failures](#),

## 4. Areas of Cooperation and Competition

**Source:** [Indian Express](#)

**GS2:** Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

**Synopsis:** Ministry of Cooperation cannot always guarantee price stabilisation and growth.

### Do cooperatives guarantee growth?

- Firstly, in 1991 it improved the terms of trade for agriculture and benefitted millions of farmers.
  - Agri-exports zoomed, **but this led to higher domestic prices.**
- Secondly, in 1991, the finance minister **wanted to delicense the dairy sector** as well, but there was stiff opposition from Verghese Kurien, the "Milkman of India".
  - As a compromise, Narasimha Rao partially **de-licensed the sector through the Milk and Milk Products Order of 1992.**
  - It was after 10 years in 2002 that the dairy sector was fully de-licensed during Atal Bihari Vajpayee's tenure.

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- The developments in the dairy sector proved that competition between cooperatives and corporate dairy players has benefitted millions of farmers around the country.
- The **Amul model** included collecting milk from millions of small and marginal farmers.
- Then, processing as per food safety standards, and distributing to consumers in metro cities to start with, and then to second and third-tier cities.
- With the entry of the private sector, the growth of the dairy sector accelerated at double the speed.
- Now, **growth in the organized private sector is faster** than in cooperatives.
- Also, despite the grand success of Gujarat's milk cooperatives in Gujarat, the model did not spread to other states as successfully.
- In UP, the biggest producer of milk, cooperatives, are nowhere in the scheme of things.
- Thirdly, the government **recently created a new Ministry for Cooperation.**
  - But India's tryst with the cooperative movement has produced mixed results, few successes and many failures.
  - There are cooperatives in the financial sector, be it rural or urban.
  - But the **performance of these agencies** when measured in terms of their share in overall credit, achievements in technology up-gradation, keeping NPAs low, or curbing fraudulent deals has been **poor to average.**
- **Fourth**, it is often believed that **urban cooperative banks had huge transactions** during the de-monetization phase and were one of the **main factors responsible for the failure of demonetisation.**
- Fifth, the Subsidy **based Karnataka model distorts price to benefit milk farmers.**
  - In its eagerness to please milk farmers, the Karnataka Milk Federation (KMF), which sells its products under the brand name of **Nandini**, gives them Rs 5 to Rs 6 extra per liter.
  - KMF procures a lot of milk and then dumps it at lower prices in the market for consumers.
  - This depresses prices in adjoining states like Maharashtra, affecting the fortunes of Maharashtra milk farmers.
  - If Maharashtra and Karnataka were two different countries, Maharashtra would be challenging Karnataka at the WTO.
  - There is a question about the role of the new Ministry of Cooperation in such cases.
- Lastly, the Sugar cooperatives of Maharashtra initially succeeded but are in the doldrums now.

### **But, how Amul model got succeeded?**

- During Operation Flood, it received a lot of capital in highly concessional terms.
- But its success also owed a lot to Kurien who believed in **professionalism and business** and, therefore, kept politics away.
- He supported dairy farmers strongly, at times even at the expense of consumers.

### **Way forward:**

- Cooperatives desperately need technological upgradation.

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- Ministry of Cooperation should give **soft loans for innovation and technology upgradation** and extend the same terms to the private sector.
- A level-playing field is critical to see which model suits India the best.
- Ensure no political interference in the operation of cooperatives.
- Since no model is perfect that is why the government's endeavour should be to support the one that relies the least on tax payers' money.

### Terms to know:

- [Urban Cooperative Banks](#),
- [Operation Flood](#),
- [Ministry of Cooperation](#)

### 5. A new chapter in Nepal's quest for political stability

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

**Syllabus:** GS2 – International Relations (IR)

**Relevance:** Recent political events in Nepal, probable reasons, and lessons for India

**Synopsis:** Unfolding of political events in Nepal in light of KP Oli's tenure and possible lessons for India.

#### Background

On July 12, 2021, the Supreme Court of Nepal passed a judgement in a case demanding that Sher Bahadur Deuba be made the Prime Minister. Although the parliamentarians had gone to the Supreme Court as Mr. Deuba had gathered enough support to become the Prime Minister of Nepal under Article 76(5) of the Constitution, President Bidhya Devi Bhandari refused to entertain it. Instead, the President re-appointed K.P. Sharma Oli as the caretaker Prime Minister till the elections that they decided to hold in October and November 2021 were concluded. This ends now.

#### Impact of the verdict

Supreme Court verdict has ended the collusion between Mr. Oli and Ms. Bhandari to continuously take decisions that were against the provisions of the Constitution.

#### Oli tenure

- In the past, Mr. Oli's popularity rose when he **challenged India** during the blockade in September 2015 and raised nationalism as an issue to emerge as the leader who could lead Nepal.
- **A Stable government in Nepal:** For the 2017 Federal and Provincial elections, the two major communist parties, the Nepal Communist Party (Maoist) and the Communist Party of Nepal (United Marxist Leninist-UML), joined hands, and with a landslide victory, were to provide a stable government in Nepal in three decades. This coalition between the two parties had laid out some conditions, one of which was that Pushpa Kamal Dahal Prachanda and Mr. Oli were supposed to **rotate the prime ministership**.
- **Party in-fighting starts:** The **infighting within the ruling party** that united in May 2018 began to surface in December 2019. Mr. Oli had, in two years of his rule, ensured that his kitchen cabinet ran the country while his image and international relations were being handled by prominent citizens who kept defending him till the end. He unleashed crony capitalism. Many business groups gained from his rule.

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- **Challenge to India:** International relations witnessed a new low with Mr. Oli taking on India with an amended map of the country ([Kalapani dispute](#)), which only affected bilateral relations.
- **Agreements with China:** With China the agreements signed never saw the light of the day when it came to implementation. The complaints of Chinese investors in Nepal in terms of governance and bureaucracy have been no different than the complaints of others.
- **Mis-handling of COVID pandemic:** Handling of the novel coronavirus pandemic created a public outcry due to a lack of health-care facilities. He was personally dragged into the Nepal vaccine scam in the purchase of vaccines from the Serum Institute of India.

### Lessons for India

The happenings in Nepal offer lessons for India:

- India should not push relationships through intelligence agencies and other indirect ways as it fails each time. (The blockade issue with Nepal)
- India needs to **continue to build on people-to-people relationships** and engage through **official channels of bilateral platforms** and diplomacy.

### 6. How India can guard its interests should Kabul fall to the Taliban?

**Source:** [Indian Express](#), [The Hindu](#), [Livemint](#)

**Syllabus:** GS2 – International Relations (IR)

**Relevance:** Understanding India's future role and policy in Afghanistan, in light of American exit.

**Synopsis:** Future course of action for India when it comes to recent events in Afghanistan.

#### Background

With US and NATO completing their pull-out from Bagram air base and other key locations, the Taliban are making huge advances across the country, capturing districts, seizing key border crossings, and encircling provincial capitals.

As the Taliban gains ground inside Afghanistan, it's only a matter of time before they reach Kabul.

#### Taliban – back to old ways

Meanwhile, ground reports from the territories controlled by the Taliban say it is reimposing severe social restrictions, especially on women. It wants unmarried girls over 15 years old and widows below 45 years as wives for the Taliban fighters. International terrorist organizations appear to be playing an important role in Taliban's military advances.

#### India's concerns

For India and the Central Asian States, the worries are about the violence at the frontiers and the resultant refugee influx, extremism, and support to transnational groups such as al Qaeda, LeT, JeM, ETIM and IMU, as it happened earlier under Taliban rule.

#### Threat to India overblown

Fears and concerns of India regarding Taliban may be genuine but they are also overblown and exaggerated due to the following reasons:

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- **International circumstances are different today:** International politics is vastly different today from what it was in 1991 or even 2001. Hence, the return of Taliban does not pose the same kind of threat to India as they did in the 1990s.
- **Taliban's hostility towards India was found to be driven more by the Pakistani agenda** and less by any intrinsic animosity towards us. In recent times, their negative position towards New Delhi has been in response to India's support for the Afghan government and, until recently, the refusal to talk to them.
- Also, in today's world Pakistan will find it increasingly difficult to exert same kind of control over Afghanistan's security policies as it did in the past. Moreover, a surge of armed conflict across the Durand Line will result in destabilizing side-effects come that Pakistan experienced a generation ago.

India's policy wrt Afghanistan

- **Legitimizing Taliban:** India must hold on and not rush into any policy action that establishes the Taliban as a legitimate force
- **Influencing Pakistan's security establishment:** To ensure that Pakistan doesn't indulge in leveraging Taliban against India, it must influence its security establishment esp. the Pakistani military chief of staff. And an effective way to influence Pakistan's behavior is by talking to its sponsors. For this, India has a number of options to pursue. Washington, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi have significant common interests with New Delhi on various issues, including terrorism.
- **Wait and watch:** India can just sit back, observe what happens, and amplify the contradictions among the various powers that have stepped in.
  - For the Taliban, **Uyghurs of China's** northwest Xinjiang province are co-religionists just across the border.
  - For many **Pashtuns of Pakistan's frontier region**, the Pakistani army is an enemy that is oppressing their ethnic brethren across a colonial border they have never recognized.
  - The **Russians**, for their part, would not mind their Chinese allies getting a bloody nose.
  - The **Chinese** are unlikely to want to be the latest foreign power to enjoy the delights of Afghan politics.

Each of these fault lines presents New Delhi with options.

**Also Read:** [India's future afghan policy – Explained, pointwise](#)

### Way forward

India must be prepared to defend its interests at all costs. This, in turn, needs strategic patience that will help resist the temptation to normalise the Taliban. At the same time, Delhi must be prepared to discuss what are real and serious differences with key regional and international partners on the Taliban and the future of Afghanistan

### Terms to know:

- [Who are Taliban? – Explained](#)
- [SCO](#)
- [NATO](#)

## 7. Long game with Beijing

**Source:** [TOI](#), [Indian Express](#)

**Syllabus:** GS2 – International Relations (IR)

**Relevance:** Understanding China's future assertive foreign policy

**Synopsis:** China believes its own rise and the decline of the US are inevitable. India must pay attention

### Background

In his speech for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of the Chinese Communist Party (CPC), on July 1, 2021, Xi Jinping means said that “the Chinese people have stood up and the era of suffering bullying has gone, never to return.”

A possible interpretation by Chinese international policy experts and a future strategy that India can evolve to deal with China.

### US provocation

The current adversarial environment between US & China is due to US policy changes only. US-China relationship has always revolved around two ideas:

- The idea that the US will respect and not de-stabilise China's internal order and
- The idea that the Chinese will not intentionally weaken the US-led international order.

The current situation is due to the fact that the US is seeking a regime change. China is not to be blamed in any way, and is simply responding to American provocation.

Chinese experts advice to Washington is to **return to the earlier implicit consensus.**

### China's policy change

China's shift to a more assertive foreign policy is due to the ill-intention of the US towards China.

- The new challenge for Beijing is how to be seen to be championing the cause of multipolarity while actually striving for a duopoly with the US or a **multipolar order with US-Chinese relations at its core.**
- There is no contradiction between China seeking **global co-hegemony** and, at the same time, continuing to be a “**developing country**”, as a demonstration of its geo-political alignment.
- **Inclusive multilateralism** is what China is aiming at with several forums in South Asia.
- Difference b/w Chinese and American multilateralism
- As stated earlier, Chinese experts believe that China follows a model of inclusive multilateralism while American alliance-building activities constitute **exclusive multilateralism.**
- China's coalitions are **open and non-threatening** but the American ones are “**issue-based coalitions** in opposition to China.
- America **exports its value system** (democracy) as part of its foreign policy, while **China does not.** (*The argument is unconvincing when President Xi has, on more than one occasion, referred to the Chinese model as an alternative for developing countries who wish to be independent.*)
- Main message, by Chinese experts, to the Americans is to give up on pressuring China to change its political system as this will be futile, and to return to accommodating the

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Chinese Communist Party as a legitimate global player. The Chinese message to the rest is to bend to China's inevitable hegemony.

Problems before China

- **Debt problem:** China's total debt has grown from 140% of GDP in 2008 to nearly 290% of GDP now. To break out of this cycle while ensuring high growth China needs better technology, and indeed it is investing heavily in high-tech industries
- **Surveillance state:** The formidable digital-era surveillance state Xi is setting up internally has led to widespread suspicion of China's own high-tech exports – look at the escalating bans on Huawei products worldwide.
- **Structural limitations:** China's rapidly ageing population, its stark inequalities and neglect of its rural population are some structural limitations that China must wake up to.
- **Power struggle:** There's also the question of what happens when Xi, who's 68 currently and has abolished term limits to his time in office, ages or dies – an intense power struggle within the CCP is all but inevitable.

Concerns for India

From India's perspective, three points might deserve attention.

- First, the statement that there is a paradigm shift in post-Covid Chinese foreign policy.
- Second, that Beijing views America's so-called "issue-based coalitions" (presumably the Quad) as the most serious external threat to its political security and the biggest obstacle to national rejuvenation.
- Finally, that China is still offering accommodation if Washington just respects Beijing's internal order and acknowledges China's regional dominance.

Way forward

New Delhi will face intense pressure from Beijing, which will wax and wane over the medium term. To ride this out New Delhi must take a leaf out of Beijing's book and learn to play the long game. This could include intermittent wars, both on the LAC and the LoC. Indian foreign policy, and its military, will be tested as never before.

**Terms to know:**

- [QUAD](#)

### 8. How OPEC+ deal to withdraw output cut impacts India

**Source:** [Indian Express](#)

**GS-2:** Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests

**Relevance** – High global oil price contributes to increasing inflation level in India. Therefore, the decision of the [OPEC+](#) meeting is important for India.

**Synopsis:** OPEC (Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries) and its allies led by Russia have agreed to gradually withdraw Covid-related production cuts by September 2022.

**Background:**

- OPEC and its allies led by Russia have agreed to gradually withdraw Covid-related production cuts by September 2022.

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- OPEC+ will **increase overall production by 4,00,000 barrels** per day every month. It will go on till the remaining portion of the group's 10 million barrels per day production cut announced in April 2020 is completely reversed.
- The decision also **ends a standoff between the UAE and other OPEC+** countries on tying an extension of the supply agreement to increases in production.

**Read more** – [OPEC's output pact proposal: How will decision affect India?](#)

### Why this move?

- The OPEC+ group of countries entered into a two-year agreement in April 2020.
- It entailed **steep cuts in crude oil production to deal** with a sharp fall in the price of crude oil as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- However, crude oil prices have recovered to above the pre-Covid-19 levels.
- The current price of Brent Crude is about 39 percent higher than the price of crude at the beginning of the year.

### How OPEC+ deadlock was impacting India?

- India has already seen a 21.7 percent increase in the price of petrol and diesel since the beginning of the year. Petrol is currently retailing at Rs 101.8 per litre in the national capital and diesel is retailing at Rs 89.87 per litre.
- The price of Brent Crude had risen to over \$77 per barrel earlier in July over a **potential deadlock in OPEC+ negotiations** on production levels.
- Furthermore, this announcement of an increase in production levels may not result in price reduction because of the **increased mobility restrictions** due to the pandemic.

### Terms to know:

- [OPEC+](#),
- [What is crude oil?](#)

## 9. Co-operation ministry: Harbinger of hope?

**Source:** [Business Standard](#)

**GS-2:** Development Processes and the Development Industry — the Role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.

**Relevance** – How the new Ministry of Co-operation can make a significant positive impact on the ground

### Background

- On July 6, the Government of India announced the creation of a new Ministry of Co-operation.
- Over 300 million people are members of around 800,000 co-operatives in India today.

**Read more** – [Ministry of Cooperation](#)

### Need for the rejuvenated cooperative sector?

- Co-operatives have suffered a serious decline over the years, with their share in institutional credit reduced to a mere 10 percent today.
- The unholy trinity of **moneylender-trader-landlords** made a comeback in the rural credit market after the 1990s, when profitability norms were strictly enforced on public sector banks (PSBs).

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- Thus, a reformed and rejuvenated cooperative sector is required to break the monopoly of moneylenders. A Cooperation ministry will take care of this task effectively.

### What can the new ministry do to help?

Firstly, recommendations of **2005 Task Force on Revival of Rural Co-operative Credit Institutions**, led by the eminent economist, **A Vaidyanathan should be key to reforms**. It recommended that the reform of co-operatives should make member-centric, democratic, self-governing, and financially well-managed institutions.

**The Center** should make financial support provided by the Centre conditional on the reforms undertaken by the states to professionalise and democratise the functioning of the Primary Agricultural Credit Societies (PACS). PACS is the foundation of the rural cooperative credit structure. PAC's reform must involve

- Audit and clean-up of balance sheets,
- Installing sound accounting and monitoring systems to enable them to remain competitive and transparent,
- Technological upgrade
- Capacity building of personnel of hundreds of thousands of PACS.

In the years since the Vaidyanathan report, a major positive development has been the growth of robust and powerful SHGs and SHG Federations. Learning from their successes and failures could be very useful while implementing solutions for co-operatives.

The role of the states must be one that supports, facilitates, and strengthens civil society action in partnership with the most vulnerable. Very often, state action, in the guise of supporting the poor, has ended up seriously harming their cause. For instance, many farmers' movements have lobbied for repeated loan melas and loan waivers, which have only ended up undermining institutions like PSBs and PACS. That, in turn, leads to an unhealthy factor for shutting them down, as their balance sheets erode.

**Also Read** – [Cooperation and competition](#)

### Terms to know:

- [Primary Agricultural Credit Societies \(PACS\)](#)

## 10. One in three couldn't afford food year-round in 2020

**Source:** [Down to Earth](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Issues relating to Poverty and Hunger.

**Relevance** – The issue of health and hunger is one of the most fundamental issues. All aspects related to it must be considered to ensure a healthy life for the population.

### Synopsis:

The Covid 19 pandemic has raised poverty and decreased income levels across the globe. This has excluded almost 3 billion people from accessing a healthy diet.

### Background:

- The pandemic has brutally impacted the lives of common masses as incomes are decreasing while food prices are on the rise.
- The Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) in its **State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2021 report** has tried to estimate the impact of pandemic on intake of a healthy diet by masses.

### What is a healthy diet?

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- A healthy diet contains a balanced, diverse and appropriate selection of foods eaten over a period of time.
- It protects against malnutrition in all its forms, including non-communicable diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, stroke and cancer.

### Key Findings of the report:

- The FAO report has quoted a study done in 63 low- and middle-income countries covering a population of 3.5 billion on changes in the income of people. It has extrapolated its impact on choice of diets.
- The study found a significant dip in people's affordability for healthy food due to a loss in income. It suggests that the **pandemic led to an additional 141 million people being unable to afford a healthy diet** in the countries studied.
  - The number of people unable to afford even half the cost of a healthy diet was also estimated to have risen from 43 per cent to 50 per cent.
  - This has resulted in **healthy diets being out of reach of the world's three billion people**.
- The **primary reason for this is the loss of income. But food price rise has made the situation more acute**.
- By the end of 2020, global consumer food prices were the highest in six years. In the first four months of 2021, they continued to rise.
- FAO's analysis shows that the **cost of a healthy diet was 60 per cent more than a diet that just meets "requirements for essential nutrients"**.
  - It was almost five times as much as a diet that just meets "the minimum dietary energy needs through a starchy staple".
- **Around 2.37 billion people couldn't access adequate food in 2020**. An increase of 320 million people in comparison to the 2019 figure. Or, one in three people in the world couldn't access adequate food in 2020.
- The overall decline in food intake **has also increased hunger levels in 2020**. In comparison to 2019, there were an additional 161 million people who faced hunger. Thus, the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goal of eradicating hunger by 2030 seems an impossible task.
- **Undernourishment due to the pandemic has impacted children the most**.
  - According to FAO, in 2020, 149 million children (under five years of age) will grow up stunted or too short for their age. Some 45 million children have been wasted, or do not have the right weight for their height.

### 11. A more humane police force

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Police reforms

**Relevance:** A healthy Police system is necessary to ensure a feeling of safety and security among the masses.

#### **Synopsis:**

Our country needs a more humane and sensitive police force that works for the welfare of the citizens. This requires harmonizing the working environment of police personnel along with the fulfillment of their psychological needs.

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### Background:

- In 2015 (April – November), 25,357 cases were registered under the police category. This included 111 deaths in police custody, 330 cases of custodial torture, and 24,916 in others.
- These numbers were shared by the former Minister of State for Home Affairs, Kiren Rijiju, in the Lok Sabha in response to a question.

### Comparing the data with other countries:

- There were 700 deaths in police custody and custody-related operations in Australia from 1989-90 to 2010-11. Similarly, in the U.K., there were 1542 deaths in police custody or following contact with the police (1990 to 2015).
- This shows a **greater magnitude of police brutality on Indian citizens**, which instills fear in the mind of the masses towards the police force.

### Reason behind police brutality:

- In the Indian police force, **the lower ranks of police personnel are often verbally abused by their superiors**. Many are not considered as individuals, are not shown compassion by the senior ranks, and work in inhuman conditions.
  - Their relationship with their superior officers is stressful and sycophantic. There is no concept of welfare, and this manifests in their **improper behavior with the citizenry**.
- **Further**, some international case studies like **Milgrim's experiment** have shown that people obey to do harm if they are coerced by their superiors.

### Way Ahead:

- Several committees have made several recommendations on the issue of reforms for a healthy police system.
  - The Supreme Court of India was forced to intervene as neither **the Central government nor the State governments acted upon those recommendations**.
- **It is clear that the problem** is with the **political apparatus** considering the history of the Police Act.
  - The Police Act of 1861 was legislated right after the revolt of 1857 to bring efficiency in the administration of police and to prevent any future revolts. This meant that **the police were to always comply with those in power**.
  - Thus, **political will is desired** for bringing about any major reform in the Indian police force, which should also focus on the psychological aspect of policing.

### Terms to know:

- [Stanford Prison experiment](#)

## 12. The crisis ahead, from learning loss to resumption

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education

**Relevance** – School education needs drastic reforms to mitigate the pandemic's impact on education.

**Synopsis:**

If school education revert to business as usual, India has to be prepared to confront a disaster in educational outcomes

**Introduction**

Schools have been closed for 16 months now, with no clarity on or a timeline for their resumption as yet. The country has promoted online classes and e-connectivity as the solution.

- The majority of the states focus on secondary and higher secondary education. However, due to a lack of connectivity as well as a lack of access to e-devices, only a fraction of children in this age group have had online education of any kind.
- When it comes to children in the primary and upper primary classes, even such access has been limited to a minuscule fraction.

**Challenges in education during and after the pandemic:**

- **Challenges in online education:**
  - The **quality of online education** — it is largely abysmal. As most studies show, **the percentage of teachers** in the country capable of **handling digital platforms for pedagogic purposes is very small**.
  - The educational material provided by them has also been mere reproduction of what is used in a physical classroom. Hence, the **teaching-learning processes have by and large been poor**.
- When schools reopen, Indian schools revert to business as usual, this will create certain challenges. Such as,
  - With a reduced syllabus, and no change whatsoever in the overall curriculum or pedagogy, and racing through the syllabus to “catch up”. **Children who cannot keep up would simply be left behind**.
  - Children from the poorest sections will be the ones who are affected the most, by having to race in accelerated learning programmes with no support at home. This will create an **alienation of already marginalised students**.

**Various studies on education during the pandemic:**

- A study in the Netherlands has found that most **learning losses occurred “among students from disadvantaged homes”**. Researchers have also termed this as **nutrition loss and learning loss**.
- A large multi-State **study in the United States** records that the **pandemic “has also prompted some students to leave the public school system altogether”**.
- According to a study by the [Azim Premji Foundation](#) in India, **92% of children on average have lost at least one specific language ability** from the previous year across all classes; the figure is **82% when it comes to mathematical ability**.

Read more: [E-classes leading to learning gaps in higher education: Survey](#)

**Suggestions to improve education and global examples:**

- ‘One way of addressing the learning crisis might be **to repeat the entire academic year**. For instance, The **government in Kenya** has recently decided to do just this. Some countries, such as the **Philippines**, allow **extended time for classes on resumption**, both in the duration of school hours and more calendar days of interaction.

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- To **reduce and synthesize the curriculum** so that students are able to focus on a few subjects and learn them well'. For example, this is followed, for instance, by the State of Ontario in Canada.
- Introducing the concept of **One-to-one tutoring for the most disadvantaged learners**. For example, the National Tutoring Programme of the UK and a similar programme in Ghana were done this.
  - In Italy, university students are volunteering to conduct one-on-one classes for middle school children from poor immigrant backgrounds

### 13. Making India a sporting nation

**Source:** The Hindu

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Government policy

**Relevance:** Improving India's performance in Olympics

**Synopsis:** Factors behind India's sporting performance in Olympics, why it lags and steps to improve it.

Factors governing performance

There are many factors which are important in determining the performance of a nation in various sports.

- Beyond a threshold level, the **average standard of living in a nation** and the country's **population size** may be important determinants for its performance at the Olympics.
- **Genetic factors** are also no less important. This is clear from the following examples:
  - **Height matters:** The U.S., Australia and the Netherlands are powerhouses in swimming, but not China. Perhaps, taller people have an advantage in swimming or basketball but height is not important in shooting or gymnastics.
  - China excels in shooting along with the U.S. and Germany.
  - East Asian nations do better at table tennis than Western nations.
  - Russia, East European nations and Central Asian countries do well in amateur boxing whereas China and Central Asians countries do better in weightlifting and wrestling.
- **Mobilization of resources for athletes and sportspersons** also impacts their performance by giving them an edge over the others. Such infrastructure makes the U.S. the superpower in athletics and gymnastics, Germany in equestrian, and the U.K. in diving, sailing and cycling. For poor nations, creating such infrastructure is a luxury.

GDP vs performance in sports

The size of total GDP is hardly important in countries like India where a sizable segment is fighting hunger. A person of poor health can never be a good sportsperson. In countries where there are high levels of stunted growth, malnutrition and anaemia, we cannot expect good athletes. Thus, South Asian countries and countries in Sub-Saharan Africa don't fit in the econometric models built on total GDP.

Why smaller countries win more medals than India?

- **India is moderately good but not good enough:** Asian countries such as Kazakhstan, Singapore and Malaysia may stand below India in the medal's tally at the Asian Games, but are ahead of it at the Olympics. This is primarily because India is moderately good at many sports but not good enough to be the best at any of them. In contrast, Jamaica

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does well at the Olympics in sprinting and Kenya gets medals in long-distance running. They perform better than India though they are not great sporting nations.

### Suggestions

- India needs to **concentrate more on sports where the physical build of an average Indian will not stand as a disadvantage.**
- **One state, One sport policy:** States need to be integrated in a bigger way in India's sports policy. People of different States have different food habits and build. We should develop training infrastructure for different sports in different parts of the country depending on the inclination of people of that area and their habits and build.

### 14. The role that industry could play in India's Indo-Pacific outreach

**Source:** [Livemint](#)

Syllabus: GS2 – International Relations (IR)

**Relevance:** Understanding industry's role in furthering India's outreach in Indo-Pacific

Synopsis: Industry's contribution towards bolstering India's interests in the Indo-pacific in the light of the recently held Indo-pacific business summit.

### Background

The geostrategic relevance of the Indo- Pacific expanse, has gained prominence over the past year. Nations are seeking to expand their engagement in the region based on the principles of a free, open, inclusive and rules-based architecture with security as a core pillar.

- The Indo-Pacific region is a vast maritime zone where the interests of many players are engaged: India, Japan, France, and the United States, as well as medium and smaller powers like Australia, Indonesia, and South Africa; there are stakeholders from beyond the region, too.

### India's Indo-pacific strategy

- India's Indo-Pacific strategy was articulated by our Prime Minister at the **Shangri-La Dialogue** in Singapore in 2018 under the '**SAGAR**' concept of **Security and Growth for All** in the Region.
- This was further developed at the East Asia Summit of November 2019, where **seven pillars of the Indo-Pacific Oceans' Initiative** were enunciated. These seven pillars are:
  - Maritime security
  - Maritime ecology
  - Maritime resources
  - Capacity building and resource sharing
  - Disaster risk reduction and management
  - Science, technology and academic cooperation
  - Trade connectivity and maritime transport
- To take forward its call for a free, open, inclusive and connected region, New Delhi has joined and created new partnerships, such as the [Quad](#), [Supply Chain Resilience Initiative](#) and various plurilateral configurations.

**Also Read:** [India in the Indo-pacific – Explained](#)

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### Relevance of Indo-Pacific Business Summit

The recently held Indo-pacific business summit was important in three ways:

- **First event focusing on industry partnerships in the region:** It reiterated the relevance of economic engagement and highlighted trade and investment as a common pillar of an overall strategy.
- **Wide participation of govt & pvt sector:** The summit saw a wide participation of governments and private sectors across 21 countries. This highlighted how the Indo-Pacific is central to their foreign policies and their desire to deepen their partnership with India.
  - India's trade with the participating countries has **risen by about eight times** over the last two decades, with the US, UAE and Singapore as our top export destinations in the region.
- It outlined the scope of emerging economic partnerships beyond the usual areas of trade and investment.

### Areas of cooperation

India highlighted three important areas that the region's private industry must capitalize on, namely

- **Healthcare, Healthcare infra and medical supplies**
- **Digital sector:** This includes both physical as well as soft digital infrastructure. Such as Cross-border e-commerce, Data management, cybersecurity and capacity building
- **Green & sustainable development**

### Way forward

The seven identified pillars of India's Indo-Pacific strategy centered around maritime engagements can benefit greatly from the participation of industry across the region.

### 15. How a four-minister MEA could amplify India's diplomatic power?

**Source:** [Livemint](#)

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Executive

**Relevance:** Impact of recent MEA expansion on India's diplomatic strength

**Synopsis:** The ministry's expansion signals an intent to ramp up our global profile and gain greater influence.

**Introduction:**

- Recently cabinet expansion added two new ministers of state to join the ministry of external affairs (MEA).
- The MEA now has a record total of four ministers catering to India's foreign relations.
- Only the ministries of home affairs, education and social justice have a similar strength of four ministers each.
- Four ministers manning 'Team MEA' is a historic development.
- Significance of the move:
  - Firstly, in India's **competitive governmental environment**, the wisdom of committing more resources to external affairs is often under-appreciated.
  - Secondly, the link between domestic and foreign interests has convinced India's public about the utility of external commitments.
    - It is a clear demonstration of the **high priority to foreign policy** and international engagement.

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- A failure to grasp the benefits that accrue from investing in external relations had in the past held back the rise of our country.
- Thirdly, it will enable India to show a high-level presence in key parts of the world on a sustained basis.
  - In diplomacy, partner nations respect a country when its interlocutors are of a certain standing in protocol and hierarchy.
- Fourth, **due to the paucity of political emissaries** of a certain stature, India often has to make do with **representation by bureaucrats** in gatherings of the United Nations' agencies, the World Trade Organization, the G20, and several regional and sub-regional groupings.
  - While bureaucrats do the essential nitty-gritty work.
  - But there is no better way to emphasize India's international leadership than to have a minister at a marquee podium speak about politically sensitive issues.
  - Hence, the symbolic multiplier effects of the four ministers cannot be underestimated. India will come across globally as prepared to lead on big issues.
- Fifth, it will ensure **broader leadership oversight of our foreign policy towards** particular regions and management of Indian projects abroad.
  - For example, building plurilateral connectivity corridors and enhancing strategic coordination with partner countries through innovative ideas.
- Lastly, **ministerial expansion is only one way to beef up the MEA.**
  - For 2021-22, the MEA got barely 0.52% of the central government's overall budget.
  - The Parliamentary Standing Committee observed that the allocation is inadequate.

Way forward:

- The size of the of **Indian Foreign Service (IFS) cadre** must be considerably enhanced.
- **Initiating short-term contractual appointments** of experts under ministers so that India has sufficient personnel and supplementary diplomatic amplifiers to befit a 'leading power' in the world.

The MEA should bring in further reforms so that India could one day match China and the US in global presence and impact.

### 16. Legislature won't act criminalisation of politics: SC

Source - [Times of India](#)

**Syllabus** - GS 2 - Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions and basic structure.

**Synopsis** - According to the Supreme Court, the legislature has no power to prevent criminal from entering into politics.

Introduction

- Recently, the Supreme Court stated that no political party was interested in enacting legislation to decriminalize politics by prohibiting candidates against whom grave charges have been framed by the courts.
- Moreover, the legislative wing of the government has not been keen on taking a step in this direction.

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- According to data, there were 427 candidates with criminal antecedents who contested the assembly elections in Bihar in 2020.

About the SC ruling

The bench was hearing a contempt plea seeking action against political parties which failed to declare and publicise criminal antecedents of their candidates in the 2020 Bihar Assembly elections.

- The plea has alleged that the Election Commission (EC) and political parties disobeyed the Supreme Court judgment in February 2020 wherein it had made it **mandatory for all political parties to put up on their websites and also publish in two newspapers information regarding the pending criminal cases** against candidates being fielded by them and the reasons for selecting them.
- The plea also contended that several parties failed to put in the public domain the details of criminal antecedents of their candidates, apart from just citing their winnability as the factor for picking them.

Challenges and Limitations of SC directions

- The directions cannot bar a candidate against whom charges for heinous offences are framed from contesting.
- **The election symbol of the party cannot be suspended or withdrawn**– The symbol of a national party cannot be cancelled because directions haven't been followed in the state of a panchayat level.

### 17. **A compromise amid uncertainty**

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

**GS-2:** Bilateral, Regional, and Global Groupings and Agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

**Relevance:** Developments of OPEC are important for India due to its dependency on oil.

**Synopsis:** The OPEC deal to step up crude production will ease rising prices and balance domestic and global priorities.

#### **Background**

- OPEC+ will now step up crude production by 400,000 barrels a day starting in August. The deal will extend until the end of 2022.
- Thus, while the internal rift has been resolved, for now, the danger cannot be ruled out in the future given the increasingly economically and politically assertive UAE.

**Read more** – [How OPEC+ deal to withdraw output cut impacts India](#)

#### **Significance of increasing oil production by OPEC+ countries**

- The latest OPEC compromise echoes growing recognition of the delicate balance between competing domestic and global priorities.
- It will also help OPEC+ countries to maximize the returns on their substantial hydrocarbon resources, amid growing speculation of a peak in oil demand within sight.
- **Concerns for OPEC bloc**
- Strict implementation of **the Paris climate accord** could result in oil demand to peak by 2030, owing to the proliferation of alternative fuels and electric cars.
- Diversification of economies in anticipation of the unfolding global energy transition.

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- OPEC's other concerns are the stabilization of world oil prices without jeopardizing national expenditure programs.

### 18. Prosecutor, not persecutor

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Structure, Organisation and Functioning of the executive and the judiciary

**Relevance:** This article highlights the role of public prosecutors in ensuring a fair justice system.

#### **Synopsis:**

The public prosecutor has an ethical obligation to balance the interests of the victims, the accused, and society. His/her conduct shouldn't be of a persecutor aiming to persistently harass the accused.

#### **Background:**

- Father Swamy's arrest under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) has highlighted issues related to police power, pretrial detention, and draconian anti-terror legislation.
- However, the **role of prosecutors** towards under-trial detentions has been largely ignored.

#### **Role of public prosecutor in criminal justice system:**

- Public prosecutors are **influential at every stage of a trial** and **impact the degree of justice awarded to the accused**.
- They decide what offences the accused person should be charged with, whether to seek pretrial custody and what sentence to ask for.
  - The prosecutor played a significant role in ensuring that the bail plea of Father swamy doesn't get accepted by giving sufficient evidence against him.
  - Further, he argued that the court must give precedence to the interest of the community/society over Father Swamy's right to liberty.
- Public prosecutors also have a **role in narrative building**. Since they present the state's case in criminal trials, they build narratives of criminality and criminalisation. They play a key role in translating criminal "law on the books" to criminal "law in action".
  - Such narratives are especially crucial in cases involving alleged terrorist activities and "anti-nationals", where the issue of security of the state becomes important for an ordinary citizen.
  - Further, their **opinions have built a culture supporting undertrial detentions**. Currently, two third prisoners in Indian jails are undertrials.

#### **Judgements on their conduct:**

- **Sheo Nandan Paswan v. State of Bihar (1986):** The SC said that they **need not be extremely concerned about the outcome of the case**. They act as officers of the court and are obliged to ensure that the accused person is not unfairly treated.
- **Jitendra Kumar v. State (1999):** The Delhi HC said that the prosecutor cannot assume the role of a persecutor. It is no part of his duty to secure conviction at all costs.

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- The Public Prosecutor should act **fairly and impartially and must be conscious of the rights** of the accused.

### Way Ahead:

The public prosecutors represent the public and are not mere mouthpieces for law enforcement agencies. They **have an ethical obligation to seek justice** balancing the interests of the victims of crime, society, and those accused of crimes.

**Thus, public prosecutors who support criminal justice reform can be a powerful force for altering the culture of undertrial detention.**

### 19. Why the Supreme Court order on registration of migrant workers is welcome

**Source:** [The Indian Express](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance

**Relevance:** The problems of Migrant workers and lack of social protection needs urgent reforms

**Synopsis:** Recently, the Supreme Court [mandated a portal for the registration of all informal/migrant workers](#). This is one of the radical judgments aimed to reduce human suffering in the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic.

### Important observations by the court:

- The court explicitly recognizes the critical contribution of migrant workers to the economy. It reminds us that **workers in the unorganized sector** (around 93 percent) **need to be able to access numerous welfare schemes** in existence.
- The court also pointed out that the **main barrier** preventing access is the **delay in registering workers on the national database** of the Ministry of Labour and Employment.
- The court also stated that **“tall claims” made by various states** about the schemes introduced to help migrant workers are **ineffective without registration**.
- Further, the court called for taking all measures to register migrant workers under the three laws that are in place to protect labour and migrant workers. Namely,
  - 1979 Interstate Migrant Workmen Act
  - The 1996 Building and Other Construction Workers Act
  - The 2008 Unorganised Sector Social Security Act
- Furthermore, the Ministry of Consumer Affairs, Food, and Public Distribution has been ordered to **allocate additional food grains** to the states. It will be used for the disbursement of dry food grains **to migrant workers** under the One Nation One Ration Card scheme under the National Food Security Act.

**Read More:** [Migrants Workers, Who Returned to Cities Earned five-fold : Study](#)

### Other Supreme court interventions on Migrant workers:

- Earlier in May, the court declared that **authorities shall not insist on an ID card and accept “self-declaration”** from workers to access welfare programs.
- Similarly, in June, the court held that the **lack of documentation cannot be used as an excuse by the state** to abdicate its responsibility, especially during the pandemic.

**Read more:** [Migrant workers and their Social protection in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

**Challenges with the migrant workers:**

- Employers and contractors collude to keep workers in perpetual precarity to protect themselves against losses caused by shocks such as Covid.
- **Challenges in registration:** Migrants experience a variety of problems with registration, ranging from digital illiteracy, corruption, and the requirement of multiple documents. The **exclusion was markedly worse among the lower castes**, who were not treated with dignity.
- Labour departments are also facing **serious manpower and capacity shortage** to carry out the Supreme Court order.

**Terms to know:**

- [Unorganised Workers' Social Security Act, 2008](#)
- [One Nation One Ration Card scheme](#)
- [National Food Security Act](#)

**20. A cardinal omission in the COVID-19 package**

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health

**Relevance:** India needs to focus on Healthcare human resources for improving healthcare.

**Synopsis:**

The Government's COVID-19 health package II again overlooks the need for and availability of healthcare human resources.

**Why healthcare human resources are essential?**

In the mid-1980s, there were a number of government healthcare facilities across the country, with newly constructed buildings, imported state-of-the-art medical equipment such as infant radiant warmers, etc.

These were developed with financial and commodity assistance as part of the overseas development assistance (ODA) from many well-intentioned international donors.

But in the following years, these equipments were packed and stacked in storerooms. A key reason was that while infrastructure was upgraded, there was a **perennial shortage of health staff**, i.e., doctors, nurses and others

**About recent initiatives:**

Recently, Union government announced the "[India COVID-19 Emergency Response and Health Systems Preparedness Package: Phase II](#)". The package aims to boost health infrastructure and prepare India for a possible third wave of COVID-19.

But the Package barely has any attention on improving the availability of health human resources.

**How intense is the shortage of healthcare human resources?**

Even before the novel coronavirus pandemic, as reported in rural health statistics and the national health profile, there are vacancies for staff in government health facilities, which range from 30% to 80%.

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In addition to the overall shortage, there are also **wider inter-State variations**. Compounding the issues, states that have poor health indicators also have the highest healthcare human resource vacancies.

The Government seems to have recognised the gaps in health infrastructure; however, the shortage in the health workforce is barely being discussed.

**Read More:** [Brain drain in the health sector – Explained, Pointwise](#)

### **Suggestions to improve Healthcare human resources:**

India's health system will not benefit from ad hoc and a patchwork of one or other small packages. It essentially **needs some transformational changes**.

- The COVID-19 package II needs to be urgently supplemented by another plan and a similar financial package to fill the existing vacancies of health staff at all levels.
- India needs to assess the mid-term healthcare human resource needs and **formulate the Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS)**. IPHS can prescribe the required human resources and infrastructure to make various types of government health facilities functional.
- The **pandemic should be used as an opportunity** to prepare India's health system for the future. So, the government should also **take a review of actions taken** on the key decisions and Government promises made (to strengthen health services) since the start of the pandemic in March 2020.

### **21. How lack of proper identification of arrested persons slows down legal process?**

**Source:** [Indian Express](#)

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Structure, Organization and Functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary

**Relevance:** Remedies to make our legal system much more efficient

**Synopsis:** Pan-India guidelines for service of summons, warrants, grant of bail can help make the system quicker and more efficient

Background:

- A recent judgment of the **Delhi High Court** in **Sunil Tyagi vs Government of NCT** has highlighted the **deficiency in criminal law and the criminal justice system** with respect to proclaimed offenders.
- Further, the judgment has provided guidelines with respect to the process of service of summons, grant of warrants, grant of bail, and the process of the proclamation of an offender.

Major issues identified by the court

In this case, the Court identified two major issues.

**First**, that the process under sections 82 and 83 of the Code of Criminal Procedure (Code) was being issued routinely.

- It was found that the State was unable to furnish the complete address of the accused and the **notices weren't sent to the correct address**.
- **The second issue** identified by the Court was that once a person is proclaimed as an offender, the case is usually confined to the record room attached with the Court and forgotten.

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- On this point, the Court was of the view that the **State must make all reasonable efforts to arrest the proclaimed offender**, attach his properties and open a prosecution under section 174A of the Indian Penal Code.
- There is an urgent need to bring proclaimed offenders to book and to ensure that the processes of law are not abused by the accused as a loophole to delay criminal trials indefinitely.
- As per the figures submitted by the Delhi Police to the Court, there were approximately 18,541 proclaimed offenders in Delhi alone, of which nearly 6,000 had been accused of heinous offences.
- It can be safely assumed that the number would increase incrementally if such data is collated for the entire country.
- These figures translates into a backlog and contribute significantly to the number of pending cases.
- The issue leads to a **violation of the right to speedy trial** which has been read into the right to life by the Supreme Court in a plethora of cases.
- Suggestions
- **Trial-in-absentia provision:** Section 299 of the Code does permit the recording of evidence in the absence of the accused to a limited extent. So, there is a need to reconsider our legal position regarding the insertion of trial-in-absentia provisions in the Code. Any such legislative exercise must be balanced with the rights of the accused.
  - The insertion of the trial-in-absentia provisions can significantly deter the accused from abusing the processes of law as tactics to delay the trial.
- **Addressing issues wrt attachment of properties:** There are many issues pertaining to the attachment of property under section 83, like lack of manpower to physical verification of residential addresses, inadequate witness protection, difficulty in the attachment of movable property, etc. Addressing these issues requires addressing broader institutional issues pertaining to the functioning of our criminal justice system.

### 22. India must directly engage with Taliban 2.0

**Source:** The Hindu

**Syllabus:** GS2 – International Relations (IR)

**Relevance:** India's future Afghan policy in the light of American exit from Afghanistan.

**Synopsis:** India must reset its Afghan policy. Engagement with Taliban is a reality which cannot be ignored.

#### Background

With the withdrawal of the United States from Afghanistan in process, New Delhi has decided to ramp down its civilian presence in the war-torn country, bracing for a full-blown civil war.

- India has 'temporarily' closed its consulate in Kandahar and evacuated its diplomats and Indo-Tibetan Border Police (ITBP) personnel stationed there.
- This follows the decision to suspend operations in the Indian consulates in Jalalabad and Herat.
- As a result, India today is left with its Embassy in Kabul and the consulate in Mazar-e-Sharif.

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What should India do?

**Open talks with Taliban:** India must, in its own national interest, begin 'open talks' with Taliban. However, this doesn't mean that India should give recognition to the Taliban.

Evolution India's Taliban policy

India's Taliban policy has witnessed a gradual change over the past few years.

- In late 2018, when **Moscow organised a conference** which had the Taliban, members of the Afghan High Peace Council, and other countries from the region in attendance, India sent a 'non-official delegation' of two retired diplomats to Moscow.
- In September 2020, India's External Affairs Minister joined the inaugural session of the **intra-Afghan negotiations in Doha**.
- **Indirect talks with Taliban:** Reports have indicated that India has started reaching out to the Taliban which was indirectly confirmed by the Ministry of External Affairs when it said "we are in touch with various stakeholders in pursuance of our long-term commitment towards development and reconstruction in Afghanistan".

Rationale behind indirect talks

There are at least five possible reasons why New Delhi appears to want to keep the Taliban engagement slow and behind closed doors.

1. **Could push Afghan President towards China:** If New Delhi chooses to engage the Taliban directly, it could potentially push Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani towards China and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) for national security and personal political survival.
2. **With whom to talk within Taliban:** Decision makers in New Delhi are also faced with the dilemma of whom to talk to within the Taliban. New Delhi may have little access to the members of the Quetta Shura or the fighters on the ground in Afghanistan.
3. **Poor global image of Taliban:** Given the global criticism that the Taliban faced earlier and the lack of evidence about whether the outfit is a changed lot today, New Delhi might not want to open direct talks with the Taliban so soon.
4. **Retaliation by Pakistan:** Finally, it would not be totally unreasonable to consider the possibility of Pakistan acting out against India in Kashmir if India were to establish deeper links with the Taliban.

Why India should engage the Taliban directly?

- **Other countries will engage with the Taliban:** Taliban is going to be part of the political scheme of things in Afghanistan, and unlike in 1996. A large number of players in the international community are going to recognise/negotiate/do business with the Taliban. So, basic statecraft requires that we follow that route as well.
- **Countering Pakistan-Taliban relations:** The Taliban today is looking for regional and global partners for recognition and legitimacy, especially in the neighborhood. So the less proactive the Indian engagement with the Taliban, the stronger Pakistan-Taliban relations would become.
- **Withdrawal shows a weak strategic resolve:** India needs to court all parties in Afghanistan, including the Taliban if it wants to ensure the security of its civilian assets there. Withdrawing from Afghanistan now because the Taliban is on the rise (and we do not want to have relations with them) will go on to highlight how weak our strategic resolve is.

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- **Opportunity for other countries:** if India is not proactive in Afghanistan at least now, Russia, Iran, Pakistan, and China will emerge as the shapers of Afghanistan's political and geopolitical destiny. This will be detrimental to Indian interests.

Way forward

India as of now is strategically limited to Indo-pacific arena. Afghanistan could provide, if not immediately, India with a way out.

**Also Read:** [India's future Afghan policy – Explained](#)

**Terms to know:**

- [Great game](#)
- [SCO](#)

### 23. Federalism and cooperatives

**Source1:** [Business Standard](#) ; **Source 2:** [The Hindu](#)

**Gs2: Development Processes and the Development Industry — the Role of NGOs, SHGs, various groups and associations, donors, charities, institutional and other stakeholders.**

**Synopsis:** SC verdict has brought clarity in the regulation of co-operatives. Also, it has firmly stated that Reforms in the cooperative sector should not be at the cost of federal principles.

#### Background

- In a landmark judgment, the Supreme Court this week struck down certain provisions of the Constitution (**97th Amendment) Act, 2011**, which had added Part IX(B) to the Constitution of India.

#### The 97th Constitution Amendment & Part IX(B)

- **The 97th Constitution Amendment** came into effect in 2012. It was a major step towards infusing autonomy, democratic functioning, and professional management.
- **Part IXB** delineated the contours of what State legislation on cooperative societies ought to contain, such as
  - Provisions on the maximum number of directors in each society,
  - Reservation for seats for SCs, or STs, and women,
  - Besides, the duration of the terms of elected members, among others.

#### Why the Constitution (97th Amendment) Act, 2011 was struck down?

- The Parliament had passed the 97th Amendment without sending it to the states for ratification by at least half the state legislatures.
- Since co-operative societies were part of the State List of the Constitution, the **97th Amendment** violated the basic structure of the Constitution.
- The Supreme Court, by a 2:1 majority, upheld the judgment holding the amendment invalid, but only in relation to cooperatives under the States.
- The elaborate amendment would hold good for **multi-State cooperative societies**, on which Parliament was competent to enact laws.

#### Principle of Checks and Balance

- The Supreme Court is the ultimate check on the powers of the Union government, particularly in matters pertaining to the balance of power between the Union and the states.

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- The judgment has reiterated that the Parliament cannot make laws on state subjects without shifting them to the Concurrent List or the Union List. Except in cases of national interest, under **Article 249**.
- The court reasoned that even well-intentioned efforts towards reforms cannot be at the cost of the **quasi-federal principles** underlying the Constitution. Permitting such an action would undermine the entire federal structure of the country.

### What would be the impacts of this judgment?

- The Union government will now have to revisit the management and regulation of cooperative societies while respecting the Supreme Court's judgment.
- Recently, Senior Maharashtra politician Sharad Pawar, had written to the prime minister, arguing against the September 2020 amendments to the Banking Regulation Act, 1949.
- The act strengthens the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI's) powers to regulate cooperative banks.
- These regulatory changes will now have to be re-examined in light of the judgment on the 97th Amendment.
- It may be necessary to do the full task of properly obtaining ratification from the states for an amendment.

### What is the Way forward?

- The functioning of the Cooperative sector is hampered by political interference, lack of regular elections, etc. The cooperative movement certainly needs reform and revitalisation.
- There is no denying that the scope for democratising the functioning of cooperative societies and enhancing their autonomy remains unchanged.
- It is vital that the RBI continue to be able to treat cooperative banks as fully regulated participants in the financial sector.
- Otherwise, they have the power to create systemic crises, given that their poor governance builds up many bad loans and that they are chronically under-capitalized. It is also necessary for consumer protection.

### Conclusion:

The Supreme Court's order may have made it harder to ensure cooperative banks are properly regulated. Nonetheless, the Centre must find another way to do so in keeping with constitutional principles.

### 24. The direction that the NCF needs to take

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education.

**Relevance:** National Curriculum Framework has to include democratic principles.

### Synopsis:

Shaping a National Curriculum Framework using only the National Education Policy will be shortsighted.

### **About the National Curriculum Framework:**

The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has tasked the State Councils of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs) to develop four State Curriculum Frameworks (SCFs).

They pertain to **School Education, Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE), Teacher Education (TE) and Adult Education (AE)**. This is as in the recommendations of the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

At the first level, the **NCERT will provide templates to the States to develop four draft SCFs, the drafts will feed into formulating the National Curriculum Frameworks, or NCFs,** and the final version of the NCFs will be used as guiding documents to finalise the SCFs.

The cycle seems to be **designed to take on board suggestions from all States, thereby making the NCFs representative and inclusive documents.**

The NCERT will also **provide e-templates for each of these tasks, survey questionnaires/multiple-choice questions to conduct surveys,** etc. Thus, massive data collection seems to be in progress.

### **Advantages of NCF:**

NCF provides the following advantages. Such as,

- Flexibility in secondary education, examination reform, more exposure to Indian languages, and taking on board Indian knowledge systems can make our education system better.

### **What are the challenges with the NCF?**

- The kind of questionnaires and template that one develops can emphasise certain kinds of recommendations while muting some others.
- A huge opinion gathering exercise preceded NEP 2020. But these opinions are just heaps of words, devoid of any organising principle to decide priorities. A similar unorganised list is repeated in the name of pedagogical recommendations.
- Similarly, the NEP 2020 fails to provide appropriate criteria to choose pedagogy at different stages and for different curricular areas. Thus, the people developing NCFs have to deal with these issues in addition to finding a method of making proper sense of gathered public opinion.
- If the National Curriculum Framework for School Education (NCFSE) is purely guided by the NEP 2020, this is likely to ensure the unsound development of our schoolchildren.

### **How to improve National Curriculum Framework?**

- The NCF can take help from the **Secondary Education Commission Report (SECR) in the 1950s and Zakir Hussain's Basic National Education (BNE) report.**
  - The SECR had all three necessary elements of education. Such as the overall framework of values and future direction, current issues and problems of the education system, and public opinion.
  - The BNE has the rigorous derivation of **educational aims from the vision of society, curricular objectives from the aims, and content from the objectives** in a clear manner.

- Both the BNE and the SECR make **democracy the basis for working out the school curriculum**. But they do not philosophically argue or give the detailed exposition of the method; they make practical use of this approach.
- The **curriculum frameworks developed after the 1980s** in our country are completely **overwhelmed by the current problems or by the pedagogical ideals of child-centrism**. This should be avoided in the present one.
- The only way to wrest the judgment from the hands of the powerful is to have the curricular debates rooted in democratic values.

## 25. Bringing skills and education closer

**Source:** [Business Standard](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education and Human Resources

**Relevance:** Skill development and education need to be integrated to provide better results.

### **Synopsis:**

Skill development is a multi-dimensional problem. But the **linking skilling and education** is one of the crucial ones.

### **The situation of skill development in India:**

- Over **70 percent of India's workforce** is concentrated in **firms with less than 20 employees**. Studies carried out in 2016 as part of an Asian Development Bank report suggest that **micro-firms are 72 percent less likely to train their workers**.
- Similarly, while 80 percent of India's workforce is employed in informal firms, only 3 percent of workers are formally trained.

### **The link between education and skill development:**

The ultimate purpose of education is not only employment and employability, but something far more impressive. It is generally agreed that access to early, holistic, and life-long skilling and learning opportunities are crucial to improving employability, entrepreneurship, and workforce adaptability.

- General education should mean the attainment of an integrated set of foundational and transferable skills.
  - Foundational skills are basic cognitive skills such as numeracy, literacy, etc.
  - Transferable skills are social, communication, and behavioural skills that help navigate the work environment
- Increasingly, it is evident from various studies that **skills have a strong impact on labour market outcomes**, including wages, productivity, and adaptability to the changing work environment.
- Hence, there is a **strong argument for developing a holistic skill focus** that is not only limited to vocational education.

### **Advantages of integrating education with skill development:**

- **Imparting holistic skills can help make school-to-work transition smoother**. Recognising and imparting technical skills **can make education more attuned to market and employer demand**.

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- Further, In addition, integration of education and skilling pathways **can ensure that learners who enter the workforce with limited school education receive training** that is crucial to **succeeding in the labour market**.
- With the increased **contractualisation of labour**, the **incentives for formal firms to train workers are declining even more**. In such a situation, the primary and **foremost opportunity to skill young people are when they are still a part of the educational system**.

Integrating education with skilling is therefore the easiest path forward.

### **The impact of the pandemic on skill development and education:**

#### **Education:**

The pandemic has had an enormous impact on the education sector (leading to learning losses, increase in school dropouts). The poorest and most vulnerable children lost out, as the site of learning shifted from the classroom to online platforms.

#### **Skill development:**

In addition, the pandemic has also rapidly altered the nature of work. As workplaces increasingly shift to a hybrid mode of functioning, **New kinds of skills have become more valuable**. For example, digital skills have now become a core foundational skill.

As **workplaces are rapidly changing**, a **key skill needed for the future is the ability to “learn to learn” and “adapt” to new modes of working**.

#### **Suggestions:**

Strong foundational skills are necessary to ensure that workers are adaptive to change. The challenges (and opportunities) posed by the Covid-19 crisis make it the right time to **bring formal education and vocational education and training closer together**. It can be done by the following steps,

- **Mandate a holistic skills provision** across ITIs, schools, and colleges.
- **Develop a common vocational skills curriculum** and adopt a credit framework that helps improve mobility between skilling and general education

Hopefully, the recent decision to place these two crucial ministries (Education and skill development) under the charge of one cabinet minister is the first step in this long-overdue integration, which is necessary for better outcomes.

## **26. China-led South Asian Initiative**

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

**Syllabus:** GS2 – IR

**Relevance:** Understanding China’s strategy in undermining India’s role in South Asia

**Synopsis:** China-led South Asian initiative feels like yet another attempt by China to create a parallel bloc in South Asia to counter India.

### **Background**

Bangladesh has said that India too can join the China-led South Asian initiative for COVID-19 vaccines and poverty alleviation if it desires. It denied that a six-nation grouping launched recently was meant to exclude India.

- The Chinese initiative comes also at a time when India has been reluctant to revive SAARC, turning its focus more on yet another regional bloc–BIMSTEC.

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About China-led South Asian initiative

The initiative includes **China-South Asian Countries Emergency Supplies Reserve**, and a **Poverty Alleviation and Cooperative Development Centre**. They were set up in China on July 8.

- **Member countries:** China, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan, Sri Lanka
- **India, Bhutan,** and the **Maldives** are the only SAARC countries not a part of the China-led initiative.
- The Emergency Supplies Reserve is a **joint stockpile of emergency supplies** as part of efforts to tackle the covid-19 pandemic and other crises.
- The Poverty Alleviation and Cooperative Development Center aims to pool strength, integrate resources, and exchange wisdom to support and help the South Asian countries' economic development and livelihood improvement, jointly promoting the cause of poverty reduction.

Issues/Concerns

- **A new regional bloc in Asia:** This might be an attempt by the Chinese to counter India and carve a totally new regional bloc in Asia minus India. If poverty alleviation in South Asia is its major objective, then why is India left out? After all, it has the highest number of poor people, equal to those in the Sub-Saharan region. Also, only those South Asian nations which are part of the China-led Belt and Road Initiative are its members. Sooner, Maldives will also join the initiative as it has also signed up under BRI.
- **Counter to SAARC:** China is targeting South Asia and wants to counter SAARC, so it is now connecting with South Asian nations in the name of different initiatives. SAARC is coping with several problems within the region and is mostly distracted by the long-standing rivalry between India and Pakistan. After Nepal hosted its 18th summit in 2014, the 19th summit, which was scheduled to be held in 2016 in Pakistan, is still in limbo.
- **Counter to QUAD:** The China-led bloc could be Beijing's plan to create what some call a northern Himalayan QUAD aimed at countering the Washington-led Quad, of which India is an active member.

India's stand

Given continuing tensions over Chinese army aggression in Ladakh and New Delhi's firm stand that other bilateral relations cannot move ahead without a resolution of the boundary stand-off, it is unlikely that India would consider a new grouping involving China, especially one that could be seen to dilute its role in the SAARC region.

**Also Read:** [What India can learn from China's foreign policy?](#)

### 27. [How Open Network for Digital Commerce could disrupt India's e-commerce space?](#)

**Source:** [Indian Express](#)

**Syllabus:** GS2 – Govt policies and interventions

**Relevance:** Important for understanding the impact of ONDC on India's ecommerce sector.

**Synopsis:** Dominated by a few players, ecommerce presents a legitimate case for intervention. But government should proceed with caution as it comes with risks.

## Background

The central government has recently set up an advisory council for Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC). This latest intervention is aimed at curbing digital monopolies in the e-commerce sector by making the e-commerce process open-source. This, will result in a platform that can be utilized by all online retailers.

**Also Read:** [Open Network for Digital Commerce \(ONDC\)](#)

Why government's move is justified?

Following market conditions necessitated this move by the government:

- **Market dominance by few players:** The market is dominated by a few players who are facing investigations for unfair trade practices in many countries.
- **Existence of multiple smaller players:** The sector is characterised by many small players who individually do not have the capacity to have an equitable bargain with e-commerce companies.
- Economists call this a “market failure”, and it presents a legitimate case for intervention.
- However, in general, governments should intervene only when there is a **clearly identifiable market failure** or **massive societal benefits** from creating shared infrastructure.

## Designing a system

A system should be designed such that it has the greatest chance of success.

The three “layers” of an open digital ecosystem — tech, governance and community — provide a useful conceptual framework in terms of both adoption and safeguards.

### **Tech layer**

The “tech layer” should be designed for **minimalism** and **decentralisation**.

- **A facilitating role for the govt:** The government should restrict its role to facilitating standards and protocols that provide open access, and in getting them adopted organically.
- **Privacy should be inbuilt:** If built, the platform should be built on “privacy by design” principles. It should collect minimal amounts of data (especially personal data) and store it in a decentralised manner.
- **Using blockchain:** Tools like [blockchain](#) could be used to build technical safeguards that cannot be overridden without active consent.

### **Governance layer**

The “governance layer” around this should alleviate business fears of excessive state intervention in e-commerce.

- Standards or tech should be **accompanied by law or regulation** that lays out the scope of the project.
- If collection of any personal data is envisaged, passing the data protection bill and creating an independent regulator should be a precondition.
- To assure the industry of fairness, the government could hand over the reins of the standards or platform to an independent society or non-profit.

### **Community layer**

Finally, a “community layer” can cultivate a truly **inclusive** and **participatory process**.

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- **Ensuring inclusivity:** This may be achieved by making civil society and the public active contributors. This can be done by, for example, making recordings or minutes of the meetings of this committee public, and seeking wide feedback on drafts of the proposal.
- **Redressal of grievances:** Once the framework is implemented, ensuring quick and time-bound redressal of grievances will help build trust in the system.

How to encourage adoption?

Creation of ONDC is just one aspect. Its adoption in a sector with dominant players is a difficult task. Here is a possible solution:

- Creating **non-mandatory “reference applications”, and financial or non-financial incentives.** For eg: The government supported the rollout of BHIM as a reference app, and offered financial rewards through a lottery scheme to drive early adoption.

Way forward

An infra-led approach will not be sufficient. We need to supplement infrastructure with **tightly-tailored regulation**. Many countries are exploring the concept of “interoperability”, that is, mandating that private digital platforms like e-commerce firms to enable their users and suppliers to seamlessly do business on other platforms.

**Terms to know:**

- [Open Network for Digital Commerce \(ONDC\)](#)
- [blockchain](#)
- [UPI](#)

### 28. ‘Gatekeeper Model’ mooted to prevent suicides in prisons

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 2 – Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions, and Bodies constituted for the Protection and Betterment of the Vulnerable Sections.

**Relevance** – Proper human treatment of prisoners is one of the aspects of ensuring human rights in India.

**Synopsis:**

The National Institute of Mental Health and Neuro Sciences (NIMHANS) issues guidelines for dealing with mental health challenges. It proposes a ‘**Gatekeeper Model**’, where selected inmates would be trained to identify prisoners at risk of suicide and subsequently refer them to treatment or supportive services.

**Background:**

- The Ministry of Home Affairs(MHA) observed that the COVID-19 virus had posed unique challenges to the world. It has also affected the prisons and correctional facilities.
- Acting on the request of the MHA, NIMHANS **has issued a set of guidelines on the management of mental health issues of the prisoners and prison staff.**
- **Guidelines by NIMHANS:**
- Prisoners with mental disorders had to be **regularly assessed for the severity of the suicidal risk** and also put on regular and supervised medication.
- It proposes a ‘**Gatekeeper Model**’ where selected inmates would be trained to identify prisoners at risk of suicide and subsequently refer them to treatment or supportive services.

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- To address the prisoner's mental health needs, the **correctional facility should have links to community-based initiatives** like the District Mental Health Program.
- It proposes the introduction of a **buddy system in prisons**. Under this, social support through trained prisoners called "buddies" or "listeners" is provided to the prisoners.
- **Periodic telephone conversations with friends and family** should be conducted at regular intervals.
  - For instance, 58 mobile phones were purchased for prisoners in Tamil Nadu. It enabled them to make video calls to their family members in lieu of the physical interviews that were temporarily suspended in view of the pandemic.

### Need of Guidelines:

- There is a prevalence of mental illness and substance use disorder in about 80% of the prison population as per a **Bangalore Prison Mental Health Study**.
- Further, **incarcerated people are facing many vulnerabilities** during the pandemic, which might impact their mental wellbeing.
- The **prison staff is also working under tremendous pressure**. It is facing challenges in performing their duty while safeguarding themselves from contracting the infection.

### 29. **MGNREGA was safety net for workers during first wave, but there are holes in it now**

**Source:** [Indian Express](#)

**Gs2:** Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

**Relevance** – MGNREGA is one of the most famous and biggest employment programs. Any issue in this program can affect millions of lives.

**Synopsis:** There are issues in the disbursement of MGNREGA wages.

### Background

- The MGNREGA, among other social security programmes, can be a powerful safety net for the poor. For instance, it acted as a shock absorber during the first wave of the pandemic.
- The effective functioning of MGNREGA depends upon sufficient budget allocation, reliable payment systems, and ease of access to wages.
- Yet, the Government reduced the MGNREGA budget this year and neglected it in subsequent relief measures post the second wave.

### Issues in the disbursement of MGNREGA wages

**First, delays in the disbursement of Wages:** As per the Act, workers should get wages within 15 days of completion of work failing which they are entitled to compensation for delays. The MGNREGA payment process consists of two stages.

- **First Stage:** After work is completed, a **Funds' Transfer Order (FTO)** with worker details is digitally sent to the GoI by the panchayat/block.
- **Second Stage:** The GoI then processes the FTOs and transfers wages directly to the workers' accounts.
  - The Act's guidelines say that the first stage must be completed in eight days, and the second within seven days after Stage 1.

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- However, as per official data, only 26 percent of the transactions of the first quarter of this financial year were credited within the stipulated seven-day period.
- In 2018, the Supreme Court gave strong orders reprimanding the GoI for not paying compensation for the delay it was causing.
- Three years hence, the GoI continues to violate the Act and court orders.
- **Second, MGNREGA has been a laboratory of many experiments since 2012.**
- Until recently, every MGNREGA FTO consisted of multiple transactions of workers across caste categories.
- On March 2, the GoI issued a circular to change the payment system so that payments can be made separately based on the caste of workers (SC, ST, and “Others”). Its purpose was to assess, how much the SC/ST communities benefited from MGNREGA.
- While affirmative action is important, experimenting with the payment architecture without transparent discussions or a justified rationale is uncalled-for.
- While the purpose of knowing the amount of money accrued to SC/ST households is useful, it can easily be calculated after the wage payments are completed.

### Way forward

A robust mechanism is required for feedback from workers to evaluate the robustness of these systems. Further, India boasts 4,355 crore digital retail transactions in 2020-21 as per RBI data. These transactions usually take minutes to complete or a day in normal circumstances. In comparison, MGNREGA transactions, which are only 1.6 percent of the volume of these, get routinely delayed. These issues can only be addressed with strong political will.

### 30. A Bill to stop strikes at ordnance factories

**Source:** [Indian Express](#)

**GS2 + GS3:** pressure groups and formal/informal associations and their role in the Polity + Security Challenges and their Management

**Relevance:** This is an example of government powers to restrict the function of pressure groups for the sake of national security.

**Synopsis:** The Minister of State for Defence introduced the Essential Defence Services Bill in the Lok Sabha.

#### Background:

- Indian Ordnance Factories is the oldest and largest industrial setup. It functions under the Department of Defence Production of the Ministry of Defence. These factories form an **integrated base for the indigenous production of defense hardware and equipment.**
- Its primary objective is self-reliance and equipping the armed forces with state-of-the-art battlefield equipment.
- In June, the government announced **corporatization of the Ordnance Factory Board.**
  - Under this, the 41 factories of ammunition, and other equipment to the armed forces will become part of seven government-owned corporate entities.
  - The Defence Minister had assured that the interests of the OFB employees will be safeguarded.

**Need of reforms:**

- First, it is essential that an **uninterrupted supply of ordnance items** to the armed forces be maintained for the defence preparedness of the country. Also, it is necessary that ordnance factories **continue to function without any disruptions**. The Government should have the power to **meet the emergency**.
- Second, the move is aimed at **improving the efficiency and accountability of these factories**.
- Third, the Bill mentioned that there is a threat that the employees of these factories can go on a strike against the decision of **corporatisation of the Ordnance Factory Board**.
  - The recognized federations of the employees gave a notice for an indefinite strike. Following this, the conciliation proceedings initiated by the Government at the level of the Chief Labour Commissioner failed.
  - Now, the recognised federations of the employees have reiterated their intention to go on indefinite strike from July 26.
  - For the same purposes, the government had promulgated the Essential Defence Services Ordinance on June 30.

**What is the Essential Defence Services Bill?**

- **Aims and objective:** it is aimed at preventing the staff of the government-owned ordnance factories from going on a strike. It is meant to provide for the **maintenance of essential defense services** to secure the security of the nation and the life and property of the public at large.
- **Power and functions of the government:** The Bill empowers the government to **declare services mentioned in it as essential defence services**. It also **prohibits strikes and lockouts** in any industrial establishment or unit engaged in essential defence services.
- **Who will it affect?** It has a direct bearing on around 70,000 employees of the 41 ordnance factories around the country, who are unhappy with the corporatization of OFB.
- However, even the Cabinet note mentioned that there should be no change in the service condition of the employees of the OFB.

**31. Countering China means more role for Navy and Airforce**

**Source:** [Indian Express](#)

**Syllabus:** GS2 – International Relations

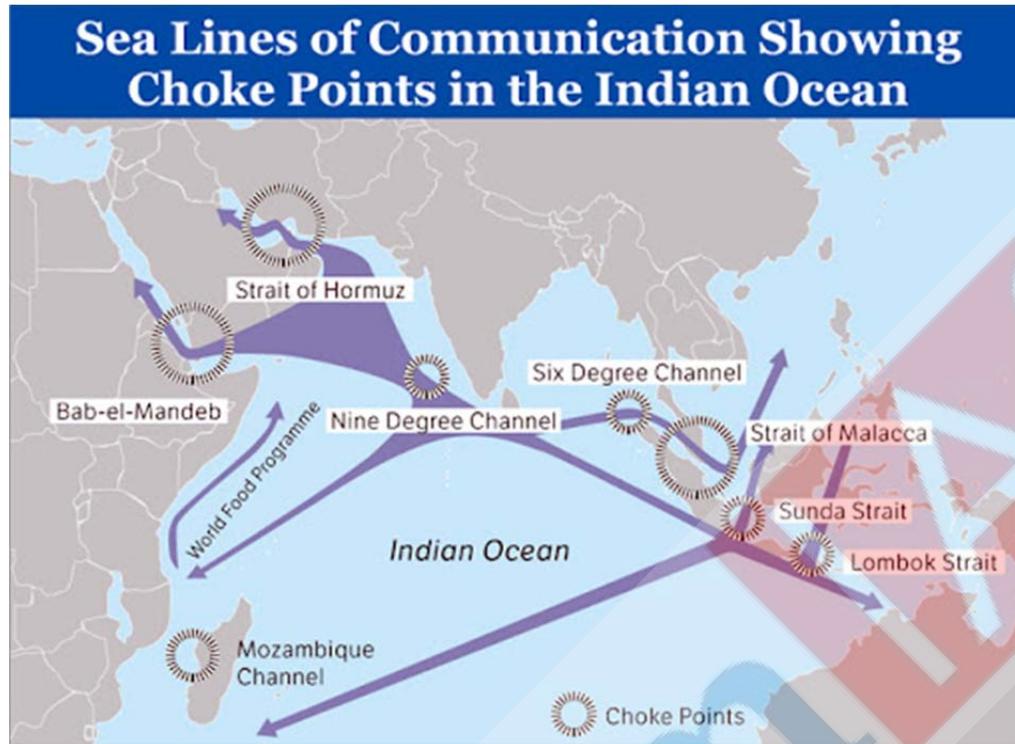
**Relevance:** Countering China's border aggression against India

**Synopsis:** We can face China by giving bigger roles to the navy and air force and downsizing the army by 200,000 men.

China: An aspiring world power

- **Huge defence budget:** China is an aspiring world power that spends **\$252 billion** on its defence budget, as compared to the **\$72.9 billion** that India spends. Both countries limit their budget to around 2% of their GDP, which in China's case is five times our size.
- **Formidable navy:** They have downsized their army and built a navy, which is growing faster than the US navy.

Strategic weakness of China



Choke points in the Indian Ocean

Their only strategic weakness is 70% of their imported oil. Hence, the only guarantee of Chinese non-aggression and good behavior is a well-crafted threat to their oil tankers and a complete naval mastery of the escalation that will follow.

Strategy to counter China

**Leveraging QUAD & Indian naval and Airforce capabilities:** India can start by dividing the Indo-Pacific, including the South China seas and the Eastern Indian Ocean, into areas of maritime search responsibility between the QUAD. All nations operate on a **common reporting communication net**, centered either in **Port Blair** or **Visakhapatnam**.

The QUAD aircraft can gain **information dominance** over the Indo-Pacific to monitor all PLAN (People's Liberation Army Navy) movements in **Malacca Straits**. This dominance can be used during the confrontation, to funnel PLAN units through the geographically constrained straits (*like the Strait of Malacca, see the map above*) into a killing ground. However, for this strategy to work, some changes are required:

1. **Turn Car Nicobar into an airbase:** Hence, it would be really beneficial to build up the **Car Nicobar airfield** into a full-fledged airbase and permanently station a squadron of suitable aircraft.
2. **Collaborating with Oman:** India can negotiate with Oman for the use of the **old RAF airbase at Masirah** to dominate the **Gulf of Hormuz** and threaten the **Chinese base at Djibouti**.

As it is evident, countering China with this strategy requires co-operation b/w QUAD members and is more reliant on India's naval & Airforce power instead of being military-dominant.

Why Navy & Airforce should be given bigger roles?

- **Unfavorable geography:** Relying on maritime and Airforce power offers a better alternative to militarily reinforcing the unfavorable geography of the Sino-Indian border in the Himalayas.
- **Expensive manpower:** In the future, **manpower is going to get increasingly expensive.** At present, our strategic options are constrained because the army gets 61% of the defence budget and 81% of it goes into manpower and maintenance.
- **Better conventional deterrence:** We can achieve better conventional deterrence against China by giving bigger roles to the navy and air force and downsizing the army by 2,00,000 men over five years through retirement and reduced recruitment.
  - The reduction in manpower will **save approximately Rs 30,000 crore**, which can be utilized equally by the three services.

Way forward

Countering China cannot be done by throwing expensive manpower at the problem. It is only possible by shifting the battlespace to advantageous geography, by a united navy and air force effort, while a technically advanced army holds the Himalayan border.

**Also Read:** [India-China relationship demands a minimalist approach](#)

### 32. [Afghanistan without Pak & Islam](#)

**Source:** Business Standard

**Syllabus:** GS2 – International Relations

**Relevance:** India's future course of action in Afghanistan

**Synopsis:** India's future afghan policy should stop viewing the Taliban as a hostile force. It should give a serious thought on the fact that despite having a different ideology, it might not be the enemy.

India's future dynamics with Taliban

Few things to consider:

- **Taliban's future interests might diverge from Pak:** Is there a piece of evidence that the Taliban, out of dependence or gratitude, will remain a subordinate of the Pakistanis forever? Considering their past this seems a possibility but not a surety.
- **Is Taliban our enemy?:** Taliban's ideology might be different, but does that necessarily make them enemies of India? Are they likely to launch a war on India or join Pakistan in its war against us? What will there be in it for them?
- **Taliban is smarter than Pak thinks it to be:** Pakistan has always fantasized about using the Taliban for strategic depth, but all these years they've used Pakistan for their own strategic depth.

Future outcomes in Afghanistan

- **Pakistan:** If the fighting rages on for long, Pak's hopes of quick benefits will disappear. The wounded, the homeless, the refugees, will all walk across the Durand Line.
- **Afghan government:** Chances that the Ghani government will decisively defeat the Taliban militarily are near-zero. The most it can ensure is a violent stalemate around key cities.
- **India:** The best outcome for India might still be a realistic negotiated settlement that brings peace and a sharing of power with minimal bloodshed. India has some leverage

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there, but very little to influence the course of the military confrontation. Both geography and geopolitics come in the way.

- Strategically, that is the most prudent way forward. The Taliban have no need or compulsion to fight India. They'd definitely not be fighting Pakistan's war against us. They neither want nor have the resources to radicalize India's Muslims. Plus, they will continue to have problems of their own in a broken, unstable country seeing a massive flight of talent and capital.

### Way forward

Indian government should stop seeing the Taliban as hostile just because it is conservatively Islamic.

ForumIAS

# General Studies Paper - 3

General Studies - 3

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1. [India's new Industrial policy is a replay of socialist era follies](#)

Source: [Live Mint](#)

**GS-3:** Changes in Industrial Policy and their Effects on Industrial Growth.

**Relevance** – An analysis of govt's Industrial policies.

**Synopsis:** It took decades for India to shift from its inward-looking and uncompetitive manufacturers. Now the government is again giving importance to inward-looking and uncompetitive companies to produce for the domestic market.

**Background:**

- One of this government's first promises was to revive the manufacturing sector.
- India had been **de-industrializing since the early part of the century**.
- Only mass manufacturing could create enough jobs for a workforce growing by a million young people a month.
- **The 'Make in India'** slogan quickly developed into a full-fledged government program.
- Further, the government is focused **on increasing foreign direct investment** and improving the business climate to attract multinational companies. It increased India's rank in the World Bank's Ease of Doing Business indicators in the five years.

**What are the remaining issues?**

- Firstly, in 2019 the **share of manufacturing** in India's gross domestic product stood at a 20-year low.
- Secondly, failure of Make in India.
  - Most foreign investment has poured into service sectors such as retail, software, and telecommunications.
- Thirdly, even 30 years after the liberalization of the private sector, the government is again **handing out subsidies and licenses** while putting up tariff walls.
  - The government shut down the 1950s-era Planning Commission, still, **bureaucrats are** directing state funding to favoured sectors.
  - It is done through new **'production-linked incentive' schemes**, in which companies receive extra funding from the state for five years in return for expanding manufacturing in India.
  - Such incentives were originally meant to support domestic mobile phone production.
  - Another issue is that a government that has held off on income support during the covid pandemic has budgeted roughly **\$27 billion for these industrial subsidies**.
- Fourth, the only thing worse than socialism with central planning is an industrial policy with no planning at all. There's no logical coherence to the sectors chosen.
- Fifth, India's haphazard industrial policy will fail, just as 'Make in India' did.
  - A scheme like PLI is not leading to job growth, leading to more economic dependence on China.
- Sixth, all the **major problems of India's socialist-era past are returning**.
  - The excessive closeness between bureaucrats and the beneficiaries of industrial policy.

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- India's top civil servant recently called for an "institutional mechanism" that provides "hand-holding" for companies.
- Companies that just began receiving subsidies are already asking the government to relax their production quotas.
- Lastly, the government's **manufacturing push never went much further than gaming the World Bank's indicators.**
  - No investor believes structural reforms have gone deep enough.
  - India has a large workforce but few skilled workers.
  - The rupee is overvalued.

### Way forward:

- Subsidies should be limited to sectors where China dominates supply chains, as part of a broader, China-focused trade policy that partners with the United States, Australia, and others.
- Invest in cutting-edge sectors.

Meanwhile, it's hard-wiring into the economy the kind of connections between industrial capital and policymakers that are nearly impossible to disentangle.

### Terms to know:

- [Make in India initiative](#),

## 2. Bank Nationalisation: 52 years and ticking

**Source:** [Business Standard](#)

**GS-3:** Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development, and Employment

**Relevance** – The government has cleared its intention to privatize the public banks. This article highlights some aspects of bank nationalization.

**Synopsis:** Nationalization has served its purpose. It's time to move forward with the retention of majority ownership of the government in a few banks to serve people.

### History of Bank Nationalization in India:

- 14 banks with deposits of at least Rs 50 crore each were nationalised on the midnight of July 19, 1969, by Indira Gandhi.
- Incidentally, this was not the first attempt to nationalise banks. An ordinance had been drafted in 1963 as well, seemingly under great political pressure to nationalise five major banks.
- A second round of nationalisation of six more commercial banks with deposits of more than Rs 200 crore was done in 1980.

### Reasons behind bank nationalisation

- **Mis-governance:** Post-World War II, many banks collapsed as they had been financing speculative activities.
- **Non inclusive:** over 300 banks during that time were under the regulation of RBI as many of them were reluctant to support industry and agriculture and only gave trade finance.
- **Bank Failure:** In 1960, Palai Central Bank and Lakshmi Commercial Bank collapsed, the RBI launched a massive consolidation drive, bringing the number of banks from 328 in 1960 to 94 by 1965.

### Had the objective of Bank Nationalisation met?

- Nationalisation of banks has served its purpose by taking banking to the hinterland and bringing a large part of the population into its fold.
- Since then, the banking industry has grown.
- In June 1969, there were 73 commercial banks; now there are 94, including small finance banks and payments banks but excluding regional rural banks and local area banks.
- The number of bank branches has grown from 8,262 to 158,373.
- One branch now covers roughly 9,500 people against 64,000 in 1969.
- In June 1969, the deposit portfolio of banks was Rs 4,646 crore, by June 2021, the deposit portfolio has grown close to Rs 153 trillion.

### Moving Ahead: Privatising Public sector banks

- Due to rising NPA's and faced with the issue of Political intervention, PSB's are in a bad state of financial health.
- Hence, the current government wants to Privatisise few of the PSB's to improve the banking sector in India.
- In February 2021 Union Budget, for the first time, spoke about privatising two such banks. Even before that, the government had committed to privatise IDBI Bank Ltd.
- In the run-up to the privatisation, the public sector banking industry had gone through a major phase of consolidation. The number of PSB's has come down from 27 to 12 in three years, between 2017 and 2020.
- Recently, Finance Secretary T V Somanathan said the government would "eventually" privatise most of the PSBs and keep its presence to a bare minimum.

### Terms to know:

- [Bank Nationalisation](#)

### 3. [Our liberalized policy on drones will serve us well](#)

**Source:** Livemint

**Syllabus:** GS3 – S&T

**Relevance:** Advantages offered by drones and how a liberal drone rules regime can help India get ahead in this sector.

**Synopsis:** Draft drone rules released recently are being hailed as progressive.

Why we needed a new set of rules?

The earlier drone rules were an over-kill that would have stifled drone usage and deprived the country of their myriad benefits. **Too many permissions** were needed to make, import and operate drones. Also, **finances so steep** were envisioned that they would have deterred startups from entering this field.

- With its revisions, however, the ministry has eased the regulatory burden, enabling a services market to take off.

**Also Read:** [Draft Drone Rules 2021 – Explained](#)

Benefits of drones

- Drones can serve a wide range of uses across sectors, from **farming and mining** to **e-commerce and vaccine drop-offs**.

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- **Monitoring of hazardous sites:** It is far safer to have a drone monitor a hazardous site, for example, than expose humans to it.
- For **transporting vital supplies** to places that are hard to access.
- **Utility for state initiatives:** Their utility for state initiatives is also very high, like
  - cartographic exercises or for farm surveys and police surveillance.
- It would serve our economy best if drones are deployed mostly by private players as **enhancers of efficiency**, rather than by the state as its eyes, ears and arms.
- For that, our drone rules need to be as **market-friendly** as possible within the constraints of public security.

The threat posed by drones

- **Lethal payloads:** A drone has the ability to carry lethal payloads. The recent drone attack on an air-force installation in Jammu brought this problem into sharp focus. Once drones are common in our skies, the prevention of rogue flights would need a foolproof vigil.

Way forward

While highly sensitive areas must stay off-limits to drones, we should not complicate matters for operators beyond what's necessary. Yet, we should be ready to adapt our drone rules in response to new learnings and advancements.

### Terms to know:-

- [Draft drone rules 2021](#)
- [Unmanned Aerial Vehicles](#)

### 4. AI's dark side

**Source:** [Times of India](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Science and Technology

**Relevance:-** Artificial Intelligence is the future of all machineries. However, Its potential misuse must be stopped for its optimum utilisation.

#### **Synopsis:**

The Government of India needs to invest in technology and talent in order to counter the danger posed by deep fake technology.

#### **Background:**

- Roadrunner: A documentary on the late chef Anthony Bourdain showcases the extraordinary advances of artificial intelligence (AI).
- It uses Deep Fake technology to show Bourdain mouthing words he never uttered. The documentary is a wake-up call on potential side effects of AI if it is used with malicious intentions.

#### **About Deep Fakes:**

- They are a subfield of AI that allow **realistic forgeries of both video and audio**.
- The speed of advances in AI have made it possible to create Deep Fakes using freely available software and computer processing power that can be rented.
- AI is perhaps the most transformative technology under development. Consequently, it also brings about entirely new risks.

**Risks posed by Deep Fakes:**

- **Deep Fakes pose a fundamental danger.** They can quickly **undermine trust**, the invisible bond that holds many collectives together.
- There are many examples of Deep Fakes being used by state actors to **influence elections and sow seeds of discord.**
  - The US has been a victim of Deep Fakes. Even in India, Deep Fakes are known to have been circulated in some electoral contests.

**Way Ahead:**

- AI's rapid upgrades, coupled with a transition to digital modes of governance, calls for a new level of safeguards on the part of the Government of India.
- The Government of India needs to adopt a proactive approach against deep fakes like the U.S government. It should invest in talent and technology to cripple hackers' cyber infrastructure.
  - The U.S has been a persistent victim of deep fakes and ransomware attacks, the latest one being the hacking of a critical oil pipeline on the eastern side.

**Terms to know:**

- [Deep Fakes](#)

**5. Calculating the benefits of lockdowns**

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

**GS-3:** Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development, and Employment

**Relevance** – Lockdowns due to Covid pandemic incurred a huge cost on the economy. This article highlights the same.

**Synopsis:** The article questions the practicability or even desirability of protecting lives with the aid of lockdowns.

**Background**

- Data show that as of now 26.2% of the world population has received at least one dose of a COVID-19 vaccine.
- Of them, only 1% live in low-income countries. By contrast, the richer nations, such as the U.S., Canada, Germany and Britain, registered above 50% vaccination by July 17.
- For India, the percentage of the adult population that has received at least one dose stands at 34.1% as of July 18.
- How long it will take to eliminate the inequality in the administration of vaccines is not known.
- Till that happens, long or short lockdowns from time to time will remain the only defence against the virus.
- Several researchers have studied the effectiveness of the lockdowns in economic terms. It is important, therefore, to take note of the issues that have significance in this context.

**The cost of a lockdown**

- **The trade-off between lives and livelihoods:** Lockdowns help you to keep on living, but they prevent you from earning a living. With incomes drying up, essential

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expenditures such as those on food, health and education cannot be sustained. Extreme lockdown policies imply that you cannot live a meaningful life.

- **Loss of GDP:** Some researchers believe that the cost of a lockdown can be measured by the value of lost GDP. **The Economist** quotes the case of two European countries (France and Italy). Both imposed heavy lockdowns and suffered 3% shrinkage in GDP.
- **The cost of saving COVID-19-infected lives:** Research has established that for every infected person cured in poorer countries, 1.76 children die on account of a fall in the quality of life.
- **Miseries faced by the vulnerable population:** There are other costs too that should not be overlooked. For example, Reverse migration of migrant labourers in India. Children are held back from school leading to emergence of child labour.
- **Not a permanent solution to control disease:** Lockdowns (severe or mild) prevent the spread of the disease so long as they last. But resurfaces once the lockdown is lifted. A U.S researcher has concluded that there is no lifesaving impact of lockdowns at all.

### How to calculate the value of a human life?

There are many different ways in which the value of a human life may be calculated.

- A direct method is to study the life insurance premiums people are willing to pay to ensure proper treatment if afflicted by fatal diseases.
- In rich societies, large amounts will be paid. This can be used to compute the social benefits of lockdowns, which will probably have higher values in rich societies than in poor societies where few are covered by life insurance.

### Way forward

Though lockdowns are unavoidable for now, but they need to be carefully designed, guided by trade-offs between harsh and mild policies. Or else, the damaged economies of the world will not revive too soon.

## 6. Experts seek reassessment of Power Finance Corp's annual discoms rating

**Source:** [Down To Earth](#)

**Syllabus** – GS- Paper 3 – Economy – Energy-related issues

**Relevance** – Healthy condition of discoms is necessary for ensuring proper electricity supply.

**Synopsis:** Energy experts have urged a reassessment of the Integrated Ratings for State Power Distribution Utilities being carried out on an annual basis since 2012 by the Power Finance Corp Ltd(PFCL).

### Background:

- **Recently**, the [Integrated Ratings for State Power Distribution Utilities](#) has been released. It rated the creditworthiness of electricity distribution companies or discoms by calculating whether money lent to them can be recovered promptly or not.
- **The report has found that** just five of the 41 distribution companies in the country are profiting / will be profitable and worthy of trust for the repayment of a loan.
- **These five distribution companies** are supplying electricity to people in Gujarat (four of the five companies) and the southern parts of Haryana.

### What are the problems with the ratings?

- **Firstly**, the ratings have not led to, much reforms on the ground. Despite being rated poor, loans and finances have been arranged and weak discoms have survived a decade.
  - **Example:** Tamil Nadu electricity distribution company always fares poorly in the exercise. But it has been arranging loans to support its existence.
- **Secondly**, the ratings should be such where all stakeholders can understand the true picture. This is not happening because the underlying data is not being released which would have allowed people to make their own analysis.
- **Financial Position of State Power Distribution Companies:** The financial position of State distribution companies has deteriorated. The cumulative losses of discoms stand at Rs 38,000 crore in the financial year 2020. Some key reasons for this include:
  - Free electricity distribution policies by the states to residents and farmers, with no reimbursement to discoms
  - State politicians' pressure on the electricity regulatory commissions to not hike electricity tariffs to customers
  - Electricity thefts
  - Technical losses.

### Way Forward:

- **Three committees** headed by Montek Singh Ahluwalia, V K Shunglu and B K Chaturvedi, have been formed since 2001 to chart a profitable way forward for discoms.
- **The key recommendation** has been to make the activity a business by improving operational and financial efficacy, and not treat distribution business as a public welfare measure.

### 7. Progressive drone policy that facilitates regtech

Source: [Livemint](#), [Business Standard](#)

**Syllabus:** GS3 – S&T

**Relevance:** understanding various dimensions of the newly released draft drone rules

**Synopsis:** Most important feature of draft drone rules 2021 is the stress on integrating technology with the regulatory framework (regtech)

Regtech

One of the most important features of the draft drone rules 2021 is how deeply technology has been integrated into the regulatory framework. If implemented as described, this could well be the country's first working example of '**regtech**'.

How do new drone rules facilitate regtech?

Various features of the draft drone rules signify the integration of technology with the regulatory framework:

**Digital Sky platform:** Central to this futuristic regulatory framework is the Digital Sky platform, a portal through which almost all compliances relevant to the drone ecosystem are intended to be managed.

**Also Read:** [Draft Drone Rules 2021](#)

The new drone regulations also refer to a number of technologies, which, even though unlikely to be in place when the rules come into force, could well be implemented soon. For instance,

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- **Geo-fencing:** to ensure that a drone only flies within a specified set of geospatial coordinates
- **Real-time tracking beacons** to constantly transmit the live-action speed, location and altitude of a drone
- **No-permission-no-take-off technology** will completely automate flight approvals in yellow and red zones.
- A framework for **drone traffic management** that will facilitate the creation of drone corridors—potentially even through red and yellow zones—that can be used by drone delivery companies and emergency services. Once in place, these dedicated corridors will greatly **improve the automated delivery** of everything, from daily groceries to life-saving medicines, and enable emergency services to rapidly reach people in remote locations.

### Issues

There are still a number of issues that need to be addressed:

- **Large restriction zones:** Red zones are defined as those areas over which drone flight will be permitted only under exceptional circumstances, while yellow zones are those within which drone pilots have to coordinate their operations with a relevant air traffic controller.
  - If these definitions are interpreted so broadly as to have large restricted zones, drone flights in virtually every part of the country will need prior approvals.
- **Sweeping penal consequences in the draft drone regulations:** According to Rule 33, any failure to comply is punishable under Section 10(2) of the Aircrafts Act, 1934, a provision that stipulates up to three months imprisonment for offenders.
  - Even a minor infraction could land a drone operator in jail. This is a risk that is bound to have a chilling effect on the industry.
- **Implementation of digital sky platform:** While almost all compliance obligations are intended to be fulfilled through a portal until we actually see Digital Sky in operation, we will not know if the procedures will be automatic and truly presence-less, or still make space for regulatory discretion.
- Suggestions
- **Prohibition over airports:** It is only over airports—where drones can interfere with aircraft operations—that drone operations should be prohibited.

### Terms to know:

- [No Permission, No Takeoff \(NPNT\)](#)

### 8. [What the Pegasus surveillance scandal means for Indian democracy?](#)

Source: [Indian Express, Indian Express 2, Livemint](#)

**Syllabus:** GS3 - Cyber Security

**Relevance:** Implication of the Pegasus spyware issue

**Synopsis:** The Pegasus scandal is a matter of grave concern for Indian democracy. Implications and future course of action.

Implications of Pegasus [spyware](#) issue

- **Allegations against Supreme Court:** There are allegations that the phones of the woman who had complained of sexual harassment against a former Chief Justice, and

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her family, might have been subject to surveillance. If true, it casts a serious doubt on the sanctity of the Supreme Court's proceedings.

- **Integrity of democratic institutions:** A system in which political opponents, officials of the Election Commission, and political colleagues could be subject to this kind of surveillance, will inspire less confidence in the democratic institutions too.
- **National security implications:** The explosive growth of surveillance technology vendors is a global security and human rights problem.
  - Even if authorized (which is doubtful), the use of Pegasus poses a national security risk. Who else will have access to that information? How much geopolitics is now influenced by these shadowy cyber weapons?
- The issue also indicates that surveillance rules in India are not as per global standards. This **hinders India's ability to enter data sharing agreements**, which allow government agencies to access data stored overseas when required, with other countries.
  - Surveillance rules in sync with the global standards would **allow India to enter into executive data sharing agreements** with countries like the US which **require judicial review of surveillance**-thereby solving the inequitable present data access scenarios where law enforcement authorities in India have to deal with a long process to access data stored abroad,

What needs to be done?

- **Global agreement:** It is not primarily China, but democratic states like Israel and UK, that are selling technologies for deepening the surveillance powers of states. There needs to be a global compact, or at least one amongst democratic states, on regulating these technologies.
- **Role of the court:** The Pegasus allegations are debilitating in their potential effect on the trust that underpins the pact between government and people. The court must play its role in ensuring that the questions are answered, and due process is followed, no matter where it might lead to.
- **Surveillance reforms:** Following reform measures need to be implemented –
  - The review committee consists of officers of the executive branch of the government. The oversight committee, to enable a working separation of powers, **must consist of other branches of government, i.e. the legislative and judiciary**
  - Neither the IT Act nor the 2009 Interception Rules, provide a **grievance redressal mechanism** for surveilled persons. Due to the strict confidentiality provisions, surveilled persons find it impossible to ascertain and prove whether they were being surveilled.
  - **Checks and balances on discretionary powers:** The law allows for surveillance for reasons including the interest of public safety where it is necessary or expedient so to do in the interests of the sovereignty and integrity of India” and for “public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of an offence”. This is a lot of discretion here, which often leads to abuse of these powers. Hence, laws should be amended and narrowed by providing an **indicative list of what constitutes abuse of surveillance or interception powers**, with stringent penal consequences.

### 9. India improves score in ease of cross-border trade

Source – [Live Mint](#)

**Syllabus** – GS 3 – Indian economy.

**Synopsis** – India has improved its ease of cross border trade ranking, the overall score is higher than many OECD nations and the average of the EU.

Introduction

- India has made significant progress in the ease of cross-border trade as per the latest UN Global Survey on Digital and Sustainable Trade Facilitation, which studied 143 different economies over a period of two years,
- As per UN Survey, India's rank moved up from 78.49% in 2019 to 90.32% in 2021. India was among the best-performing country in the South and South-West Asia region and in the Asia Pacific region.
  - In South Asia, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka were far behind India with a score of 64.5% and 60.2%.

The key parameter in the UN survey

The survey tracks 58 measures identified with trade facilitation which are seen as the global best practices, **For example-**

- Electronic submission of declarations
- Electronic payment of duties and fees
- Electronic application for refunds

**What steps were taken by India to improve cross border trade?**

- **Faster clearance at customs** such as
  - Electronic submission of custom declaration
  - Electronic issuance of import and export permits.
  - Facilitate processing of shipments without direct interaction with merchants.
- Paperwork to be done within a specified time frame
- Constant checking of smuggling and tax evasion
- Facilitate trade in times of emergencies

Way forward

The improvement in cross-border trade facilitation is a promising indicator of post-pandemic economic recovery.

- The findings are particularly encouraging for policymakers who are attempting to increase the country's appeal as a business destination

This will also help India to grab a greater share in the global supply chain of goods and services

### 10. [For Cairns dispute, international arbitration is not the way forward](#)

Source: [Indian Express](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Effects of Liberalization on the Economy.

**Relevance:** Various dimensions of the Cairn issue

**Synopsis:** The recent move by Cairn to seize India's sovereign assets has many grey areas of law that need due consideration.

Background:

Britain's Cairn Energy Plc has secured an order from a French court authorizing the [freezing of 20 Indian government properties in Paris](#) valued at over 20 million euros.

#### Evolution of Bilateral Investment Treaties:

- After the World Wars countries tended to look at foreign investments as a form of **neo-colonialism**.
- For many years, policies in developing countries turned inward-looking.
- As a result, developed countries sought to **guard their investments against expropriation**.
- Bilateral investment treaties became the primary tool to forge relationships between developed and developing countries.
- Some argue that the US signed BITs mainly to adopt standards for prompt, adequate and effective compensation in case of expropriation.
- With the advent of globalisation, BITs became the means for foreign investment in developing countries.

Issues with International arbitration:

- Firstly, **the question is about the jurisdiction of the International Arbitration Tribunal** as the most appropriate forum to preside over a matter pertaining to tax planning.
  - Taxing offshore indirect transfers, a structuring device to gain tax advantage from the indirect sale of assets is **not unique to India** (336 tax treaties contain such an article).
- Secondly, **retrospective tax is challenged on grounds of denial of fair and equitable treatment**.
  - In 2012, the Indian **government then retrospectively amended the tax code**, giving itself the power to go after **mergers and acquisitions(M&A) deals all the way back to 1962 if the underlying asset was in India**.
  - But the **principle, retrospective amendments are not unusual**.
  - For example, in the UK such an amendment was introduced in 2008 to check the use of avoidance arrangements via the Isle of Man.
- Thirdly, the **option of arbitration** upon an unsuccessful Mutual Agreement Procedure (MAP) resolution is **not available in India**.
  - Even when the OECD published its multilateral instrument for tax treaty amendment, India reserved the application of binding arbitration.
- Fourthly, **many developing countries view arbitration of tax matters as a breach of their sovereign right to tax**.
  - Taxation of cross-border incomes is resolved either through domestic dispute mechanisms or by competent authorities appointed to agree on an outcome not binding on the taxpayer.
- Lastly, **all investments have tax implications and the acceptance of distinction could create problems** even where tax is explicitly carved out from the bilateral investment treaties.
  - Over the years, there has been a rising trend in tax disputes involving BITs.
  - The Cairn case is one such instance where arbitration was invoked especially since MAP was not an option.

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- The UK-India tax treaty allowed for taxation of capital gains as per Indian law. India challenged the admissibility of the case before the arbitration tribunal. However, the case rests on a distinction between tax and tax-related investment.

**Read more:** [Cairn Energy dispute and Government disputes with private entities – Explained, pointwise](#)

Hence, given the complexity, the only reasonable solution would be a **negotiated settlement**. Even if there's a resolution in the Cairns case, questions of law would remain.

### Terms to know:

- [Income Tax Act](#)
- [Retrospective taxation](#)

## 11. India needs an economic stimulus that can also aid green energy transition

Source: [Indian Express](#)

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Conservation, Environmental Pollution and Degradation, Environmental Impact Assessment.

**Relevance:** Areas where India can direct its economic stimulus for maximum effect.

**Synopsis:** Some innovative and affordable pathways for a green stimulus which would create dispersed demand and jobs with large multiplier effects.

### Background

- A large demand stimulus seems necessary in getting the V-shaped economic recovery that India need right now.
- A green stimulus can create demand, address air pollution and accelerate the green energy transition.

### Innovative Ideas for Green stimulus

#### Conversion of crop waste into briquettes

- Within a few months from now, the burning of rice crop residue in northern India will create an air pollution crisis. This can be avoided by procuring all the crop waste at a remunerative price.
- The waste can be converted into briquettes, which can be substituted for coal in thermal power stations.
- NTPC has already done this successfully without adding to the cost of generation, as the cost of briquettes is comparable to that of coal in energy terms.
- The crop waste can be given for conversion into briquettes to private entrepreneurs.
- Dispersed private investment for conversion would take place, creating demand for the conversion equipment, labour and transport. Air pollution would be reduced without any cost to the government.

#### Investments in EV charging Infrastructure:

- Electric vehicles are eco-friendly and are cheaper to run on a life cycle per km basis.
- But demand is not rising because of the lack of charging infrastructure.
- Till a critical mass of charging infrastructure is created, demand for EVs will not pick up and the investment on charging stations would not generate returns.

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- A **national programme for building charging stations** in all cities with a population of over a million is needed. It can be financed fully through a central government-guaranteed debt.
- The **purchase of electric buses for city bus services** may also be fully financed through government-guaranteed debt.
- These measures, in addition to creating a demand stimulus, would also lead to substantial improvement in air quality in our highly polluted cities.

### Policy Guidelines to support Solar Power

- India has made an ambitious commitment under the **Paris Agreement** to aim for 450 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030.
- To achieve this, electricity distribution companies should be persuaded by states to **announce a remunerative price for solar power in rural areas**. This does not need any transmission investments.
- Rather, Distribution companies would save money.
- Solar power generated in a village would make it much easier to provide electricity in the day to farmers for irrigation. This would also facilitate more efficient use of water.
- If generating 1 MW from a village is realistic, with 6 lakh villages, there is a potential of 600 GW capacity creation.
- Such a programme would generate widely dispersed private investment and increased incomes.
- Germany used a feed-in tariff with great effect to become a global leader in the use of solar power.

### Conversion of cow dung into useful commercial energy

- With increased access to LPG stoves and cylinders and electrification in rural households, cow dung is no longer required for cooking.
- It can be converted in **small village-level plants to gas** which can be used as a fuel for cooking and transport, or, to generate electricity.
- India has the **largest cattle population in the world** and the goal should be to **convert all the cow dung into useful commercial energy**.
- A **government-promoted system for procurement of this gas**, at a remunerative price, would create the right incentives for private investment and income generation across all villages.

### 12. Hope fades for PSBs

Source: [Business Standard](#)

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to Planning, Mobilization of Resources, Growth, Development and Employment.

**Relevance:** Resolving problems faced by PSBs

**Synopsis:** Govt cannot keep infusing capital constantly. Hence privatization of PSB's will be the ideal route.

Background:

- Public sector banks (PSBs) are reported to have written off about Rs 8 trillion worth of loans over the last seven years.

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- It is more than twice the Rs 3.37 trillion capital infused by the government in the same period.
- The last four years have been particularly bad for PSBs as they wrote off loans worth over Rs 1 trillion every year.
- This is clearly an unsustainable position, and the government cannot constantly keep infusing large sums of capital into the banking system.

### Why government need to recapitalize PSB's?

- Most PSBs command low valuations and are not in a position to raise capital from the market.
- This forces the government to keep infusing funds at a time when it needs to increase public spending to support the economy affected by the pandemic.
- Not infusing capital will affect the flow of credit to the productive sectors of the economy, which will delay full economic recovery.

### Increasing Bad loans

- Bad loans started rising during the early part of the last decade as a result of excessive lending, both before and after the global financial crisis.
- Owing to the impact of the Pandemic, the gross non-performing assets (GNPAs) for PSBs are expected to go up to 12.52 per cent by March 2022, according to the Reserve Bank of India (RBI).
- The government has taken several steps to improve the functioning of state-run banks, but they don't seem to have had any significant impact.
- The government has also put in place a bankruptcy law, which has strengthened the position of lenders though the recovery has been muted so far.

### Reasons for Bad loans

- The RBI conducted an **asset quality review** during 2015-16, which led to a surge in bad loans.
- One of the big reasons for higher stress in PSBs is their inability to properly evaluate businesses and track progress.
- Further, bankers in the public sector are reluctant to recognise bad loans in time because of the fear of investigative agencies.

### Way forward

- Since it is clear that there are limits to the extent PSBs can be reformed and are likely to remain a drag on government finances, the government should speed up their privatisation.
- The government intends to privatise two PSBs in the current fiscal year and the NITI Aayog has reportedly made its recommendations.
- Immediate steps must be taken to take this forward and make way for privatising more banks in the coming years.
- This will not only help strengthen the banking system but also allow the government to stop throwing good money after bad.

### 13. Pegasus spyware issue – concerns and way forward

Source: [The Hindu 1](#), [The Hindu 2](#)

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Cyber Security

**Relevance:** Possible future course of action for India after the recent revelations under Pegasus spyware issue.

**Synopsis:** Dealing with the implications of the Pegasus spyware issue and the policy challenges involved in existing laws.

Background

Under the revelations made in the [Pegasus spyware issue](#), it is clear that many Indian citizens were targets of a vicious surveillance campaign by a government entity, Indian or foreign. The composition of the people targeted include journalists, politicians, probably a Supreme Court judge and a former Election Commissioner

Is surveillance necessary?

Yes and no.

- To enjoy liberties provided to us by the Constitution we need national security to be maintained. This requires a small degree of surveillance. But, that national security is not meaningful if it comes at the cost of the very liberties such security is supposed to allow us to enjoy.
- **Excessive and unaccountable surveillance is dangerous** to privacy, freedom of thought, of speech, and has a chilling effect on people's behaviour. It also shatters the very foundation of the rule of law upon which a constitutional liberal democracy is built. Like with everything, balance is necessary.

Laws & programmes dealing with surveillance

Currently, the laws authorizing interception and monitoring of communications are

- Section 92 of the CrPC (for call records, etc)
- Rule 419A of the **Telegraph Rules**
- Rules under Sections 69 and 69B of the **IT Act**
- Programmes such as CMS, TCIS, NETRA, CCTNS, and so on exist (They have not been authorized by any statute as of now)

**Issue:** It is unclear when the Telegraph Act applies and when the IT Act applies.

Who can monitor?

- **A limited number of agencies are provided powers to intercept and monitor.** The **Intelligence Organisations Act**, which restricts the civil liberties of intelligence agency employees, **only lists four agencies**, while the **RTI Act lists 22 agencies** as “intelligence and security organisations established by the central government” that are exempt from the RTI Act.
- In 2018, the Srikrishna Committee on data protection noted that post the K.S. Puttaswamy judgment, **most of India's intelligence agencies are “potentially unconstitutional”**, since they are not constituted under a statute passed by Parliament — the National Investigation Agency being an exception

Thus, it is unclear which entities count as intelligence and security agencies.

### Suggestions

The intelligence agencies in India must be provided with a legal framework for their existence and functioning; their functioning must be under Parliamentary oversight and scrutiny". This will also ensure civil liberties and rule of law are protected.

### Conclusion

The truth about these revelations must be unearthed through an investigation by a JPC (Joint Parliamentary Committee) or by the Supreme Court or any other credible mechanism.

Terms to know:

- [Section 69 of the IT Act](#)
- [Intelligence Organisations Act](#)
- [Telegraph Act](#)
- [Srikrishna Committee on data protection](#)

### 14. [Water as woe](#)

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

**GS-3: Disaster and Disaster Management.**

**Relevance:** Urban flooding is a recurring event. This article highlights the reasons behind it.

**Synopsis:** Mumbai cannot manage its flooding without a new deal for drainage and housing

#### **Background**

- Due to global warming, the volume and duration of monsoonal rain are becoming unpredictable, and its catastrophic impacts on cities will become more frequent.
- The revival of the monsoon has affected Mumbai and its suburbs once again. It has disrupted drinking water supplies and had exposed the ill state of its infrastructure.
- The limitations of Mumbai's infrastructure to accommodate intense monsoons, and its inability to provide affordable inner-city housing to the less affluent, are making other cities look more attractive.

#### **Steps taken**

The aftermath of catastrophic floods in Mumbai and Chennai in 2005 and 2015 led to the following initiatives.

- The management plan was drawn up by the National Disaster Management Authority
- The first dedicated stormwater drainage manual has been brought out by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs.
- Further, a fact-finding committee appointed by the Maharashtra government in 2005 has given the following recommendation to mitigate the crisis.
  - Liberate the city's rivers and lakes from various impediments,
  - Enable perennial flow in the mithi river,
  - Create fresh holding lakes for excess waters,
  - Rehabilitate those who live in risky locations.

But such initiatives can do little if States, do not address the challenges posed by urbanization.

#### **Conclusion**

- Mumbai's neglect is not unique, most big cities are unsustainably expanding to the suburbs where even basic infrastructure is absent. Lakes and river areas are heavily encroached in these cities.

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- Such unplanned growth, with no defenses against weather disasters, is leaving cities a lot poorer.

### 15. The creeping concerns over India's debt

**Source:** [Live mint](#)

**GS3:** Government Budgeting

**Synopsis:** Recently, the Supreme Court directed the Centre to formulate guidelines for providing compensation under the Disaster Management Act.

#### **Background**

In response to SC directions, the Solicitor general made an argument, which underlines the government's inability to comply due to the tight revenue situation amid the growing demand for resources.

#### **Why the fear of downgrading credit rating is overrated?**

Former chief statistician Pronab Sen said the government's plan to have a **medium-term fiscal consolidation roadmap** as recommended by the 15th Finance Commission should be junked until covid is no longer a threat.

- A rating downgrade **will impact mostly the small foreign investors** who may withdraw their money.
- **Large investors depend on their own research** and don't rely only on input from credit rating agencies.
- Any effort to make that correction when GDP growth is low would mean the brunt of the adjustment will be on expenditure.
- It will lead to an unstable situation.

#### **Why the government did not choose to provide compensation to COVID victims?**

- **Economic contraction:** 3% contraction in the nominal gross domestic product (GDP) and 7.7% decline in revenue receipts in 2020-21.
- **Increase in debt and fiscal deficit:** The Union government's debt soared to 58.8% of the gross domestic product (GDP) in 2020-21, a 14-year-high.
- **Ensuring credit availability:** the government has primarily focused **liquidity support** to distressed sectors, apart from free food grains.
- **Fears around a ratings downgrade:** It has both direct and indirect effects on the economy.
  - S&P, on 14 July, reaffirmed India's sovereign rating at the lowest investment grade (BBB-) with a stable outlook.
  - The other two key rating agencies, Fitch and Moody's, have the lowest investment-grade sovereign rating for India with a negative outlook.
  - **The latest Economic Survey** admitted that ratings not reflecting fundamentals.
  - But pro-cyclical action by rating agencies can affect equity and debt foreign portfolio investor (FPI) outflows from developing countries.
- **Fiscal conservatism:** The government chose more supply-side interventions instead of providing a strong fiscal stimulus to revive consumer sentiment and demand.
- **No multiplier effect:** As per CEA, the problem with the unconditional transfer is evident in the **"disastrous" farm loan waivers** of 2009. Whereas, there was very **little impact on consumption** wasted taxpayers' money.

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- **Rising cost of debt financing:** high public debt can entail higher debt servicing requirements, which undermines the proportion of revenue that the government can allocate to social spending.

### Way forward:

- India needs consistent strong nominal GDP growth with smaller fiscal deficits.
- Improve the efficiency **of public spending**.
- Strengthening **domestic revenue mobilization** to help widen fiscal space and bolster policy credibility.

### 16. **Power hurdles: Consumers need to wait before they can choose supplier**

**Source:** [Business Standard](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Infrastructure: Energy

**Relevance:** Challenges ahead of draft Electricity Bill, 2021.

**Synopsis:** The latest amendments to the Electricity Act, 2003 seek to abolish the power distribution license. Further, it will allow any company to supply electricity in an area. However, these amendments might not be enough to remove existing obstacles in the power sector.

### Background:

- The amended Electricity Bill, 2021 will be tabled in the current monsoon session of the Parliament.
- With this, the centre plans to end the monopoly of existing discoms, which are mostly state-owned entities, by amending the Electricity Act, 2003.

### About Electricity Bill, 2021:

- Section 24 (A) states that **any company** may supply electricity to consumers in its area of supply. It can do so using its own distribution system or using the distribution system of another distribution company.
  - However, the company should fulfil the prescribed qualifications and must register itself with the Appropriate Commission.
- The Bill has replaced the term **'distribution licensee', and replaced it with 'distribution company'**.
- It has also allowed two or more discoms to register and distribute electricity in the same areas.
- Existing power purchase agreements would be shared by all discoms in an area. Companies could also sign additional power purchase agreements.
- Providing consumers the right to choose their preferred power supplier would be challenging even after the amendments to the Electricity Act.

### Challenges:

- **First**, there is a scarcity of **multiple power distribution companies (discoms) in several states**. Currently, it is only in Delhi and Mumbai that there are more than one discom.
- **Second**, there is **little interest in the privatisation of discoms in several states**. In Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Haryana, etc., there are more than one state-owned discom, but their area of supply is exclusive to them.

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- None of these states have awarded private distribution licenses. It is **only in Odisha that a private distribution licence award** has been a success after a mega failure.
- **Third**, there are **no overarching regulations** to support the proliferation of a dynamic electricity retail market.
  - For instance, when consumers switched to Tata from Reliance in Mumbai, the company paid wheeling charges to Reliance infra.
  - The consumers were directed to pay cross-subsidy charges and regulatory assets charges under a 2014 order of the Appellate Tribunal for Electricity.
  - This became a **disincentive for residential consumers** to change their discom, however, industrial consumers continued to change over to Tata.
- **Fourth**, in many cases, protests and complex litigation are causing a delay in privatising the discoms.
  - The finance minister last year in her Covid relief package announced that **discoms of all union territories** would be privatised.
  - Chandigarh and Dadar and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu since then floated tenders for discom privatisation but it has not met with success.
  - All the **tenders are facing legal petitions by either employees or individuals protesting against the privatisation bid**. In the case of Chandigarh, the bidders have challenged the terms of bidding.

### 17. India's renewable energy plan of 175 GW by FY22-end faces multiple risks

**Source:** [The Business Standard](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Energy

**Relevance:** There are certain problems associated with the renewable energy sector which is hurting India's renewable energy targets.

#### **Synopsis:**

India is now chasing its target of 450 GW of renewable power by 2030. However, several issues, including delays in the signing of power sales agreement (PSAs) stand in the way of realising the immediate target of 175 GW by the financial year 2021-22 (FY22) end.

According to a 2020 report of the Central Electricity Authority, around 16 GW of solar and wind energy capacity awarded across the country, **do not have power purchase agreements (PPAs) or PSAs. It is because** states are reluctant to buy renewable energy.

#### **Reason for delay in renewable energy projects:**

According to industry data, 20 GW of solar and wind power projects have been auctioned in the past three years, but barely 20 percent have been commissioned. The reasons for delay are,

- Three major issues that converge and hamper large renewable projects are **land acquisition, transmission system, and regulatory delays**.
- The **cost of renewable energy projects** is also a cause of concern. For instance, the **Andhra Pradesh government** in 2019, **canceled all renewable energy projects, citing high rates**.
- **The financial distress of power distribution firms:** It is a major reason for the delay in confirming contracts and the release of payments to operating units. For instance, Discoms' overdue amounts towards renewable projects stand at Rs 11,368 crore as of May.

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- **The disconnect between Center and State:** The Centre awards mega-project capacities, but state governments do not have a land allotment/approval process. For example,
  - In 2018, Gujarat refused to allot land to solar and wind projects that central agencies had awarded to private companies. It also said the land would only be allotted to those projects that would sell power to Gujarat
- The **pandemic-induced lockdowns** have **delayed** the projects **further**.
- Indian solar industry is ready to balance biodiversity and ecology while achieving RE targets. But it is the challenges that are hurting India's improvements.

### 18. The many paths to a greener future

**Source:** [Business Standard](#)

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Environment

**Relevance:** Different strategies to lower India's carbon emissions

**Synopsis:** Peaking of carbon emissions and the time when de-carbonisation begins are important considerations on road to a greener economy.

Background

Researchers and policymakers are exploring various pathways for Indian carbon emissions over time. These pathways range from Business-As-Usual (BAU) to Low-Carbon to Net-Zero. In each pathway, it is becoming increasingly important to establish when carbon emissions for India will **peak** and then start to decline.

How peaking of CO<sub>2</sub> is related to eco dev of a country?

Peaking concept is linked to the theory that a country's economic development is closely linked to **fossil fuel consumption**. According to this theory,

- In its initial development stages, a country grows by using cheap fossil fuels, which then also leads to a rapid increase in its global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.
- As the country's economy becomes more developed, emissions peak, and the country's carbon requirement for each unit of GDP begins to decline rapidly.

This model has been followed by all industrialized countries, including China.

Global peaking levels

- US peaked at 15 tonnes per capita
- Japan at 10 tonnes
- China at 7 tonnes per capita.
- In comparison, India's present GHG emissions are about 3.5 billion tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent, which translates to just **2.5 tonnes per capita**
- Global GHG emissions are about 55 billion tonnes CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent

By when India's total GHG emissions should reach zero?

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has concluded that global emissions must reach close to zero by 2050 to have a reasonable probability of restricting warming to 1.5 °C above pre-industrial levels. This implies that India's total GHG emissions should also reach zero by mid-century.

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In order to achieve this target, India has following pathways available.

Business As Usual scenario – peak around 2070

- In the BAU pathway, our emissions continue to grow with increasing usage of fossil fuels till we reach middle income status of about \$8,000 to \$10,000 in GDP per capita.
- Several studies have indicated that on this BAU pathway, **even by 2050, India will still only reach about 5 tonnes per capita**. So, if we want to achieve per capita emission standards close to those of industrialized countries (or even China), then our **BAU emissions will continue to increase and peak around 2070**.
- Subsequently, carbon emissions will begin declining and reach **zero by the end of the century**.
- On the BAU pathway, India will be emitting about 15 to 20 billion tonnes in 2070. This pathway will likely aggravate global warming and will not be acceptable at the global level. Ironically, India will end up facing some of the harshest consequences of global warming.

Low-carbon pathway – peak around 2050

What if we **peak around 2050** at 5 tonnes per capita, as suggested by some studies? On this Low-Carbon pathway, India would be still emitting about **8 billion tonnes of GHG** when the rest of the world will be close to net-zero. This too may not be acceptable to the global community and will seriously jeopardize the 1.5 °C goal.

Net-Zero pathway – peak before 2050

The Net-Zero pathway would require that our emissions **peak before 2050** and reach zero thereafter — maybe 10 to 20 years later. The exact time frames should come from careful modelling and analyses. This would roughly parallel what China is promising to do.

Analysis of pathways

Two points emerge from the above analysis

- **Our peak will be well below global peaks:** One, it is possible that our emissions will peak at about 3 to 5 tonnes per capita. This is well below the peaks reached by developed countries. In fact, we may not even peak and then rapidly decline, rather we may reach a plateau and then slowly decline from there on.
- **Impact on jobs and overall prosperity:** It raises the fundamental question: Does this lower per capita level imply that we have compromised on job creation and economic prosperity? Will we not be able to take advantage of cheap fossil fuels?

Conclusion

While we do have ample time to make the necessary changes to our economy, we must begin now to decide which pathway we would like to pursue. Each pathway requires different policy packages and sets up different investment and consumption incentives

**Terms to know:**

- [IPCC](#)

### 19. The laws for surveillance in India, and the concerns over privacy

**Source:** [Indian Express](#) , [Indian express](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Cybersecurity

**Synopsis:** The recent Pegasus attack has raised questions over the degree of protection awarded to an individual's privacy.

**Relevance** – Article highlights laws governing surveillance in India.

**Background:**

According to the report of a global collaborative investigative project, Pegasus spyware may have been used by Israeli based NSO group to conduct surveillance on about 300 Indians.

**Why is the Pegasus attack a concerning issue?**

If the allegation is true that the government can **misuse the critical information for electoral gains**, it undermines the spirit of democracy.

However, the government has claimed that all interception in India takes place lawfully. So, what are the laws covering surveillance in India?

**Laws Covering surveillance in India:**

Communication surveillance in India takes place primarily **under two laws — the Telegraph Act, 1885 and the Information Technology Act, 2000.**

**Telegraph Act, 1885:**

- It deals with interception of calls. **Section 5(2)** allows for the interception.
- The section states that the **Central Government or a State Government** or any **officer** specially authorized by them may order interception of any telegraph.
- He/she can direct that any message or class of messages shall not be transmitted, or shall be intercepted or detained, or shall be disclosed to the Government making the order. The reasons for such an order **should be recorded in writing.**
- Such an order can be made in the interests of
  - the sovereignty and integrity of India,
  - the security of the State,
  - friendly relations with foreign states or
  - public order or for preventing incitement to the commission of an offence.
- Additionally, a **proviso in Section 5(2)** states that even this lawful interception cannot take place against journalists.
- **Public Union for Civil Liberties v Union of India (1996):** The SC pointed out the lack of procedural safeguards in the provisions of the Telegraph Act and laid down certain guidelines for interceptions.
  - It called for setting up a review committee that can look into authorisations made under Section 5(2) of the Telegraph Act.
  - These guidelines formed the basis of introducing rule 419A in the Telegraph Rules in 2007 and later in the rules prescribed under the IT Act in 2009.
- **Rule 419A states** that a Central Home Secretary and State Home Secretary can issue interception orders on behalf of the center and state governments, respectively.
  - In unavoidable circumstances, Rule 419A adds, such orders may be made by an officer, not below the rank of a Joint Secretary.
  - However, such an officer should be duly authorised by the Union Home Secretary or the state Home Secretary.

**Information Technology Act, 2000:**

- It was enacted to deal with surveillance of all electronic communication, following the Supreme Court's intervention in 1996.
- **The Information Technology (Procedure for Safeguards for Interception, Monitoring and Decryption of Information) Rules, 2009 were enacted to further the legal framework for electronic surveillance.**
- **Under Section 69** of the IT Act, all electronic transmission of data can be intercepted. Apart from the restrictions provided in Section 5(2) of the Telegraph Act and Article 19(2) of the Constitution, the section adds another aspect that makes it broader.
  - It broadens the scope of interventions as it allows interception, monitoring and decryption of digital information “for the investigation of an offence”.
  - Further, it **dispenses with the condition precedent set under the Telegraph Act that requires** “the occurrence of public emergency in the interest of public safety” which widens the ambit of powers under the law.

**Way Ahead:**

- The current legal framework on surveillance has a wide divergence amongst themselves as pointed out by **Justice A P Shah committee**.
  - They differ on “type of interception”, “granularity of information that can be intercepted”, the degree of assistance from service providers etc.
- Thus, there is **a need to test the wide reach of these laws in the court against the cornerstone of fundamental rights**.
  - IT intermediary rules 2021 and the government's 2018 order are being already challenged in the SC.
  - The order authorised 10 security and intelligence agencies to intercept, monitor and decrypt any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer resource.
- Further, a **comprehensive data protection law** to address the gaps in existing frameworks for surveillance should be enacted as recommended by the B.N Srikrishna Committee.

**20. We should be thankful for the economy's liberation**

**Source:** [Live Mint](#), [Live Mint](#), [Live Mint](#)

**GS3:** Effects of Liberalization on the Economy

**Relevance** – This article analyzes the performance of economic liberalization.

**Synopsis:** Economic liberalisation of 1991 is viewed with Skepticism. However, we should be thankful for P.V. Narasimha Rao and Manmohan Singh for liberating the economy from the dead hand of bureaucratic control.

**India Before Liberalization:**

- The important sectors of the economy were reserved for the public sector, and the private sector could not invest in them even if it wanted.
- In all other sectors, private companies could make new investments, but only if they got industrial licenses from the government.
- However, these were given on a very non-transparent basis and were especially difficult for large companies, lest it increases economic dominance.

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- Imports of consumer goods were completely banned, effectively insulating producers from foreign competition.
- Imports of capital and intermediate goods needed for production were allowed, but only with import licenses.

### Criticism leveled against Economic Liberalisation

- **First**, some developing countries that retained significant state control (like China) did much better.
  - **India's HDI rank slipped from rank 114 to 131.**
  - The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) shows 28% of India's population in multidimensional poverty, with another 20% vulnerable to it.
- **Second**, the stated goals of the 1991 reforms were higher rates of income growth with more **employment generation and diversification into higher value-added activities.**
  - Of these, only higher-income growth was achieved at the expense of massive **environmental destruction and without enabling structural change.**
  - Industrialization did not take off beyond what was already achieved before 1991.
  - Most workers remain stuck in low-paying informal work.
  - Women's employment participation declined significantly.
  - Declining per capita calorie consumption.
- **Third, Extreme crony capitalism:** Big business demanded **ever more incentives and next-generation 'reforms'**,
  - Only large corporations or extremely rich people were benefiting from subsidies and access to 'cheap' natural resources.
- **Fourth, growing disparities:** The non-agricultural part of the economy for the 30-year period ended 31 March 2020 grew by 7.1% per year.
  - Employment in agriculture as of 2019 still formed 42.6% of overall employment, against 63.3% in 1991.

### Why the criticisms are unfounded?

Economic liberalization has resulted in increased Economic growth, Inclusive development, and improved lifestyle for Indian citizens.

- **Economic growth:**
  - The major objective of the reforms was to lift the economy's growth rate, and this was achieved.
  - In the period of four decades up to the fiscal year 1990-91, the Indian economy grew by an average of 4.1% annually.
  - However, In the last 23 years, India's economic growth averaged about 7%.
- **Inclusive Development**
  - Growth was not the only objective. As growth accelerated, the government adopted a strategy of 'inclusive growth', to ensure that the benefits of growth also reached the poor.
  - The strategy included accelerating growth in agriculture and supporting incomes of rural wage earners through rural employment guarantee programmes.
  - The result was that agricultural growth did accelerate, and there was also greater poverty reduction.

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- Between 2004 and 2011, the last year for which data is available, about 140 million people were pulled above the poverty line.
- **Conditions for most Indians have improved.**
  - Per capita income went up more rapidly than before.
  - India's overall Human Development Index (HDI) score improved from 0.433 in 1991 to 0.645 in 2019.
- **Wider choices for consumers and greater economic activity.**
  - In the 1990s, one could withdraw money from a bank only for a few hours during the day.
  - Now one can walk over to an ATM at any point in time.

### 21. Gudalur's Gene Pool Garden is an example of participatory forest management

**Source:** [Down To Earth](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

**Relevance:** The success of Gene Pool Garden highlights the need for Participatory forest management.

#### **Introduction:**

The Gene Pool Garden was established in 1989 under the Hill Area Development Programme at the Gudalur forest division in Nilgiris district of Tamil Nadu.

#### **About the Gene pool garden:**

- It is located in the Western Ghats, one of the 25 biological diversity hotspots of the world.
- The Gene Pool Garden was created with the following objectives:
  - In situ conservation of available endemic plant species;
  - Ex-situ conservation of rare, endangered, and threatened plant species;
  - Reintroduction and recovery of endangered plant species;
  - Propagation of fast disappearing plant species and education, research, and awareness.
- The plant species collected from various parts had been assembled under different zones for easy identification. These included thalophytes, hydrophytes, etc.
- The forest department is also managing the center through the **Eco-Development Committee (EDC)** formed with the involvement of the local Paniya tribal community.
  - The tribal community has been made in charge of the cafeteria and other shops. Thus, the indigenous community will be benefited economically through the EDC.

Participatory forest management with the involvement of forest stakeholders is a real success in managing a special project like this.

#### **Advantages of Participatory Forest Management:**

The failure on the part of the forest department in managing the plant conservation center through the traditional method was overcome by the **joint forest management model**. This is a clear indication that forests can no longer be managed through Acts and Rules alone.

Managing **natural resources through people's participation** is the right way forward.

## 22. Haunting Our Seas: How 'ghost nets' threaten marine life and human beings

Source: [Times of India](#)

Syllabus: GS 3 – Environment

**Relevance** – Marine life is facing threats from human-induced pollutants. Ghost nets are one of the threats that require urgent attention.

### Synopsis:

Ghost nets put severe stress on marine species, which threaten their survival. A reduction in marine species is in turn worrisome for humans as it would reduce the oxygen level in oceans which currently holds 70% of the world's oxygen.

### Background:

- The presence of plastic in the world's seas is growing exponentially. The **IUCN estimates that at least 8 million tons of plastic** are discarded in our oceans each year.
- The impact of such debris on marine life, which ingests it or gets caught in it, is enormous. Ghost nets increase this problem even more. These are discarded fishing nets cluttering up land and sea.

### Menace of Ghost Nets:

- The waters around India are characterized by the **presence of trawl nets from big fishing vessels, gill nets, and purse seine nets which are entire walls of netting.**
- They **entangle marine life** from small crabs and little starfish to turtles and even whales in their mesh. This creates a significant stress on marine creatures, who are unable to escape from their grip.
- Furthermore, these are made of **non-biodegradable materials like nylon** due to which they stay for 500-1000 years in the ocean and **enhance pollution levels.** For instance, 46% of the Great Pacific Garbage Patch is composed of fishing nets.
- The ghost nets are also **impacting the long-term health of marine ecosystems.**
  - For instance, species like sharks take 25 years to gain maturity and reproduce. They can have as few as one to three offspring in a breeding cycle.
  - By catching such slow-breeding marine beings in ghost nets, we are wiping out their juveniles and pushing the species **closer to extinction.**
- The **death of marine species** coupled with deep-sea mining, and the ever-growing extraction of seafood **is putting significant stress on oceans.**
  - Over 70% of the oxygen we humans breathe arises from plankton in the sea. These micro-organisms are dependent on a marine structure where multiple species are dependent upon each other. As we disturb this structure, we are **ending our oxygen supply.**

### Initiatives taken to solve the problem of ghost net:

- **Committed divers** frequently explore marine zones to rescue animals trapped in ghost nets. **Some states offer fishermen a reward if they let these species go.**
- There are diving companies that **collaborate with the Dive Against Debris movement** to clean up local waters.
- **Some fishing communities in Goa and Maharashtra worship turtles and whales** with great sincerity and want them to live free in their marine homes.

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- On ground-level, **nature lovers** routinely report ghost net sightings and help the authorities free animals stuck in these.
- **Many environmental NGOs and conservationists** organize regular beach clean-ups to reduce plastic waste entering the ocean.
- However, we need far more stringent regulation to prevent the expansion of this menace, which has the potential of creating havoc in the lives of marine species and humans.

### Terms to know:

- [Great Pacific Garbage Patch](#)

### 23. Polluted river stretches in India: A list across states

**Source:** Down to Earth

**Syllabus:** GS3 – Environment

**Relevance:** Understanding reasons behind polluted river stretches in India

**Synopsis:** Various Indian states have a large number of polluted river stretches. What are the reasons behind it and steps taken by the government to address the problem?

#### Background

The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) in 2018 identified 351 polluted river stretches in India. The assessment of water quality for identification of polluted river stretches found that 31 states and Union territories (UT) had rivers and streams that did not meet the water quality criteria. These states / UTs have to submit their action plans for the same.

#### Performance of states

- **Maharashtra** has the **highest number** of polluted river stretches (53), followed by Assam (44), Madhya Pradesh (22), Kerala (21), Gujarat (20), Odisha (19), and West Bengal and Karnataka (17).
- The other **less river polluted states** are Delhi (1); Daman and Diu and Dadra and Nagar Haveli (1); Puducherry (2); Haryana (2); Rajasthan (2)

#### Reasons behind polluted river stretches

Rivers in the country are polluted, mainly due to

- **Discharge of untreated or partially treated sewage from cities / towns and industrial effluents** in their respective catchments
- Problems in operation and maintenance of sewage / effluent treatment plants
- Lack of dilution
- Dumping of solid waste on river banks
- **Other non-point sources of pollution:** Discharge of pollutants from diffuse sources or from a larger area such as runoff from agricultural fields (agricultural runoff), grazing lands, construction sites, abandoned mines and pits, roads and streets.
- **Gap between sewage generation and treatment:** This gap between sewage generation and treatment remains a major point source for the increase in pollution of rivers.
  - According to the report published by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) sewage generation from urban areas in the country is estimated at **72,368 million litres per day (MLD)**, against the sewage treatment capacity of **31,841 MLD**.

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- Rapid urbanisation and industrialisation have compounded the problem of polluted river stretches.

Steps taken by the govt

- **National Water Quality Monitoring Programme (NWMP):** CPCB, in association with State pollution Control Boards / committees in different states / Union territories, have been monitoring the water quality of rivers and other water bodies across the country through a network of monitoring stations under the National Water Quality Monitoring Programme.
- **Cleaning / rejuvenation of rivers is an ongoing process.** It is the responsibility of the states / UTs and local bodies to ensure the treatment of sewage and industrial effluents to the prescribed norms before discharging into water bodies, coastal waters, or land.
- **Namami Gange & NRCP:** The Union ministry supplements efforts of states / UTs. It provides financial and technical assistance for abatement of pollution in identified stretches of rivers in the country through the Central Sector Scheme of **Namami Gange** for rivers in the Ganga basin, as well as through the Centrally Sponsored Scheme of National River Conservation Plan (NRCP) for other rivers.
  - **NRCP:** The river cleaning programme in the country initiated with the launching of the Ganga Action Plan (GAP) in 1985. The Ganga Action Plan was expanded to cover other rivers under National River Conservation Plan (NRCP) in the year 1995.
  - The objective of NRCP is to **improve the water quality of the rivers**, which are the major water sources in the country, through the implementation of pollution abatement works.

### 24. **The Ganga's message**

**Source:** [The Hindu](#)

**Syllabus:** GS 3 – Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation.

**Relevance:** India must take its laws on waste seriously to stop microplastics pollution.

**Synopsis:** Microplastic pollution around the world demands the proper implementation of existing laws and global collaboration.

#### **Introduction:**

The Ganga might have stood witness to many stages of India's civilisation. But in recent decades it has become a conduit for sewage, solid waste, industrial effluents, and other pollutants.

But the recent study by a Delhi-based environment NGO highlighted heavy microplastic pollution in Ganga at Haridwar, Kanpur, and Varanasi. These range from tyres, clothing, food packaging, cosmetics with microbeads, garland covers, and other municipal waste.

The study also finds that there are significant levels of microscopic particles invisible to the naked eye at below 300 micrometers to 5 millimeters.

**Read more:** [Analysis by NGO reveals microplastics in Ganga](#)

#### **Other challenges with the Ganga:**

Official data indicates that **97 Ganga towns may be discharging about 750 million litres of untreated sewage a day** into the river.

This questions the progress of two high-priority, well-funded missions (Swachh Bharat (to deal with solid waste) and Namami Gange (to rid the river of its pollution)).

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### **Reason for microplastic increase in Ganga:**

The Centre recently issued a draft to tighten the **Plastic Waste Management Rules**, but **cities have failed to implement existing rules.**

Similarly, the **Solid Waste Management Rules**, on ending single-use plastics, waste segregation, recycling labels on packaging, extended producer responsibility for manufacturers, and recovery of materials were **not implemented properly.**

### **The threat of Microplastics:**

Microplastics, recorded in recent times in the remotest of places — Mount Everest, Arctic snow, and the depths of the Mariana Trench, etc. Microplastics pose a hazard as **plastics production outpaces the ability of governments to collect and manage** waste.

### **Suggestions:**

Plastic wastes around the world are threatening the food web, and the crisis demands a **new global treaty modeled on the Montreal Protocol and the Paris Agreement.**

### **Terms to know:**

- [Montreal Protocol](#)