

9pm
Compilation

November, 2021 (Fourth Week)

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

General Studies - 2

1. Keeping a close eye on China's nuclear capabilities
2. Flaws in the system
3. Deeper trade ties will benefit both India and US
4. In Hyderabad, leadership of security forces must ensure that personnel follow court's directions, in letter and spirit
5. Shifting the pile: On inequity and Swachh cities
6. Making Ayurveda a real science
7. Better co-ordination
8. Why China is acquiring foreign military bases
9. Database of unorganised workers is a welcome step towards creating a robust social security architecture
10. Dynamism in India US ties
11. Sanitation workers' safety and welfare must be urgently addressed
12. JPC retains exemption clause, adopts personal data Bill
13. The significance of Supreme Court's recent POCSO decision
14. The need for palliative care in India has never been greater
15. Wanted: An Indian Charlesworth
16. Elephant vs Dragon
17. ASER 2021 has insights on how schools can respond to post-Covid world
18. Lessons from past sanitation policies for future efforts
19. Antimicrobial Awareness Week 2021: How resistance to antibiotics develops
20. We need a multi-pronged approach to end child marriage
21. The pandemic is an opportunity to correct some historical wrongs
22. Economic heft and foreign policy posturing
23. POCSO shocker
24. Why Non-Personal, What's Critical ... & Snooping?
25. Chaos in Parliament a sign of India's strong democracy
26. The case of Prince Jaibir Singh's admission to IIT Bombay
27. Why the link between mental health and death penalty deserves greater attention
28. On the path of Buddha and his followers
29. Obesity is a social problem. Addressing it requires access to healthy food, not restrictions
30. It's time we produced champions
31. Opposition Dissent without Basis or Foundation: About the data protection bill
32. What they own: NFHS on women property ownership isn't conclusive
33. Shore in the lifeline – About MGNREGA
34. Our constitution, A beacon of freedom

General Studies - 3

1. Reforming the fertilizer sector
2. Time to rethink Indian levies on motor vehicles
3. Another Supply Chain Crisis?
4. Climate justice must drive climate action
5. Explained: In perspective, farm distress and the demand for guaranteed MSP
6. Non-farm jobs and social mores hold India's key to farm reforms
7. 'Andaman & Nicobar Is Key To Act East Policy'
8. Use of facial recognition technology by police is dangerous
9. EVs for last-mile delivery could boost India's e-commerce sector
10. Sustainable agriculture
11. What India should strive for in trade deals
12. Over-valued unicorns in a distressed economy
13. The road to a Himalayan blunder
14. Dear 'The Economist', climate change is a global predicament
15. New cryptocurrency bill seeks to ban private players
16. Why Cities Must Lead The Climate Battle
17. Privatise Post-Repeal: Selling sarkari banks & PSUs is critical.
18. A food crisis of the government's own making
19. What \$650 billion can buy – On India's currency reserves
20. Farm Laws: Is MSP guarantee really the elixir that Indian agriculture needs?
21. Farm bills may be repealed, but farmers will still need help
22. Pointers that India is witnessing a K-shaped recovery
23. A unified regulatory framework
24. Do not ignore livestock's contribution to climate change
25. Decline in India's camel population is worrying
26. After farm laws repeal, farmer unions want legal guarantee for MSP. Should the govt give in?
27. Setting the tone at Glasgow, the job ahead in Delhi
28. Decomputerize to decarbonize: A climate debate we can't avoid
29. Airport Lessons
30. Chinese med imports up 75%, raises concerns
31. Indian agriculture needs a Verghese Kurien
32. Is crypto mania more a symptom than a cause?
33. The dreaded rainforest shift
34. Yes, there are two Indias, and they are not getting any closer together

General Studies Paper - 2

General Studies - 2

1. Keeping a close eye on China's nuclear capabilities

Source: This post is based on the article "Keeping a close eye on China's nuclear capabilities" published in The Indian Express on 7th Nov 2021.

Syllabus: GS2 – India and its Neighborhood- Relations.

Relevance: Understanding a shift in China's strategic military capabilities and India's response.

News: The PRC's nuclear capabilities, in particular, are undergoing a fundamental transformation and a shift seems to be evident in both the quantity and the quality of the PRC's atomic arsenal. India needs to be cautious.

How China's military capabilities are undergoing a major shift?

China Military Power Report (CMPR) recently released by the Pentagon reveals four specific areas where change is underway —

i). Quantitative strength: the size of the PRC's nuclear arsenal, is set to increase. Presently, it has around 200 nuclear warheads. By 2027, they are likely to increase to 700.

ii). Atomic yield: The PRC is likely to favor the expansion of low-yield weapons. They are weapons ideal for battlefield use during conventional military operations and against conventional targets such as concentrations of armoured, artillery and infantry forces. Lower yield warheads help the PRC avoid causing collateral damage.

iii). Delivery capabilities: these low-yield nuclear warheads are also likely to find their way into a key delivery capability — the PRC's Dong-Feng-26 (DF-26) ballistic missile. In addition to the DF-26, China has also developed the JL-2 Submarine Launched Ballistic Missiles (SLBMs) with a range of 7,200 kilometres capable of striking targets across continental Asia.

iv). Posture: China has moved towards a Launch on Warning (LoW) nuclear posture. A higher alert posture risks reducing the threshold for nuclear use in the form of preemption. It could also lead to miscalculation and unintended nuclear use.

What are the implications for India of China's increasing military capabilities?

For India, there are some serious implications with China's increasingly minatory nuclear military capabilities.

First, the size of China's nuclear arsenal complicates the potency of India's nuclear arsenal. A significantly larger Chinese nuclear arsenal paired to missile defences will limit damage to the PRC. It also threatens the survivability of the Indian nuclear arsenal.

Secondly, the Launch on Warning (LoW) posture reduces the decision time for any Indian retaliatory nuclear strike in the heat of a war or crisis and places pressure on India to pursue its own LoW. The PRC could also significantly degrade an Indian retaliatory strike if China chooses to resort to First Use (FU) of nuclear weapons, and completely eradicate India's nuclear forces.

Thirdly, despite the COVID-19 pandemic, the Chinese have added two new Type 094 (Jin class) SSBNs/nuclear-powered ballistic-missile submarines to their existing fleet. The Chinese Navy has carried out **bathymetric** and **ocean mapping surveys** in the Indian Ocean, crucial to the execution of sub-surface military operations. The Bay of Bengal's sea depth is very conducive for nuclear submarine missions, which will leave **India exposed to a Chinese atomic pincer** from the maritime & the continental domain.

A pincer attack is a military attack by two coordinated forces that close in on an enemy position from different directions

What is the way forward?

Indian strategic planners will have to think about the quantitative nuclear balance and India's nuclear posture *vis-à-vis* the PRC.

The maritime dimension of China's nuclear capabilities might not be an immediate strategic challenge but will potentially become one in the coming years for New Delhi. It will have to specifically watch the pattern in the People Liberation Army Navy's (PLAN) nuclear submarine deployments and address the deficit in its subsurface nuclear delivery capabilities.

2. Flaws in the system

Source: This post is based on the article "**Flaws in the system**" published in **The Hindu** on 21 November 2021.

Syllabus: GS2 –Structure, organization, and functioning of the Executive and the Judiciary.

Relevance: To understand the constitutional and supreme court stand on the transfer of judges.

News: The transfer of Chief Justice Sanjib Banerjee from the Madras High Court to the Meghalaya High Court has given rise to a controversy.

What is the Constitutional provision on the transfer of judges?

Article 222 of the Constitution provides for the transfer of High Court judges, including the Chief Justice.

-It says the President, after consultation with the Chief Justice of India, may transfer a Judge from one High Court to any other High Court.

-It also provides for a compensatory allowance to the transferred judge.

What is the Supreme Court's stand on the issue?

In **Union of India vs. Sankalchand Himatlal Sheth(1977)**:

-Supreme Court rejected the idea that High Court judges can be transferred only with their consent. It reasoned that the transfer of power can be exercised only in the public interest.

-The President is under an obligation to consult the CJI which meant that all relevant facts must be placed before the CJI.

-The CJI had the right and duty to elicit and ascertain further facts from the judge concerned or others.

In **S.P. Gupta vs. President of India (1981)**, also known as the 'Judges' Transfer Case', the Supreme Court by the majority ruled that consultation with the Chief Justice did not mean 'concurrence' with respect to appointments.

-In effect, it emphasised the **primacy of the executive in the matter of appointments and transfers**.

However, this position was **overruled in the 'Second Judges Case' (1993)** where also the concept of a '**Collegium of Judges**' came into being. That is the opinion of the CJI ought to mean the views of a plurality of judges.

What is the current procedure for transfers?

In the collegium era, the proposal for **transferring** a High Court judge, including a Chief Justice, should be **initiated by the CJI**.

The **consent of the judge is not required**. “All transfers are to be made **in the public interest**, i.e., for promoting better administration of justice throughout the country.

For **transferring a judge other than the Chief Justice**, the CJI should take the views of the Chief Justices of the two High courts concerned.

The CJI should also take into account the views of one or more Supreme Court judges in the process of deciding whether a proposed transfer should take place.

-In the case of transfer of a Chief Justice, only the views of one or more knowledgeable Supreme Court judges need to be taken.

The views should all be **expressed in writing**, and they should be considered by the CJI and four

senior-most judges of the Supreme Court- **Collegium** of five.

The recommendation is sent to the Union Law Minister who should submit the relevant papers to the Prime Minister who then advises the President on approving the transfer.

What makes transfers controversial?

The accusation of the **Punitive element** in the transfer of judges makes the transfer controversial.

Not **disclosing the reason** for a transfer, as disclosure could impinge on the judge’s performance and independence in the court.

-On the other hand, the absence of a reason sometimes gives rise to speculation whether it was effected because of complaints against the judge, or if it was a sort of punishment for certain judgments.

3. Deeper trade ties will benefit both India and US

Source: This post is based on the article “**Deeper trade ties will benefit both India and US**” published in **Indian Express** on 22 November 2021.

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

Relevance: To understand the potential of Indo-US ties and pain points in the relation.

News: The first US-India Trade Policy Forum in over four years begins.

Over the past two decades, the partnership between India and US has strengthened tremendously. From strategic cooperation to our deepening people-to-people ties, the gains have been impressive.

However, the current stakes for a growing economic partnership are greater as we experience a volatile and uneven global economic recovery from the pandemic.

What is the significance of the US for India?

India is trying to move up its value chains and reach ambitious development targets. The aims are to grow to a **\$-5 trillion economy** by 2025, become a hub for **high-tech manufacturing**, and install 500 GW of **renewable** energy by 2030.

These goals can be achieved with **US capital and investment** and continued **access to the US market**.

What are the steps taken by India and challenges thereon to boost investment?

The recent moves to **raise FDI caps** in key sectors and the repeal of the retroactive **tax law** have boosted investor confidence.

However, the implementation of **unpredictable tariffs** and **regulatory regimes** targeting foreign firms should be avoided.

What should be the way forward for India and US?

Both governments can make real progress by pursuing negotiations on two parallel tracks:

One dedicated to removing and **resolving longstanding irritants** and disputes.

Second focused on building a 21st-century trade framework **starting with the key sectors** that are driving growth and innovation across the economic corridor. Some of them are:

– Healthcare sector

Governments should embrace market-based approaches to **innovative medical products**. It **must** ensure that public procurement policies do **not discriminate against foreign firms**, and speed up the approval of medical devices and pharmaceuticals so that critical and lifesaving therapies can get to the market faster.

–Digital sphere

we must address several foundational issues, such as the digital service tax, cross-border data flows, and common cellular standards.

It's important that on the **digital services tax**, India accords with emerging global agreements that will accelerate trade.

Similarly, it is important that India and the US come to a common ground on **5G standards** so that it can operate in an integrated telecommunications ecosystem.

New data regulations should also facilitate the flow of information and respect internationally recognised intellectual property rights that serve as the cornerstone for innovation worldwide.

What are the potential benefits of these actions if taken?

Progress on these fronts can facilitate the movement of the goods, services, technology, talent, and capital necessary to fortify the world against climate disruption, prepare it for future pandemics, and build an economy ready for the challenges of the 21st century.

4. In Hyderabad, leadership of security forces must ensure that personnel follow court's directions, in letter and spirit

Source: This post is based on the article **"In Hyderabad, leadership of security forces must ensure that personnel follow court's directions, in letter and spirit"** published in the **Indian Express** on **22nd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Fundamental Rights.

Relevance: Understanding the breach of Fundamental Rights behind the encounter.

News: Recently, army and police forces conducted an operation in Srinagar which led to the killing of three civilians along with a Pakistani militant has raised questions of the overuse of their powers.

What was the issue all about?

Army and police personals in the disturbed areas have the special power under **Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act (AFSPA)** to fight against militants. But in some cases, the security

personnel find it difficult to distinguish between militants and civilians, a distinction which has blurred even further with the recent emergence of “OGW” (overground worker for militants) or “hybrid militant”.

What were the earlier instances?

A similar instance has happened last year in Amshipora in Shopian, where the Army captain and JCO (Junior Commissioned Officer) in association with two civilians wrongly portrayed three men as terrorists, in order to claim reward money and killed them. The Police had filed a charge sheet against the captain, and the two civilians.

The Army also acknowledged the breach of powers under the [Armed Forces Special Powers Act](#) by the officials. Army took over the case from the civil court. As of now, there is no update from either the Military Court or Civil Court.

What is the Supreme court's view over misuse of power?

SC in 2019 order said that every encounter must be enquired and there must be material evidence before naming someone as a terrorist. The Army leadership must ensure the rule of law is followed and [Article 21](#) is respected.

Also read: [Rule of Law vs Rule by Law](#)

5. Shifting the pile: On inequity and Swachh citiest

Source: This post is based on the article “**Shifting the pile: On inequity and Swachh citiest**” published in **The Hindu** on **22nd November 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the results of Swachh Survekhan 2021.

News: Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs has released the results of Swachh Survekshan 2021.

What are the key takeaways of the Swachh Survekshan 2021 awards?

Read here: [President of India Graces Swachh Amrit Mahotsav and Presents Swachh Survekshan Awards 2021](#)

Ganga Towns: Varanasi has been awarded the cleanest town award along the banks of river Ganga.

Prerak Daaur Samman: It is a new category of awards that starts from 2021 and judged states on its Solid waste management. It ranked Indore, Surat, Navi Mumbai, New Delhi Municipal Council and Tirupati as ‘Divya’ (platinum).

What is the purpose of such rankings?

1) Publicity boost 2) Motivation to do better

What are the questions raised by the Swachh Survekshan survey?

The award categories have expanded manifold e.g., Separate award for States Category based on number of ULBs in the State (Above 100 and below 100); ‘Ganga City’, ‘Prerak Daaur Samman’, and ‘Population’ wise category. The expanded categories mean that more cities get awards and consequently the award process resembles an appeasement exercise.

For the last six years, almost the same cities are topping the survey. This raises legitimate questions like (1) whether cities are actually getting motivated as intended; (2) whether some

cities have better access to funds; (3) whether the States focus their funds in keeping some cities clean to avail of a rank in any of the wide number of categories; (4) Can complex problems like sanitation be reduced to simple metrics?

Thus, there should be a better analysis of the scheme to understand whether the cities are getting cleaner or the numbers are hiding inequity?

6. Making Ayurveda a real science

Source: This post is based on the article “**Making Ayurveda a real science**” published in **The Hindu** on **22nd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Achievements of Indians in science & technology.

Relevance: Understanding the need of revamping the Ayush system.

News: During the Pandemic, Ayurveda based self-medication was promoted. But no attempt was made to educate people with the correct ingredients like Giloy or Dalcheeni.

Many Ayurveda physicians claimed successful treatment of Covid, but none were recorded and researched. The coordination between [ICMR](#) and Ayush could have helped in better management of the pandemic.

Why the Ayurveda system is being questioned?

Recently, a group of scientists has started a social media campaign calling all Ayush systems “pseudoscience”. This is because of:

- Finding unwarranted constituents like antibiotics, heavy metals in many of the Ayush products.
- Unscientific and outdated content in the textbooks of Ayush graduate programmes.
- Various cases where adverse impacts were visible after exposure to Ayush interventions.

What should the policymakers/academicians do?

- Introspect all the flaws carefully and do the required changes.
- Adoption of uniform protocols for diagnosis and interventions of various diseases.
- Conduct longitudinal observation studies involving around 20 different clinical conditions that Ayush is confident of treating to establish the efficacy of Ayush medicines and systems.
- Establish a regulatory mechanism to check that classical formulations do not contain harmful substances like heavy metals before they are made available in markets.

7. Better co-ordination

Source: This post is based on the article “**Better co-ordination**” published in **Business Standard** on 22 November 2021.

Syllabus: GS 2-Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India’s interests.

Relevance: To understand some areas of cooperation between India and the USA.

News: United States Trade Representative is in India to further the agenda of the US-India Trade Policy Forum to be held after the four-year interregnum.

While the bilateral relationship has shown considerable progress in the past years, the economic agenda has always been a stumbling block. In other cases like, US-China or US-EU relationship, there is a clear give and take across sectors.

What are Issues in India-US relations that are likely to be discussed?

India's digital policies, including data localization and taxation of US-based tech multinational companies.

Trade-related regulatory barriers, tariffs, and recent export promotion policies from the Indian government, as well as the vexed interlinkage between environmental factors and trading relations.

How should Indian officials respond?

A **whole-of-government** approach has to be taken. Each official should be briefed on the entire set of outstanding issues and possible ways forward, not just related to their ministry or portfolio.

-Response of Indian officials should be based on feedback from other departments and updated input from relevant stakeholders in the corporate world and Parliament.

There should be **ongoing coordination** during the visit, and to build on the progress already made in previous meetings during the visit.

8. Why China is acquiring foreign military bases

Source: This post is based on the article “**Why China is acquiring foreign military bases**” published in **The Indian Express** on **23rd Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 – India and its neighborhood relations

Relevance: Understanding China's growing military presence around the world

News: USA recently convinced UAE to stop China from secretly constructing a military facility at an Abu Dhabi port. China's growing interest in acquiring foreign military bases has been reported for more than a decade.

Beijing opened its **first** foreign military base in **Djibouti** in the Horn of Africa in 2017. It is said to be building its **second** foreign military base at Ream, **Cambodia**.

Must Read: [Keeping a close eye on China's nuclear capabilities](#)

Through acquiring foreign military bases, China is trying to assert its primacy in Asia and the Indo-Pacific region while pushing out the US and India. A permanent naval presence in the Indian Ocean will profoundly alter India's security environment.

Which countries is China targeting for its foreign military bases?

The recent US annual report on Chinese military power cites several countries that People's Liberation Army is targeting for military bases.

In Bay of Bengal: Myanmar, Thailand and Sri Lanka are candidates from the Bay of Bengal

To the West of India: Namibia, Seychelles, Tanzania, and the UAE.

Pakistan is likely to emerge as the most important vehicle for Chinese naval power projection in the Indian Ocean, with significant implications for India's military planning.

What are the reasons behind China's pursuit of acquiring foreign military bases?

Background: In the past, Communist China claimed that it had no interest in projecting power to distant seas or foreign military bases. China also actively campaigned against the foreign military presence in Asia. As a defensive power in the second half of the 20th century, China's priority was to fight off external threats to its sovereignty and consolidate its communist revolution.

This policy changed as China rose rapidly to become a great power in the 21st century.

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

– Due to its vast globalized economy and growing reliance on foreign markets and resources, a need was felt within the Chinese security establishment to **secure its regional and global interests**.

– In the 1970s, China valued the US role in containing **Soviet social-imperialism** and **latent Japanese militarism**. Today, China wants to establish **primacy in Asia and its waters** by expanding its military reach and is trying to push America out of Asia once again.

Hence, China started establishing foreign bases.

What are the features of the Chinese strategy of establishing foreign military bases?

Dual-use facilities: China's focus was on building dual-use facilities rather than explicit military bases on foreign soil.

Construction of ports & BRI: China's dual-use approach benefited immensely from its expansive foreign port construction and the more recent Belt and Road Initiative to build infrastructure across the Indo-Pacific.

Cultivating special relationships with the political elites, as well as strengthening ties with the military establishments in a potential host country.

Arms transfer, and military diplomacy, are also an integral part of China's pursuit of foreign bases.

What are the similarities and differences b/w Chinese and Indian positions on foreign military bases?

Similarities	Differences
In the second half of the 20th century , India, like China, opposed foreign military bases in Asia and the Indian Ocean.	China opposed foreign bases due to their direct security implications. Its rejection was political and contextual. India's opposition was based on an ideological principle of its non-aligned foreign policy
In the 21st century , like China, India also began to recognize the need for military access to strategic locations in the Indo-Pacific.	

Delhi's efforts included negotiating arrangements with friendly states in the Indian Ocean, as well as developing deeper strategic partnerships with the US and its regional allies.

But India is still a long way from matching the speed and intensity of Chinese military diplomacy in its near and extended neighbourhood.

9. Database of unorganised workers is a welcome step towards creating a robust social security architecture

Source: This post is based on the article "**Database of unorganised workers is a welcome step towards creating a robust social security architecture**" published in **Indian express** on **23rd November 2021**.
Syllabus: GS2 – Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors.

Relevance: Welfare measures for unorganized workers

News: Launching of e-Shram portal, a database of unorganized workers, is a welcome and long-overdue step towards creating a social security structure for this part of the labor force.

The absence of credible data on the migrant workforce, during the economic distress induced by COVID-19, resulted in problems in extending policy support for this section.

Moreover, there is a lack of credible data for the entire unorganized labor, which accounts for roughly 90% of the entire labor force in the country.

To address this gap, the government has launched the [e-Shram portal](#). The portal facilitates the identification and registration of the unorganized workers.

Reportedly, the database will also be linked to Unnati (*the proposed labor matching platform*).

What are the important findings revealed by the e-Shram portal data?

The e-Shram portal data gives vital information on the unorganized labor force, such as,

- **Number of registered unorganised workers:** a fifth of the estimated unorganised workers in the country are now registered on the database.
- **Caste based data on unorganised workers:** 40.5% of unorganised workers belong to the OBC category, 27.4% are from the general category, 23.7% are Scheduled Castes, while 8.3% are Scheduled Tribes.
- **Sector based data on unorganised workers:** Maximum registrations have been in the agriculture sector (53.6 per cent), followed by construction (12.2 per cent), and domestic and household workers (8.71 per cent).

What is the way forward?

Merely creating a database of workers is not enough, but identifying them, registering them, is a step towards including them in social security schemes. For this to happen, the following steps need to be taken:

First, the information gathered on workers, especially on migrants, will need to be regularly updated. The states of origin and destination will need to do this and keep track of circular migration.

Second, workers unwilling to register in e-Shram portal need to be incentivised.

Third, eligibility criteria for schemes that depend on information that is not collected by the e-Shram portal will also need to be integrated.

Fourth, the issue of portability of benefits, extended at both the central and state level, need to be addressed.

10. Dynamism in India US ties

Source: This post is based on the article "Dynamism in India US ties" published in **The Hindu** on **23rd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Bilateral, regional and global groupings and agreements involving India and/or affecting India's interests.

Relevance: Understanding India-US relations.

News: Recently, a **congressional delegation (CODEL)** led by U.S. Senator John Cornyn visited Indo-Pacific Command countries which also included India in its list. It interacted with the Prime Minister, External Affairs Minister, and representatives of the Dalai Lama in India.

Both sides are committed to "**increasing convergence of strategic interests**" between India and the U.S. and to "further enhance cooperation on contemporary global issues such as **terrorism, climate change and to promote global peace and stability.**"

What was the outcome of the CODEL meet?

– It recognizes the importance of the Indo-Pacific and the increasing China’s threat to these countries and to India.

-It favored India to get a presidential waiver under [Countering America’s Adversaries Through Sanctions Act](#) for procuring [S400 missiles](#) from Russia.

Significance of CODEL visit for India

The statements of CODEL cannot be undermined. U.S. Congress plays an important role in determining the foreign policy of the US.

Read more: [The sanctions clouds over India US Ties](#)

What are the drawbacks in India-US relations?

India had 8 **Parliamentary Friendship Groups** including Japan, Russia, China, and the European Union, but the USA is absent from that group. There is **no institutional communication** or interaction between MPs in India and members of the U.S. Congress.

What is the way forward?

In the words of Dr. McDermott (former Congressman) “legislative interactions inject dynamism in bilateral relations”.

Given the robust India-US ties, There is a need for ministers on both sides to engage with each other. This was asserted when The joint statement at the end of the **2+2 dialogue** in 2019 called for the establishment of India USA parliamentary exchange to facilitate reciprocal visits.

Also read: [What is India-US 2+2 dialogue?](#)

11. Sanitation workers’ safety and welfare must be urgently addressed

Source: This post is based on the article “**Sanitation workers’ safety and welfare must be urgently addressed**” published in the **Indian Express** on **23rd November 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the issue of manual scavengers.

News: Covid pandemic highlighted the urgency of addressing the issues related to manual scavengers.

Sanitation work in India is tied to caste-based occupational roles. It is majorly performed by people from scheduled caste and schedule Tribes.

What is the status of manual scavenging in India?

Presently, the government does not directly employ manual scavengers, but the work is outsourced to private providers. It is these private providers that employ manual scavengers.

The **sixth Economic Census**, 2013 reported around 1.7 lakh businesses underwater supply, sewerage, waste management, and 82% of these are in the private sector which reportedly employs manual scavengers.

A **manual scavenging survey** by the Ministry of Social Justice and empowerment found 66, 692 manual scavengers till October 2020.

Read here: [The Plight of Manual Scavengers in India](#)

What steps have been taken by the government?

The government enacted the [Prohibition of the Employment of Manual Scavengers Act 2013](#) which prohibited any form of employment of manual scavengers.

The [Swatch Bharat Mission](#) led to the construction of toilets with on-site sanitation systems like septic tanks and pits.

[Atal Mission for rejuvenation and urban transformation](#), which focuses on 500 cities has led to the development of infrastructure such as sewerage networks, sewerage treatment plants.

Latest, [National Sample Survey, 2019](#) showed that more than 65% of households in India have toilets with septic tanks.

Ministry of Social Justice and empowerment has taken up rehabilitation of sanitation workers under revised self-employment scheme for rehabilitation of manual scavengers.

National Safai Karamchhari Finance and Development Corporation is building capacity at the local government level, providing mechanized desludging trucks and financial assistance to sanitation workers.

What is the way forward?

Given that so many plans have failed to yield results, there is a need for strict monitoring of the implementation of the act.

The government has proposed a new initiative of national action for the mechanized Sanitation ecosystem. The plan will provide monitoring of sanitation services, including the activities of private sanitation service organizations. These could pave the way for eradicating manual scavenging and ensuring the welfare of all consultation workers.

12. [JPC retains exemption clause, adopts personal data Bill](#)

Source: This post is based on the following articles:

“**Platforms as publishers, penalties, checking electronic hardware may figure in draft data Bill**” published in the **Indian Express** on **23rd November 2021**.

“**JPC retains exemption clause, adopts personal data Bill**” published in **The Hindu** on **23rd November 2021**.

“**Falling short**” published in **The Hindu** on **23rd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Indian Constitution—historical underpinnings, evolution, features, amendments, significant provisions.

Relevance: Understanding the data protection bill.

News: Joint Committee of Parliament (JCP) on the Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill, 2019 has submitted its report in the Parliament.

Also Read: [The draft personal data protection bill, 2018](#)

What are the key recommendations?

Inclusion of non-personal data: It proposed to include non-personal data along with personal data and also that **Data Protection Authority (DPA)** should handle this. Any further policy/legal framework on non-personal data in the future should be made part of this legislation and not separate legislation.

Data collection by electronic hardware: Hardware manufacturers that collect data through digital devices are not under scrutiny in the earlier legislation. JCP suggested incorporating

new clauses and allowing DPA to frame regulations towards data handling by hardware manufacturers and related entities.

Stricter regulations for social media platforms: JCP recommended that all social media platforms, which did not act as intermediaries, should be treated as publishers and be held accountable for the content they host. It also recommended setting up a statutory media regulatory for the regulation of content on such platforms.

However, The committee grants some exceptions to data fiduciaries below a certain threshold, not to hamper the growth of firms that are classified under MSMEs.

Ringfencing data

Concluding its deliberations since 2019, the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Personal Data Protection Bill adopted its report on Monday

Key recommendations

- Treat as publishers all social media platforms which do not act as intermediaries, and they be held accountable for the content they host
- Allow no social media platform to operate in India unless the parent company handling the technology sets up an office in India



- Develop an alternative indigenous financial system for cross-border payments
- Set up dedicated lab for certification of all digital devices
- In case of cross-border transfer of data, a mirror copy of sensitive and critical personal data be mandatorily brought to India

Source: The Hindu

Definition: JCP recommended that the definition of harm should also include psychological manipulation which impairs the autonomy of a person.

What are the controversies surrounding the Personal Data Protection Bill?

Under the bill **Clause 35**, it allowed exemption to any agency under the Union Government in the name of “**public order**”, “**sovereignty**”, “**friendly relations with foreign states**” and “**security of the state**” from all or any provisions of the law.

Many members argued for **removing public order as a ground for an exception** given under clause 35. This would create two parallel universes where the private sector is strictly regulated, and the government sector has a lot of exemptions.

Read here: [Issue of privacy and Personal Data Protection Bill 2019](#)

Members proposed many alternatives like:

- Having judicial or Parliamentary oversight for granting such exemptions
- Providing the order of exemption in writing
- Allowing only partial exemptions to select agencies

However, the report did not accept these recommendations. It called for a balance of privacy and national security. It cited the exemptions as reasonable and in conformity with [Article 19](#) and the [Puttaswamy \(2017\) judgement](#).

What did the dissenting members propose?

They argued that the bill did not provide adequate safeguards to protect the right to privacy.

Read here: [Need for a robust Personal Data Protection Bill](#)

13. The significance of Supreme Court's recent POCSO decision

Source: This post is based on the article “**The significance of Supreme Court's recent POCSO decision**” published in **Indian Express** on **23rd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

Relevance: To understand the reason behind the recent Supreme Court Judgment on POCSO Act.

News: In the **Attorney General of India v. Satish case**, the Supreme Court has set aside the controversial judgment of the Bombay HC which held that ‘skin-to-skin’ contact is necessary for an act to be classified as sexual assault under the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences(POCSO) Act.

About the Bombay HC judgment

Two judgments of the Bombay High Court provide an interpretation of “sexual assault” under Section 7 of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 (POCSO Act).

Note: Section 7 of POCSO Act mandates that “*whoever with sexual intent touches the vagina, penis, anus or breast of the child or makes the child touch the vagina, penis, anus or breast of such person or any other person, or does any other act with sexual intent which involves physical contact without penetration is said to commit sexual assault*”.

Satish v State of Maharashtra case: The Bombay HC cited “no direct physical contact, i.e. skin-to-skin contact, with sexual intent without penetration.” Thus Satish was acquitted for sexual assault and convicted instead for outraging a woman’s modesty and wrongful confinement.

State of Maharashtra v. Libnus case: The accused was acquitted for aggravated penetrative sexual assault, and instead convicted for the lesser offences of sexual harassment under both the POCSO Act and the IPC.

Read here: [Sexual intent, not skin-to-skin contact, key: SC](#)

About the POCSO Act

The Act provides a **mandatory minimum punishment** of three years.

-For an act with sexual intent which involves physical contact without penetration, the punishment may extend to five years, and a fine.

-For Aggravated penetrative sexual assault, the minimum punishment is five years imprisonment, which may extend to seven years, and a fine.

Read here: [The POCSO Act and associated issues](#)

Why the Bombay High Court verdict is controversial?

Read here: [Error corrected: Regarding POCSO Act](#)

-The emphasis of Section 7 is to outlaw behaviour driven by sexual intent. So, the HC judgment legitimises “an entire range of unacceptable behaviour which undermines a child’s dignity and autonomy, through unwanted intrusions.”

Why SC ruling is essential and how to move ahead?

Much needed interpretation of Section 7: Research studies based on judgments of special courts have revealed similar interpretations of Bombay High Court is prevalent in courts. For instance, taking children by force and tearing their clothes have been considered as falling outside the ambit of “physical contact” under Section 7.

So, the SC interpretation will serve as a precedent for the scores of cases before special courts involving physical contact with sexual intent.

Research on high minimum mandatory sentences: Both SC and HC noticed high minimum mandatory sentences under POCSO Act. There is a need for research on the impact of high minimum mandatory sentences on judicial appreciation of evidence and outcomes, as well as the participation of victims and their families during the trial.

14. The need for palliative care in India has never been greater

Source: This post is based on the article “**The need for palliative care in India has never been greater**” published in the **Indian Express** on **24th November 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the need for palliative care.

News: With the rise in non-communicable diseases, the requirement of palliative care is a must.

What is palliative care?

WHO defined palliative care as “the active total care of patients whose disease is not responsive to curative treatment. This type of care is focused on providing relief from the symptoms and stress of the illness. The goal is to improve quality of life for both the patient and the family.”

What are the problems associated with palliative care?

- 1) Lack of trained staff and healthcare professionals.
- 2) Restricted access to opioids for pain control.
- 3) Refusal to accept that there comes a time when one needs to work with the process of dying rather than against it.

Why does the need for palliative care arise?

Non-communicable diseases like cancer are rising these days. Presently, in India, 30 lakh people are suffering from cancer. Of these, 75-80% are in the advanced stage and half of them die within a year. Yet, no more than 2% receive palliative care because of the paucity of service. With the corona pandemic, this count will further increase.

What should be done to improve the conditions of palliative care?

Trained professionals: Palliative care requires end-of-life conversations. So, there is a need for training professionals to work in a collaborative manner. People must also make a living will to designate a surrogate who can take decisions on their behalf when they are incapacitated.

Renaming: Rename palliative care and call it symptomatic care to make it more acceptable.

Treatment by specialists: There is a tendency to cut off relations once treatments fail. The treating specialist should continue to involve family members whose advice and support are needed by the patient.

Rehabilitation of family members: Apart from the patient, the survival and safety of members left behind is also a concern that should be addressed, especially in the case of India where it is missed.

15. Wanted: An Indian Charlesworth

Source: This post is based on the article “**The need for palliative care in India has never been greater**” published in **The Hindu** on **24th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Role of civil services in a democracy.

Relevance: Understanding the need for transparency behind the selection of Indian candidates in international forums.

News: Recently, India nominated Bimal Patel, professor of international law to the UN [International Law Commission](#). Before him, the only instance of an Indian academic elected to the ILC was that of Radhabinod Pal in 1958, an iconic judge.

Why the nomination is noteworthy?

His appointment is notable as earlier India routinely nominated retired officials from the Legal and Treaties Division (L&T) of the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), ignoring the talent that existed in international law in academia. According to **Syed Akbaruddin**, India’s former permanent representative to the UN, the L&T Division treated the ILC membership “as its preserve”.

The Indian habit of nominating retired government officials and bureaucrats to international forums is not restricted to ILC only, but also to other international forums like [World Trade Organization](#), [International Court of Justice](#) etc.

What are the practices adopted by other countries?

Other liberal democracies of the world do not nominate only retired officials, but they also nominate the leading academicians of international law. For e.g. Australian nominee, Hilary Charlesworth, recently elected to the ICJ, is a professor of international law and is globally known for her path-breaking work on feminist approaches to international law.

What are the drawbacks of the Indian process of nomination?

Lack of **transparency**: It gives rise to speculations of favouritism and nepotism.

What is the way forward?

Setting up an independent search-cum-selection committee: The committee should invite applications from qualified candidates, screen them based on their expertise and professional reputation in international law, and then make recommendations publicly.

Nominate the brightest talent: Ministry of External Affairs should make sure that the nominated candidate should have expertise in international law.

16. Elephant vs Dragon

Source: This post is based on the article “**Elephant vs Dragon**” published in **Times of India** on **24th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 –International relations and policies.

Relevance: Understanding Indian democracy versus Chinese authoritarianism.

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

News: The Chinese model has allowed it to make significant economic gains, as was revealed in the recent report that it had raced past the US in wealth gain over the last two decades. This is in contrast to the Indian democratic model, which faces many challenges.

What are the challenges facing the Indian democratic model?

The government was able to push through some controversial measures like [demonetization](#) and [GST bill](#).

But in the matter of the farmer's bill, though economically sound, it was forced to repeal those laws because of the democratic nature of Indian politics. Here, politics triumphed over the economy.

What are the strengths of the Chinese model?

China, guided by the single pursuit of economically overthrowing the USA, can take tough and strict measures. In China, opposition holds little or no power against the ruling segment.

17. [ASER 2021 has insights on how schools can respond to post-Covid world](#)

Source: This post is based on the article "[ASER 2021 has insights on how schools can respond to post-Covid world](#)" published in [The Indian Express](#) on **24th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Education.

Relevance: To know how to build back education better.

News: Recently, the 16th Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) survey 2021 has been released.

About the ASER Survey and its key findings

Read here: [ASER Survey and issues in school education – Explained, pointwise](#)

How education can be “build back better” in the post-pandemic world?

Children in today's Class 1 and Class 2 have never been to school. They have to be helped to get ready for schooling and learning.

Children above Class 3 will need help to settle in and reconnect with school education.

Retain children in government schools: Government schools have to demonstrate new ways to welcome children. Further, they need to build trust and faith through interaction between parents and teachers. So that, the shift to government schools can be long-lasting.

A shift in teaching-learning approach: The use of grade-level curriculum may not be useful immediately after the pandemic. Instead, meeting children at the level where they are and using the “teaching at the right level” approach is the need of the hour.

Investing time and effort now in rebuilding and strengthening children's ability to read with understanding, improving their problem-solving skills, and enabling them to help each other in the classroom may provide a big boost. It will bring the education system to where it was in pre-Covid times and will help to realize the goals of the [National Education Policy](#).

In conclusion, new methods of engaging with children and parents should emerge along with a proper Ground-level action plan that has appropriate teaching-learning goals and activities.

18. Lessons from past sanitation policies for future efforts

Source: This post is based on the article "[Lessons from past sanitation policies for future efforts](#)" published in [Livemint](#) on **24th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2- Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Relevance: To understand various sanitation programmes, their challenges and suggestions.

News: Despite decades of national sanitation policies, data from the [fifth National Family Health Survey \(NFHS-5\)](#) indicates that India is far from achieving it.

Why does SDG Goal 6 (on water and sanitation) is essential?

The United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 6 aims to "ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all" by 2030. But, its importance extends beyond its objectives. It will help nations achieve other SDG goals. Such as SDG 1 (poverty eradication), SDG 2 (improving nutrition), SDG 3 (promotion of well-being), and SDG 5 (gender equality), among others.

About the Evolution of India's sanitation policies

Central Rural Sanitation Programme (CRSP; 1986-1999): It offered financial assistance to below-poverty-line (BPL) homes to encourage the construction of 'individual household latrines' (IHHLs).

Challenges: Slow construction and lack of demand-led 'behaviour change communication' (BCC).

Total Sanitation Campaign (TSC; 1999-2011): It focused on driving up demand for toilet adoption. Around 15% of its budget was dedicated to educational activities, along with continued financial assistance to BPL households.

To inculcate behaviour change, the campaign focussed on achieving Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS).

Note: *Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) is developed in Bangladesh. It is a multistep participatory process that acknowledges that the mere provision of toilets does not guarantee its usage. It uses audiovisual aids to arouse a sense of discomfort and disgust with Open Defecation (OD) and motivates local communities to end the practice collectively.*

Challenges of TSC: 1. Officials running TSC lacked the training needed for educational activities, 2. Rather than demand-led, it is infrastructure-focused.

So, less than a 10% increase in toilet coverage was achieved under TSC according to the Census data (from 22% in 2001 to 31% in 2011).

Nirmal Bharat Abhiyan (NBA), 2012: The Abhiyan only ran for 18 months.

Swachh Bharat Mission (SBM) on 2 October 2014: Under it, the government aims to achieve an OD-free India within five years. The SBM was the first to include urban (along with rural) sanitation guidelines.

Under the SBM, India achieved the construction of around 100 million toilets and was declared an OD-free nation on 2 October 2019. However, many independent studies, along with NFHS-5 data, have raised questions over this claim.

Why do India's sanitation policies not yield desired results?

1. Policies have had a top-down approach with a focus on building toilets, this led to a higher number of toilets installed, but not used, 2. Ignored behaviour change communication' (BCC).

What should India do?

Proper community mobilization: India has to learn from Bangladesh. Using CLTS, Bangladesh reduced OD from 42% in 2003 to 1% in 2016. India should follow Bangladesh's

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

steps such as 1. Recognize sanitation attitudes as crucial, 2. Form collaborations with state and local governments along with national and international NGOs, 3. Recognise the participation and leadership role of women in achieving ODF status, such as decisions on the location and type of toilets planned, 4. Explain the merits of using toilets and having clean surroundings.

Remould social norms: Social norms should be remoulded in such a manner that toilets begin to be associated with the household's dignity and social status.

Keep toilets structurally intact and suitably clean: This will ensure that there is no reversal to OD after some time.

Linking SDG 6 goal with the sanitation programmes at all levels: This will allow a unified approach towards that end.

19. Antimicrobial Awareness Week 2021: How resistance to antibiotics develops

Source: This post is based on the articles “Antimicrobial Awareness Week 2021: How resistance to antibiotics develops” and “Antimicrobial Awareness Week 2021: How vaccines can help reduce India's AMR burden” published in **Down To Earth** on 24 Nov 2021.

Syllabus: GS2 – Issues relating to development and management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health, Education, Human Resources.

Relevance: To understand the grave situation of antimicrobial resistance(AMR), their types, and actions taken.

News: The development of resistance to antimicrobial is a major public health problem all over the world.

Though the world is trying to develop new drugs, there are difficulties in treatment as a result of the rapid development of resistance to these drugs.

What is antimicrobial resistance(AMR)?

It occurs when microorganisms (bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites) evolve and stop responding to medicines, making even minor infections tough to treat, causing severe illnesses and deaths.

What are the reasons for AMR?

Poor prescription practices, inappropriate antibiotics in pharmacies, and self-medication practices are key determinants of AMR in India.

What are the different types of AMR?

Natural (intrinsic, structural) resistance: This kind of resistance is caused by the structural characteristics of microbes and is not associated with the use of antimicrobials. It has **no hereditary property**.

Acquired resistance: Due to changes in the genetic characteristics of microbes, acquired resistance occurs as it is now unaffected by the previous antimicrobial.

-This kind of resistance occurs mainly due to structures of chromosomes or extrachromosomal such as plasmid, transposon, and others.

Cross resistance: Some microorganisms are resistant to a certain drug that acts with a similar mechanism as some other drugs. However, sometimes it can also be seen in completely unrelated drug groups.

-This resistance is usually observed against antibiotics whose structures are similar. This may be the chromosomal or extrachromosomal origin.

Multi-drug resistance and pan-resistance: These are often bacteria resistant to the antibiotics used to treat them. This means that a particular drug is no longer able to kill or control the bacteria.

How vaccines can help reduce the AMR burden?

Vaccinations not only prevent diseases but also prevent the development of antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

-Prevention of infections through vaccines results in reduced use of anti-microbials for treatment, reducing the emergence of resistance.

What are the steps taken in this regard?

The **Global Action Plan (GAP) on AMR** was launched in 2015 by WHO. Today, almost 80 countries have announced National Action Plans to address AMR at a national level.

In **India**, the recent announcement to **universalize PCV** across the country would protect children not only from pneumococcal disease, but also protect children and other populations from the emergence of drug-resistant pneumococcal disease.

20. We need a multi-pronged approach to end child marriage

Source: This post is based on the article “**We need a multi-pronged approach to end child marriage**” published in the **Indian Express** on **25th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of these vulnerable sections.

Relevance: Understanding the need of empowering girl children and stop child marriages.

News: There is an increase in Child marriages in India.

What is the status of child marriages in India?

NFHS 4 data shows that one in four girls in India was being married before 18. The first phase findings of **NFHS5** (2019-20) also show a similar result. Even according to other reports, more child marriages happened during the Covid pandemic.

What are the reasons behind the prevalence of child marriage?

- 1) Domestic work and care performed by women,
- 2) A belief that girls need to marry early for their safety and protection,
- 3) Apprehensions about the risk to family honour or economic burden.

Read here: [Major reasons for prevalence of child marriage in India](#)

What are the negatives of child marriages?

- 1) Violates girl human rights,
- 2) Lack of opportunities for women in society,
- 3) Impacts their overall personality from education to health,
- 4) Exposed to domestic abuse,
- 5) Women will have less decision-making powers.

There are several other outcomes that will also occur. Such as teenage pregnancy, population growth, child stunting, poor learning outcomes for children and the loss of women's participation in the workforce etc.

What are the government initiatives to stop child marriages?

-Karnataka amended the **Prohibition of Child Marriage Act in 2017** declaring every child marriage void, making it a cognizable offense and providing harsh punishment for those involved in child marriages.

Read here: [Incentives and Schemes provided by the Government of India to end child marriage](#)

What are the hurdles in stopping child marriages?

- 1) Patriarchal mindset
- 2) One size fits all approach: Although the government introduced various schemes like Conditional Cash Transfers, all failed to show the desired result.

What is the way forward?

Introduce various reforms: Like the expansion of secondary education, access to safe and affordable public transport, and support for young women to apply their education to earn a livelihood.

Education: Teachers should hold regular gender equality conversations with high school girls and boys to shape progressive attitudes that will sustain them into adulthood.

Community engagement: through programmes like Mahila Samakhya.

Involvement of various stakeholders: Bureaucrats across multiple departments, teachers, Anganwadi supervisors, panchayat and others interacting with rural communities, should be notified as **child marriage prohibition officers**.

Decentralized approach: Decentralising birth and marriage registration to gram panchayats will protect women and girls with essential age and marriage documents, thus better enabling them to claim their rights.

21. [The pandemic is an opportunity to correct some historical wrongs](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**The pandemic is an opportunity to correct some historical wrongs**” published in the **PIB** on **24th November 2021**.

Subject: GS 2-health.

Relevance: Understanding the issue of COVID-19 vaccine waiver.

News: In the upcoming 12th ministerial conference of **WTO**, access to vaccine and vaccine viva will be the most contentious issue.

Read more: [Issues Associated with IPR Waiver to Covid Vaccine](#)

What has been India’s contribution towards Vaccine equity?

India gifted two lakh doses of COVID-19 vaccine for UN peacekeepers. India provided critical medicines, diagnostic kits, ventilators to more than 150 countries.

India and South Africa also moved a motion at the WTO. In that motion, they asked the WTO Council on TRIPS to provide a waiver of Intellectual Property Rights for vaccine production. This would enable all the countries to domestically manufacturer vaccines. The proposal now has the backing of more than a hundred countries.

Must Read: [Intellectual Property Rights\(IPR\) and Universal Vaccination – Explained, Pointwise](#)

Due to India’s pressure, global supply lines and raw materials have remained open. India has contributed to the COVAX initiative as well.

India's vaccine [Maitri programme](#), with the premise that no one is safe until everyone is safe, provided vaccines to many developing and least developed countries. India could supply more than 65 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines to about a hundred countries.

Further, India is one of the initiators of the "**Political Declaration on Equitable Global Access to Covid 19 vaccines**". The declaration treats vaccines as a **global public good (GOPG)**. At present, it has the support of more than 180 UN member states.

What should be the way forward?

It is time for the global community to work collectively and urgently to address the COVID-19 crisis. Implementation of TRIPS was in favour of developing and least developed countries can be a good start in this direction.

22. Economic heft and foreign policy posturing

Source: This post is based on the article "**Economic heft and foreign policy posturing**" published in **Business standard** on **26th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Effect of Policies and Politics of Developed and Developing Countries on India's interests, Indian Diaspora.

Relevance: Limitation to India's foreign policy

News: India's foreign policy options are limited by its relatively inadequate economic size and technological capabilities.

How economic considerations of a nation can influence its foreign policy stance?

This can be easily understood by analyzing the difference in the West's posture towards China and Russia.

For instance, with respect to Russia, the western journals repeatedly condemn Mr Putin's violations of human rights within Russia, such as the targeting of Alexei Navalny.

By contrast, they overlook China's oppression of millions of people living within its own borders, for example the Uighurs and Tibetans.

This contrast is because Western real and financial sector companies continue to profit enormously by having invested in mega-scale production of goods and services in China.

Further, China's huge investments around the world, and being a huge exporter of a range of engineering products, provides them a significant power to influence international policies.

What is the way forward for India?

China's economic heft has contributed to its **aggressive external posturing**, including armed intrusions into Indian territory, extravagant claims over all of Arunachal Pradesh.

Changes in the economic size, foreign direct investment-related numbers and military strength of neighboring and major powers, like China, should be **factored by India in its foreign policy framework**.

23. POCSO shocker

Source: This post is based on the article "**POCSO shocker**" published in **The Hindu** on **26th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the Protection and Betterment of these Vulnerable Sections.

Relevance: Interpretation of provisions of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO Act)

News: Recently, the Allahabad High Court had ruled that a penetrative sexual assault on a 10-year-old boy did not fall under the stringent POCSO Act's definition of aggravated penetrative sexual assault.

The Allahabad High Court lowered the sentence of a man who was convicted of forcing a 10-year-old boy to perform oral sex.

The ruling has been handed down without due regard to the laws and facts.

What was Allahabad High Court's view?

The Court agreed that it was a "penetrative sexual assault" as defined by the POCSO Act, as the accused had put his member into the victim's mouth.

However, the court opined that, it did not amount to "aggravated penetrative sexual assault", a crime punishable with a minimum prison term of 10 years that can go up to life.

Instead, it was punishable under Section 4 of POCSO, which prescribes a minimum 7 years. Accordingly, the court reduced the trial court sentence of 10 years in jail to 7 years.

Must Read: [POCSO Act and associated issues – Explained](#)

Why the High Court's judgement is erroneous?

The High Court failed to note that a sexual offence can take the character of aggravated form of sexual offence in certain circumstances under POCSO.

Following sections of POCSO Act, contain provisions regarding 'aggravated penetrative sexual assault',

Section 5

i). When the offender is a police officer, a member of the armed forces, a public servant or someone on the staff of a jail, remand home, hospital, educational or religious institution, or any place of custody or care and protection.

ii). When the crime involves a group of offenders, or is done repeatedly, or when it pertains to the use of deadly weapons or causes grievous harm or injury, or leads to physical or mental incapacitation, pregnancy, or disease.

Section 5(m)

iii). Whoever commits penetrative sexual assault on a child below 12 years.

Further, the court failed to consider the fact that the child was about 10 years old when the offence took place.

What is the way forward?

First, the verdict in **Sonu Kushwaha vs State of U.P.** is a fit case for review, as it seems to be based on an error of law.

Second, quashing Bombay HC's judgement in [Satish v State of Maharashtra case](#), SC clearly stated that a narrow interpretation of POCSO provisions would defeat the very purpose of the act. This judgement cautioning against diluting the gravity of an offence against a child by ignoring the plain meaning of POCSO's provisions needs to be adhered.

24. Why Non-Personal, What's Critical ... & Snooping?

Source: This post is based on the article " **Why Non-Personal, What's Critical ... & Snooping?**" published in the **Times of India** on **26th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Government Policies and Interventions for Development in various sectors and Issues arising out of their Design and Implementation.

Relevance: Understanding the provisions of JPC on PDP Bill.

News: Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) on the Personal Data Protection (PDP) Bill, 2019 has submitted its report in the Parliament.

What are the key recommendations of JPC?

First, It suggested renaming 'Data Protection Bill' by dropping the word 'personal'.

Second, Committee recommended that the same regulator should govern both personal data (data about an individual) and non-personal data (anonymised data, business data).

Third, It suggested that government should set up certification labs for testing the integrity of all digital and IoT devices.

Fourth, Another suggestion is to store the sensitive and critical personal data in India only, as proposed in the 2019 bill.

Last, The committee suggested to do away with the penalty provision proposed in the 2019 bill.

Read here: [JPC retains exemption clause, adopts personal data Bill](#)

What is non-personal data? Why is its inclusion worrying?

Non Personal data is not about any particular individual. For eg, data about traffic or congested routes picked up by a ride-share platform. Or data about soil trends or weather patterns that never relate to any person is considered as non-personal data.

The government argues that this data is useful for formulating any future policy, but businessman argues that such data is proprietary.

What are the concerns associated?

Read here: [What are the concerns associated with the draft bill?](#)

How the Data Protection Bill is effective in the current scenario?

- It has the potential to address long-standing concerns around our surveillance regime.

-Having strong checks and balances over government surveillance could also help India seek free flows of data from regions like Europe that restrict transfers to other countries unless they have sufficient protections.

Read here: [How the Personal Data Protection Bill, 2019 can be more effective than the current regulations in place?](#)

25. Chaos in Parliament a sign of India's strong democracy

Source: This post is based on the article "Chaos in Parliament a sign of India's strong democracy" published in **Times of India** on **26th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 Parliament and State Legislatures—Structure, Functioning, Conduct of Business, Powers & Privileges and Issues Arising out of these.

Relevance: Understanding the cause and impact of disruptions occur in the Parliament

News: There is an increase in the cases of disruptions in the house.

About disruptions in Parliament

Disruptions usually occurred when the opposition is against a government policy or a national issue. The amount of time lost due to disruptions in Parliament had steadily risen from 5% of working time in the truncated 11th Lok Sabha (1996-97) to 39% in the 15th LS (2009-14).

In 2010, the entire winter session was lost due to the uproar over the 2G scam. In 2011, 30% of the time was lost due to disruptions. 2016 was the least productive of the 16th Lok Sabha, when the opposition united against the government's decision of demonetization. 73% of the time was lost during that period.

Previous cases of disruptions in the past

Disruptions have a long history in the Indian Parliament. Soon after the first Lok Sabha convened in 1952, an amendment to the contentious **Preventive Detention Bill** was brought about, which led to chaos in the house. In the words of veteran journalist BG Verghese, it was an incident of "an unprecedented hullabaloo."

Another incident of disruption is from 3rd Lok Sabha in 1963 when **Official Languages Bill** was introduced, there were strong protests by some Opposition members, which this newspaper described as the first time that such "disorderly scenes" were witnessed in the house.

Many instances of disruptions have occurred after that and a similar trend follows to today date.

How has the trend changed over the years?

From the fourth Lok Sabha, the culture of parliamentary politics changed, and it was politics with the "masks and gloves off".

The floor of the Lok Sabha was not the only site of protests. Members wanted permission to hold protests and even hunger strikes in the premises of parliament. For eg, The Communist MP AK Gopalan in 1964 held a one-day hunger strike in the lobby of Parliament to protest food shortage in his home state of Kerala. In 1966, Rameshwaranand led a mob protesting cow slaughter towards Parliament in an attempt to storm the complex.

What are the reasons behind the increase of disruption in the Parliament?

- The limited efficacy of the rules and disciplinary powers of speakers.
- More heterogeneous composition of Parliament compared to its first three decades of existence.
- Replacement of a dominant party system with a fragmented one where coalition government was the norm.
- The televising of parliamentary proceedings.
- Acceptance that disruptions were part of parliamentary and India's political culture.

What should be the way forward?

Frequent disruptions reflect the nature of Indian democracy as being dysfunctional. Thus, there is a need to strengthen the working of the Indian parliament.

26. The case of Prince Jaibir Singh's admission to IIT Bombay

Source: This post is based on the article " **The case of Prince Jaibir Singh's admission to IIT Bombay**" published in the **Indian Express** on **26th November 2021**.

Subject: GS2 – Mechanisms, Laws, Institutions and Bodies constituted for the Protection and Betterment of these Vulnerable Sections.

Relevance: Understanding affirmative action and substantive equality

News: Recently the Supreme Court, in pursuance of complete justice, directed IIT Bombay to allot a seat in the BTech program to Prince Jaibir Singh, a Dalit student from Ghaziabad.

What was the issue?

He was denied a seat because of late payment. The institution did not provide an alternative mechanism for fees payment like cash or cheque or other measures like allowing late payment without a fine. The supreme court ruled in favour of the student because Dalit students face many obstacles.

What are the obstacles faced by Dalit students?

They struggle in the initial stages to get good coaching. They also face humiliation in hostels, classrooms and playgrounds.

Considering these, more steps should be taken by the government to promote their welfare. One such measure was the recruitment drive for SC/ST/OBC/EWS through **Mission Mode Recruitment (MMR)**. But this also faces many challenges.

What are the challenges faced by MMR?

First, there is resistance by many IITs against this program. The recruitment process is rushed to adjust to the regular recruitment cycle. Due to this due diligence in the process, implementation is not followed.

Second, there is a lack of clear directions from state agencies, which brings discrepancies and variations in the process of recruitment. For example, illegitimate limits are set to the number of faculties to be recruited.

Third, Exceptionally good candidates are not recommended under the general category, which makes competition under the reserved category very difficult.

Fourth, Many candidates with high-quality publications hesitate to apply due to arbitrary numerical criteria like requiring 49 publications. Here, quantity dominates quality.

What should be the way forward?

As argued by Max Webber and Dr. BR Ambedkar substantive rationality and substantive equality should guide public policymaking to ensure the welfare of the marginalized.

27. Why the link between mental health and death penalty deserves greater attention

Source: This post is based on the article “**Why the link between mental health and death penalty deserves greater attention**” published in the **Indian Express** on **26th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Issues Relating to Development and Management of Social Sector/Services relating to Health.

Relevance: Understanding death penalty and mental health.

News: Recently **NLU Delhi’s project 39A** released its report **Deathworthy** in collaboration with NIMHANS. It studied the life and history of prisoners who have been given death punishment.

What were the findings of the report?

The report gave two important findings.

First, The origins of violent behaviour are determined by poor educational attainment and mental health issues of the prisoners. Early nurturing, disturbed childhood, exposure to abuse as children, disturbed family environment contributed to the poor mental and cognitive development of the child. For example, 73 prisoners experienced at least three adverse childhood experiences.

Second, two-third of the prisoners were diagnosed with current episodes of mental illness like depression and had suicidal tendencies. Prisoners also demonstrated evidence of cognitive impairment, head injuries, deficits in mental functioning.

All these factors should ideally be considered as part of the judicial process while awarding the death punishment.

What is the status of death punishment in India?

Since 2014 nine prisoners have been executed. Until the execution of Dhananjay Chatterjee in 2004 for the rape and murder of a minor girl, the country was a de facto abolitionist state. Now, Nearly 500 prisoners have been sentenced to death row.

Laws have provided for more crimes against which death punishment can be given, particularly of the nature of sexual violence.

What should be the way forward?

Evidence has shown that there is no link between death punishment and crime rate. In fact, murder rates have declined in 10 out of 11 countries that abolished capital punishment.

The Mental Health of the convict should be considered before giving capital punishment, as is the norm in international law.

28. On the path of Buddha and his followers

Source: This post is based on the article “On the path of Buddha and his followers” published in **Indian Express** on **27th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 – India and neighbourhood relations

Relevance: Buddhism and its significance in international relation, Use of Soft power in foreign diplomacy

News: Recently, the Prime Minister inaugurated the Kushinagar International Airport in eastern Uttar Pradesh to facilitate Buddhist pilgrims to reach the important site of the Mahaparinirvana Temple.

The completion of the Kushinagar airport is a significant milestone in the Indian government’s 2016 plan to develop a “Buddhist Circuit”.

The ambitious tourism circuit, will help India to achieve regional objectives.

How the development of Buddhist circuit will help India to achieve regional objectives?

Facilitation of people-to-people diplomacy between the SCO members: Both India and the seven members of Shanghai Cooperation Organization (Russia, China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, and Pakistan) share a common Buddhist religious and cultural legacy.

Will counter ongoing Chinese attempts to distrust the Buddhist narrative in the maritime Belt & Road Initiative countries like Sri Lanka, in Himalayan border monasteries in Leh, Arunachal Pradesh, and also in India's neighbours Nepal and Bhutan.

Neighborhood First policy: Bhutan has about 75 per cent Buddhist Lamaist population, while Nepal has 10 per cent. China had already started to leverage the soft power of Buddhism in these countries to achieve its strategic geopolitical goals. In this context, India's Buddhist Circuit including Lumbini in Nepal as a pilgrimage site holds great potential in bringing greater ties between India's neighbours.

Spread of India's soft power: The spread of Buddhism also coincided with the transmission of secular knowledge from the Indian subcontinent – like traditional Indian medicine (Aayush), manufacturing (sugar) and the astro-sciences into these regions. Most monasteries along the Silk Route during the first millennium were often headed by Indian monks. They hosted merchants, travellers, and tended to the sick using traditional Indian medicine. Even today, amongst the Central Asian Republics (CARs) there is an interest in traditional Indian medicines. Exchanges (research and students) for studying this would be of great interest to these countries.

What steps were taken by India in this regard?

Recently, when India chaired SCO, India hosted the Shared Buddhist Heritage virtual exhibition in New Delhi, where it showcased Buddhist art, tapestry, ritual objects from across this vast Eurasian region.

What is the way forward?

First, Buddhist history, trade and student exchanges, should become truly impactful.

Second, tracing back Buddhism's living legacy and its archaeological remains in the SCO nations to its roots in India is essential for India's soft diplomacy.

29. Obesity is a social problem. Addressing it requires access to healthy food, not restrictions

Source: This post is based on the article "**Obesity is a social problem. Addressing it requires access to healthy food, not restrictions**" published in **Indian Express** on **27th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS2 – Health

Relevance: Obesity and health.

News: The council in the most obese area in Lancashire is planning to place restrictions on takeaway food to control the health menace. There is also talk of encouraging exercise and addressing mental health issues

Restricting fast-food isn't a bad idea, particularly for young people, amongst whom research indicates it is both a consequence of and cause for mental issues.

However, obesity control cannot be achieved just by restricting individual choice.

Why the solution to control obesity cannot be achieved just by restricting individual choice?

Obesity, like most public health issues, is a social problem: In the West, it is more expensive and difficult to procure healthy produce. Hence, much of the people belonging to lower-income groups prefer fast foods.

Like most addictive substances, fast food targets the poor and vulnerable, and the solution to it cannot just be restricting individual choice. We must find healthy replacement choices first.

What can be done?

It is important to ensure food habits and economies that do not make eating healthy a function of wealth.

Need to expand choices, especially, the ability to make healthy ones rather than restricting them.

30. It's time we produced champions

Source: This post is based on the article “**It's time we produced champions**” published in **Indian Express** on 27th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS 2-Government policies and interventions for development in various sectors and issues arising out of their design and implementation.

Relevance: Understanding our suboptimal performance in major sporting events.

News: India won only seven medals in Olympics. Even small nations with fewer people have done better than India.

What are the issues plaguing our sports sector?

Access to infrastructure(like schools and stadiums)- In India, our pool of talent is limited to a few pockets. For example, the badminton team has been picked from an academy; the boxers and wrestlers are all from Haryana or the Northeast; and the shooters are all, with few exceptions, rich kids who don't need any state support.

No country has performed well in sports without taking care of the **basic needs of its people**, especially health and social security. India needs to take care of it.

On the lines of the Soviet Union, the US, South Korea, and China, the rise in the sporting world should be preceded by **widening the sporting pool** from which talented players can be tapped.

We need to **change our attitude** and not accept second-best anymore. Complacency could creep in when we celebrate bronze medals like gold.

Sports should be seen from the right perspective. It should help the community at large in becoming better by serving a social purpose.

We must create leaders in every field who can think and act, not leaders who think they act.

31. Opposition Dissent without Basis or Foundation: About the data protection bill

Source: This post is based on the article “**Opposition Dissent without Basis or Foundation**” published in **Times of India** on 27th November 2021.

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

Relevance: Understanding the JCP chairperson's viewpoint on the data protection bill.

News: The Joint Committee of Parliament chairperson PP Chaudhary clarifies the concerns raised by opposition on the data protection bill.

What are the concerns associated with the data protection bill?

Read here: [What are the concerns associated with the draft bill?](#)

What are the reasons provided by the JCP chairperson of the data protection bill?

On exemption of agencies: The claims that the government was given undue powers are without foundation. [Article 19](#) and [Article 21](#) have reasonable safeguards. Moreover, they are subject to judicial review.

The exemption clauses allow the government to intervene in matters of sovereignty or integrity of the country. In such matters, the reasons cannot be disclosed on the floor of the house. Moreover, sections 12, 13, and 14 provide that individual consent may not be required. The state is authorized by law to seek data for the provision of any services or benefits.

Also read: [Draft Personal Data Protection Bill – Explained, pointwise](#)

About inclusion of non-personal data: According to the chairperson, the reason behind including of non-personal data is that so much data is flowing, which makes it hard to differentiate between personal and non-personal data.

Inclusion of bringing hardware manufacturers under the purview of proposed legislation: Because of various news of breaches of data, this has been done. Under the process of Standardisation Testing and Quality Certification (STQC), both software and hardware will be examined.

About 72 hours to report a breach of data: According to him, this is the reasonable time for data fiduciaries to report for the breach of data.

On how the bill will impact India's digital economy: Committee is expecting a 22% increase in cloud storage in India due to the boost this law provides. India's digital infrastructure will become stronger and can benefit the economy.

32. What they own: NFHS on women property ownership isn't conclusive

Source: This post is based on the article "What they own: NFHS on women property ownership isn't conclusive" published in **The Times of India** on **27th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Mechanisms, laws, institutions and Bodies constituted for the protection and betterment of vulnerable sections.

Relevance: To understand the land ownership of women in India based on the findings of NFHS-5.

News: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) has released the 2019-21 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5).

NFHS-5 Findings of women's ownership of property

In the NFHS-4, 38.4% of women respondents reported owning a house/land alone or jointly, this has risen to 43.3% in NFHS-5. 45.7% of rural women claimed such ownership, against 38.3% in urban areas.

States like UP, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Punjab reported a huge improvement in women ownership between the two surveys. But, Delhi, Odisha, Puducherry and Chandigarh surprisingly declined.

Read more: [NFHS-5 and its findings – Explained, pointwise](#)

Is the NFHS-5 data reliable?

NFHS doesn't reveal women owners as a percentage of total land/house owners. So, the experts warned relying upon NFHS data for land ownership.

A 2020 University of Manchester working paper examined other Indian surveys and found barely 16% of women in rural landowning households own land. Women constitute only 14% of all landowners, owning just 11% of the land.

What are the government steps to improve land ownership among women?

-**Hindu Succession Act:** The 2005 amendment to the Act gave daughters equal coparcenary rights in the undivided joint family property.

-Official schemes for homeless/landless offering property titles predominantly to women.

-Many states are lowering stamp duties for women to reduce gender gaps in property registration.

What needs to be done?

Kerala, which implemented the HSA amendments decades before 2005 reported only 27.3% of women claiming property ownership in NFHS against 55% in Bihar. So, India has to **fix the data gaps** to better reveal gender gaps.

Read more: [India must push for women's rights in land ownership](#)

Terms to Know:

- [Hindu Succession Act](#)

33. Shore in the lifeline – About MGNREGA

Source: This post is based on the article “**Shore in the lifeline**” published in **The Hindu** on **27th November 2021**.

Source: GS 2 Welfare schemes for vulnerable sections of the population by the Centre and States and the performance of these schemes.

Relevance: Understanding the impact of delay of funds in MGNREGA.

News: Government has recently announced 10,000 crore additional funds to supplement the needs of the state under MGNREGA. However, 24 states and UT's still show a negative net balance.

Also read: [MGNREGA: Issues and Significance – Explained, pointwise](#)

What are the reasons behind the fund crunch under MGNREGA?

-High demand because of the extended effects of pandemics in rural areas.

-Low budget allocation for the MGNREGA scheme. In the case of 2021-22, the total allocations were ₹73,000 crores, much lower than the ₹1,11,500 crore as revised estimates in expenditure in 2020-21.

Read here: [What are the reasons for the delayed payments of MGNREGA wages?](#)

What is the impact?

According to the activists, delayed payment led to increase in an unmet demand of 20% in Bihar, Telangana and Gujarat.

Also read: [What is the impact of low fund allocation to MGNREGA?](#)

What should be the way forward?

Considering MGNREGA as the lifeline of rural communities, Government should make up the shortfalls quickly.

34. Our constitution, A beacon of freedom

Source: This post is based on the article “**Our constitution, A beacon of freedom**” published in **Indian Express** on **27th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 2 Indian Constitution—Historical Underpinnings, Evolution, Features, Amendments, Significant Provisions and Basic Structure.

Relevance: Understanding the importance of constitution day.

News: 26th November 2021, marked as India’s 72nd Constitution Day.

Also read: [Constitution Day](#)

What are the challenges involved in drafting the constitution?

Multiple roles: Constituent assembly faced a difficult task. It sat as the parliament in the morning and the constituent assembly in the afternoon. It faced challenges of governing a new nation along with communal tensions, partition and refugees.

Constituency: Constituent body was supposed to have 296 members which were later reduced to 210 as members boycotted. But statesmen like Dr. Ambedkar still believed in creating an environment that would allow those members to come and participate.

Juristic concerns: Some constitutional experts like **Ivor Jennings** questioned why the constitution plays down communalism as the partition of India was the result of communalism.

Given all these challenges, our constitution makers framed the constitution delicately and culminated the constitution in who we would be — “**We the People**” **all citizens, not subjects**. And what we will become —“a nation that would secure the liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship, and ensure equality of status and opportunity”.

Read more: [Analysing the Constituent Assembly debates reveals of a vital process](#)

How India’s constitution is unique in comparison with other constitutions?

Reparation: India’s constitution made compensations for historical discrimination on grounds of caste that defines the present and future of so many Indians. By contrast, America’s Constitution makes no apology nor enables reparations for slavery.

Voice of all communities: India’s constitution is an instrument for silenced minorities to express themselves, to have injustices redressed and in turn owe their allegiance to their Constitution.

These are the main reasons that India’s constitution lives through along.

What should be the responsibility of Indian citizens?

Tom Ginsburg, after studying 935 different constitution systems of 200 nations commented on an average a constitution survives for 17 years. Yet, the Indian constitution is successfully entering in 72nd year. Indians should not take the endurance of the constitution as granted.

The endurance of the Indian constitution is deeply rooted in the commitment to expand each other’s freedom.

General Studies Paper - 3

General Studies - 3

1. Reforming the fertilizer sector

Source: This post is based on the article “Reforming the fertilizer sector” published in **The Hindu** on 23 November 2021.

Syllabus: GS 3-Issues related to direct and indirect farm subsidies and minimum support prices.

Relevance: To understand the fertilizer subsidies given in India, its issues, and the way forward.

News: A heavy increase in fertilizer subsidy bill is seen.

A brief background of fertilizer policy since 1991 reforms:

After years of unchanged prices, the **budget of 1991** raised the issue prices of fertilizers by 40% on average. This rise was rolled down to 30% in a few months, with exemption to small and marginal farmers from the price increase. Due to opposition, the **increase in Urea price was further rolled back** to 17% over the pre-reform price.

-It resulted in a big shift in the composition of fertilizers used in the country in favor of urea and thus Nitrogen(N).

The government started **Nutrient Based Subsidy (NBS)** in 2010 to address the growing imbalance in fertilizer use, which was skewed towards urea (N). However, only non-nitrogenous fertilizers P and K (phosphorus and potassium) were included in NBS; urea was left out.

What is the need for reforms in the fertilizer sector?

Firstly, It is putting a huge and unsustainable burden of rising fertilizer subsidy bills on the government exchequer. Fertilizer subsidy has doubled in a short period of three years between 2017-18 to 2021-22. At present, taxpayers bear 78% of the cost of urea and farmers pay only 22%.

Secondly, to promote the **efficient use** of fertilizers through the balanced use of N, P, and K (nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium).

Thirdly, to reduce water and air **pollution** caused by the overuse of urea.

What are the challenges faced in reforming the sector?

A huge amount of fertilizer is imported into India due to limited domestic production capacity. Further, the **international prices of fertilizers are volatile** due to:

-Sharp upsurge in **international energy prices**, with which fertilizer prices are directly related.

-**Supply constraints** in major producing countries due to robust domestic demand, production cuts, and export restrictions.

-**Cartels** of major global energy producers have a strong influence on prices.

What is the way forward?

In order to address the multiple goals of fertilizer policy, we need to simultaneously work on four key policy areas.

Firstly, we need to be **self-reliant** and not depend on the import of fertilizers.

Secondly, we need to **extend the NBS model to urea** and allow for price rationalization of urea compared to non-nitrogenous fertilizers and prices of crops.

-Distribution of price change over both price and subsidy based on some rational formula rather than just on subsidy.

Thirdly, We need to shift towards **non-chemical fertilizers** like organic and biofertilizers and bring parity in prices and subsidies given to chemical fertilizers with organic and biofertilizers.

-This also provides the scope to use large biomass of crop that goes waste and enhance the value of livestock by-products.

Finally, India should pay attention to improving **fertilizer efficiency** through **need-based use** rather than using excess fertilizer in the field.

What are the steps already taken by the government?

For being self-reliant, five urea plants are being revived in the public sector. To increase the efficiency of fertilizer use, the recently developed Nano urea by IFFCO shows promising results in reducing the usage of urea.

2. Time to rethink Indian levies on motor vehicles

Source: This post is based on the article **“Time to rethink Indian levies on motor vehicles”** published in **Livemint** on 23 November 2021.

Syllabus: GS 3- changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

Relevance: To understand the system of differential taxation based on car length and its impact.

News:

How different cars are taxed in India?

GST is levied at 28%, the top slab, with an add-on cess of 1% on small cars (less than 4m length) and 17-22% extra on those longer than 4 meters. While the exhaust-free Electric Vehicles attract a GST rate of just 5%.

What is the rationale behind such a differential taxation system?

The majority of the cars attracting a higher rate of GST are ‘luxury’ cars.

A low tax rate makes it possible for EV-makers to reduce prices enough to compete with fossil-fuel-based cars. It will also hasten the process of transition to EVs.

What are the issues associated with this differential taxation system?

Excessive protection to EVs will not help in becoming globally competitive. ‘Made in India’ EVs need to be cost-competitive on their own by innovation and competition, then only will have a good chance at global success.

As low tax on smaller cars led to more demand for smaller cars, and therefore larger vehicles, that make up the bulk of foreign markets, are unable to find economies of scale.

What is needed to be done?

A similar level of the lower burden of tax on all cars will push automakers to work harder on all cost-heads under their control.

It may also be time to explore the idea of **road pricing for arterial routes** (important routes in a system of roads) in big cities to decongest traffic. **Satellite-linked technology** can enable this system to implement differential rates.

-Charges could generally **vary by traffic density**, with vehicles in a hurry billed extra for the use of a speedy express lane and EVs can be given these facilities for free to encourage their use.

3. Another Supply Chain Crisis?

Source: This post is based on the article “**Another Supply Chain Crisis?**” published in **Times Of India** on 22 November 2021.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development and employment.

Relevance: To understand the potential supply chain crisis due to covid-19 impact in china.

News: US Federal Reserve chair Jerome Powell recently said that Americans should be prepared for the global supply chain to remain in crisis through 2022.

Covid-induced supply chain disruption highlighted the loopholes of total dependence on one country for vital products, and diversification will take a few years to implement.

What is the risk to the global supply chain?

If China's '**zero- Covid strategy**' fails after the Winter Olympics in February, there is going to be a major crisis. **Delta variant** could further the crisis.

-if it experiences a devastating Covid wave, the Chinese government will be forced to clamp down on exports of critical products, to fulfill the demand of its own population.

Lean manufacturing processes and just-in-time delivery mean a factory closure in one Asian country can unleash a global crisis.

How much is the dependence of the world on China for products?

According to the United Nations, China accounts for 28.7% of global manufacturing output. China is India's largest trading partner; bilateral trade was at \$92.68 billion in 2019.

A major chunk of **electronic components, auto parts, consumer durables**, active pharmaceutical ingredients (**APIs**), and key starting materials (**KSM**) required to manufacture lifesaving drugs are imported from China.

In case of any disruption, global healthcare would be severely affected. For example, 80% of heparin(used to prevent blood clotting) comes from China. Without heparin, critical care will suffer, virtually paralyzing the entire global healthcare delivery system.

What needs to be done by India?

It is important for every Indian industrial body to create a checklist of vulnerable items and secure supply till the end of 2022.

Most countries cannot be self-reliant due to small aging populations, which means a small consumer base or a lack of a talented workforce. It is time for India to enhance its status by becoming a global manufacturing hub.

4. [Climate justice must drive climate action](#)

Source: This post is based on the article “**Climate justice must drive climate action**” published in **Business Standard** on **22nd Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the shortcomings of the present climate process and ways to improve it.

News: Big emitters must reconsider their stated net-zero date and specify a credible action plan.

Important elements of a disaster response

There are four elements in the response to any disaster that are important —

- The credibility of the warning
- A shared sense of emergency
- A social and political norm of joint responsibility
- A higher authority capable of enforcing restraint and liability on those most responsible for the risk

The biggest natural disaster of our times is – climate change.

How have UNFCCC & IPCC fared in terms of the four elements of response wrt climate change?

Credibility of warning: Each of the five assessments by IPCC and early indications of the sixth assessment have strengthened the scientific consensus on the facts and the projections. The IPCC reports have certainly raised awareness not just in scientific circles, but also among the public, particularly young people. Doubts about their reliability are now limited to fringe groups.

Shared sense of emergency: As most drastic consequences of the climate change will be witnessed in the future, so decision-making at global scale is still limited to short-term considerations. This absence of a sense of emergency can be seen in the casual and indifferent declarations of net-zero emissions decades ahead.

Must Read: [Glasgow Climate Pact – Explained, pointwise](#)

Joint responsibility: This is reflected in the principle of common but differentiated responsibility (CBDR). But here also the problem is that the principles of climate justice that should govern the differentiation of responsibility have never been framed. **Differentiation by capacity** (*as per a nation’s capacity*) is now more widely accepted even in rich countries. However, unless the issue of **differentiation by culpability** (*as per a nation’s responsibility/liability*) is adequately resolved, countries will hold back on their commitments.

Higher authority: This is entirely missing in the global climate response process. Presently, we rely on the voluntary acceptance of liability by those responsible for the greater part of the accumulation of greenhouse gases.

What are the implications?

The climate process is now driven largely by narrow national interests. The past is ignored altogether in the process.

Emergence of a three-part power structure in the climate negotiations:

- **The first part** includes the two big emitters, **China** and the **US**, whose participation is a pre-condition for an effective agreement. This G-2 dimension is now clearly evident in the separate agreement that these two countries presented before and during the 2015 Paris COP meeting and the 2021 Glasgow COP meeting.
- **The second part** consists of **18-20 countries**, each one of which accounts for 1% or more of the global carbon emissions
- **The third part** consists of about **180 countries** that are at the receiving end of what the big players decide.

What is the way forward?

As per *Nitin Desai (Business Standard)*,

- **Climate dharma:** A consensus on the principles of climate justice that would define each country's and each individual's duty is needed
- **Carbon-saving technologies** may also help
- Most big emitters should **bring forward their net-zero target dates** and specify a credible action plan from now onwards at the 2022 COP meeting.
- An **independent national mechanism** in every country for ensuring credibility and accountability

5. Explained: In perspective, farm distress and the demand for guaranteed MSP

Source: This post is based on the article "**Explained: In perspective, farm distress and the demand for guaranteed MSP**" published in **The Indian Express** and "**Modi's farm misadventure is a huge setback for urbanization**" published in **Live mint** on **23rd November 2021**. **Syllabus:** GS3 – issues related to agriculture sector

Relevance: Agri reforms

News: Despite the announcement by the PM to repeal the three farm laws, farmers have said their protest will continue. They have written to the PM with their six remaining demands.

One of the main demands by farmers is that, **MSP should be made a legal entitlement** of all farmers for all agricultural produce. However, a legally mandated MSP regime is likely to be neither feasible nor sustainable in the long run. A guaranteed MSP can have a few unintended consequences.

Hence, a balanced approach would be to address the issues hampering the growth of agriculture and doubling the incomes of farmers in India.

What is the status of MSP in India?

MSPs are the prices at which, the government promises to procure agricultural produce from farmers.

At present, the government announces MSPs for 23 crops, but procurement happens only for a few among them. Also, procurement varies quite a lot across states.

Till now, the Government is not legally mandated by law to procure under MSP. The government can by its discretion choose, not to procure.

Must Read: [What is MSP?](#)

What are the issues/challenges in a legally mandated MSP regime?

A legal mandate for MSP would force the government to purchase all the produce that any farmer wants to sell at the declared MSP. It would also have to procure from all states, and all crops for which MSPs are announced. This will have the following unintended outcomes:

- High cost to the exchequer
- Loss of food grains due to rotting in mandis.
- Increase food inflation.
- Encouragement to unsustainable cultivation of water intensive crops, rice and wheat. This will indirectly contribute to stubble burning.
- It will increase the capacity of buffer stocks. Already, grain stocks lying with the government are more than twice its buffer requirement.

What are the issues that are hampering the growth of agriculture in India?

- Holdings are fragmented and have become uneconomical.
- Lack of focus towards crop diversification
- Public investments compared to subsidies are very less.
- Declining productivity.
- Disguised labor force
- Low income (Farmers earns an average of ₹27 a day)
- Lack of growth in non-farm sector jobs, limiting diversification of agriculture.

What is the way forward?

Instead of bypassing the market by using MSPs, the government should make efforts to enable farmers to participate in the market.

Ramp up investment in the agriculture sector: Provide better irrigation facilities, easier access to credit, timely access to power, and ramping up warehouse capacity and extension services, including post-harvest marketing. This will increase farmers' bargaining ability and choices before them.

Boosting India's industrial and services sectors: Agriculture accounts for just 17% of India's GDP while employing 55% of its population. Industry and service sectors can potentially take up the excess labor that is presently engaged in unremunerative farm activities. Rapid growth of industries and services for the next couple of decades could help alleviate India's farm distress.

Direct cash transfers to the rural poor: In the short term, providing direct cash transfers to the rural poor can alleviate distress. \$100 billion in annual subsidies for food, farming and village unemployment should be slowly replaced by a basic income.

Replicating the success of AMUL in agriculture: Supporting producers' organizations that capture more of the farm-to-fork value chain would mean better prices for farmers.

6. Non-farm jobs and social mores hold India's key to farm reforms

Source: This post is based on the article "Non-farm jobs and social mores hold India's key to farm reforms" published in **Live mint** on **23rd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues related to Agriculture sector

Relevance: Necessary pre-conditions for success of Agri reforms.

News: Recently, government repealed three farm laws.

Agri reforms in India are necessary to unlock the true potential of agriculture and the agro-processing industry, and for the efficient allocation of private and government resources. However, the success of any attempt to reform the agriculture sector in India would depend to a large extent on the state of its economy's non-farm sectors, as well as societal culture. Further, other preconditions for successful farm reforms, such as improved irrigation and an agriculture insurance market that functions better, are also needed.

What has been the impact of High agri income in Punjab and Haryana?

Decline in employment of adults and women: Data shows that, in Punjab and Haryana, due to high agricultural incomes, there is a drastic decline in agricultural employment among adults and women.

- Because of high agricultural incomes, young men (aged 20-29 years) could afford to remain unemployed or in education in Punjab and Haryana.
- Similarly, as per data, the number of women employed in agriculture have declined over the years. Meanwhile, there has been no increase in women participation in non-farm work. This means with high agri incomes, more women have retreated to their homes, i.e. they are no longer working.

Why decent employment opportunities in non-farm sector are necessary for successful Agri reforms?

Now, in the above context, if price guarantees for rice and wheat are rolled back, this would make a price decline of rice and wheat inevitable due to their excess supply in the market. If this were to happen, farmers would be unable to sustain their current income levels and lifestyle.

This will force farmers in these states to find alternative sources of income that includes, women and younger adults in farmer families taking up paid work.

But with decline of non-farm sectors, avenue to absorb youth is very less. Further, women returning to paid work will be seen as a decrease in societal status.

This is why rich farmers in Haryana and Punjab are forced to maintain the status quo with respect to agri reforms.

Hence, reviving high-paying jobs in non-farm sectors becomes an important precondition for Agri reforms in India.

7. 'Andaman & Nicobar Is Key To Act East Policy'

Source: This post is based on the article **“Andaman & Nicobar Is Key To Act East Policy”** published in **Times of India** on **23rd November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Security challenges and their management in border areas.

Relevance: To understand the strategic significance of Andaman & Nicobar and Andaman & Nicobar Command.

News: Andaman & Nicobar Command (ANC) is the country's only integrated military command till now in India. So, It is crucial for India's military outpost to counter China's expanding footprint in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR).

About Andaman & Nicobar Command (ANC)

The ANC was set up in 2001. Over 20 years, the ANC evolved into

-A Quad-service integrated theatre command of the army, navy, air force and coast guard.

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

-Better integration, training, and a common approach to operations, logistics and sustenance.
-Enhanced ANC's communications, networking and maritime domain awareness along with huge infrastructure development.
-The creation of the office of the **Chief of Defence Staff (CDS)** has greatly empowered ANC and the HQ Integrated Defence Staff with better control, continuity and clarity in multiservice and multi-domain operations.
All these made the A&N Islands from the initial outpost a so-called springboard to a veritable hub of activities in the region.

Why Andaman & Nicobar Command (ANC) is significant?

India's central role and peninsular orientation in the Indian Ocean Region (IOR) lends itself to supporting net maritime security in the region.

Over the years, the efforts of development have been towards **Security And Growth for All in the Region (SAGAR)**. The IOR offer tremendous scope for cooperation by everyone.

IOR region is witnessing more regular transit movements to and from the Gulfs of Aden and Oman.

So the A&N Islands **provide an additional strategic outreach** towards India's interests in the IOR. The ANC's infrastructure and military assets provide for the defence of India's islands and the protection of Indian interests in the IOR. So, the ANC has been a **pivot in India's 'Act East' and 'Neighbourhood First' policies**.

Recent initiatives in the A&N Region

The Niti Aayog, as well as the **Island Development Agency**, have announced numerous initiatives for further development of the A&N Islands.

In 2020, the government launched **submarine optical fibre cable project in A&N** Islands to provide digital connectivity.

The airport at Port Blair will also become an international airport with regional connectivity by 2022.

All these will give a fillip to tourism at the islands and in future make the island an important transshipment hub for Indian mainland.

What the country should learn from ANC?

The establishment of ANC saved precious government resources and operational benefits in the form of shorter decision cycles. The same approach of ANC should be followed by government in establishing other integrated theatre commands for the nation.

Must Read: [Integrated Theatre commands in India – Explained, pointwise](#)

8. Use of facial recognition technology by police is dangerous

Source: This post is based on the article "Use of facial recognition technology by police is dangerous" published in **The Indian Express** on 24th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS-3 – Science and Technology- developments and their applications and effects in everyday life.

Relevance: To understand the dilemma of security and privacy.

News: Hyderabad city police is deploying lakhs of cameras connected in a real-time network managed by Hyderabad's Command and Control Centre and can be used for facial recognition technology.

In Hyderabad, an Integrated Police Command Control Centre has been set up, with a cost of Rs 800 crore. The center will allow the police to access real-time surveillance footage from the network of cameras that monitor the city.

Numerous reports have emerged from Hyderabad about illegal search operations and police taking photographs of people on the road without any reason.

What is Facial Recognition Technology(FRT)?

Facial recognition technology identifies the distinctive features of a person's face, and it creates a biometric map using these features. Then an algorithm matches these features with possible individuals. The system searches across databases of millions of images and information gathered without knowledge or consent.

What are the issues with FRT?

Surveillance practices like data analytics, social media analysis capabilities and facial recognition are alleged to be an attempt to **control citizens' lives through technology**.

International experience – The EU is in the process of banning this technology. Belgium, Luxembourg and multiple cities in the US have already banned this technology.

Specific concerns linked to India:

-Supreme Court in its judgment has already recognized the Right to Privacy as the fundamental right. However, there is yet **no privacy law in India** to regulate data collection and to act as an oversight mechanism. The proposed 'Personal Data Protection Bill 2019' is still stuck in Parliament.

– Without a law on privacy, public spaces will turn into sites of technological experimentation, where human rights are sidelined for profit and control.

-In the name of the protection of women and children, public money is being spent on these technologies. However, there is yet no evidence of their effectiveness, further **wasting public funds**.

-This Hyderabad model will **motivate other** state police departments and intelligence agencies to adopt similar measures throughout the country.

9. EVs for last-mile delivery could boost India's e-commerce sector

Source: This post is based on the article “**EVs for last-mile delivery could boost India's e-commerce sector**” published in **Live mint** on 24 November 2021.

Syllabus: GS3 –Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation, environmental impact assessment.

Relevance: To understand the new demand for EV's for environment-friendly last-mile delivery.

News: Recently, NITI Aayog and around 30 companies, including many e-commerce and logistics firms, launched their **Shoonya campaign** that calls for accelerated electrification of last-mile delivery.

Why big private companies are adopting electric vehicles?

A **rapid digital adoption** across India during the **covid** pandemic has pressured companies to expand their last-mile logistics.

A McKinsey analysis stated that as more netizens order online, India requires between 1 million and 1.5 million two-wheelers for delivery, by 2025.

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

Companies seem to be realizing that electrifying the delivery vehicles could help them cut **fuel and maintenance costs**, besides reducing **harmful emissions**. 100% electrification of their two-wheeler fleets by 2025 could save close to \$1 billion as well as a 1.5-million-tonne reduction in carbon dioxide emissions each year.

What are the challenges?

The idea is yet to take off on a larger scale owing to **structural issues**, including financing limitations, lack of awareness, and the limited availability of EV models right now.

Insurers lack sufficient data to accurately price risk while providing cover for these vehicles.

What efforts are done to tackle the last-mile delivery issue?

Efforts by private players:

-The rise of mobility platforms gives companies an option to **lease vehicles** instead of purchasing them.

-**Newer models** of EVs are coming up with features such as higher top speeds, longer ranges, and better tech packages that are ideal for last-mile delivery.

Efforts by Union Government:

-**FAME-II** incentives have been increased from ₹10,000 per kWh to ₹15,000 per kWh, to spur demand and supply in this space.

-**Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme** for the automotive sector, where around ₹26,000 crores have been earmarked for 5 years. The initiative could incentivize EV production in the country.

10. Sustainable agriculture

Source: This post is based on the article “**Sustainable agriculture**” published in **Business Standard** on 23 November 2021.

Syllabus: GS3 –Major crops-cropping patterns in various parts of the country.

Relevance: To understand the need and ways of sustainable agricultural practices.

News: During the recent climate summit in Glasgow, India did not ratify “**Action Agenda on Sustainable Agriculture**”.

India stated that it already has a “**National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture**” as part of its broad “National Action Plan on Climate Change”. However, these initiatives have failed to improve the condition of Indian agriculture.

What are the issues in Indian agricultural practices?

The country’s Greenhouse Gas (GHG) emission from the farm sector is increasing constantly.

-India overtook China in 2011 to become the world’s top polluter in terms of agricultural emissions.

-Emission from the two main methane-emitting activities — paddy cultivation and livestock rearing — is also increasing continuously.

Environment-friendly practices, like organic farming or zero-budget cultivation, are not able to match the massive and rapidly growing demand for farm products.

What is the solution?

India needs “sustainable agriculture” whereby technologies and agronomic practices are efficient, least injurious to the environment, and yet profitable for farmers.

What are the means to execute such a sustainable practice?

Mixing the modern productivity-boosting **technologies**, including environment-resilient crop varieties and animal breeds, **with traditional knowledge** and norms, that promote living in harmony with nature.

Widely practiced mono-cropping and unchanged cropping cycles should be replaced with **diversified farming**. It should include a judicious mix of agriculture, horticulture, animal husbandry, fisheries, and agroforestry.

Land-restoring and fertility-enhancing crops like legumes and quick-growing vegetation should be included in the cropping sequence. It will improve soil's physical, chemical, and biological health.

Physical churning of soil needs to be avoided or minimized. Novel concepts like conservative agriculture involving **zero or minimum tillage** and direct seeding of crops can help to do so.

Mixing manures—Greater use of farmyard manure in combination with chemical fertilizers.

—Placement of fertilizers at the right depth near the plant roots and rational use of pesticides can help in promoting sustainable farming.

Integrated disease and pest management, involving the planting of disease-resistant crop varieties and deployment of natural predators of pests.

Promotion of rainwater harvesting and **economical use of water** through systems like drip and sprinkler irrigation.

Practices like **stubble burning need to be forbidden**.

11. What India should strive for in trade deals

Source: This post is based on the article “**What India should strive for in trade deals**” published in **Business Standard** on 23 Nov 2021.

Syllabus: GS3 – Effects of liberalization on the economy, changes in industrial policy and their effects on industrial growth.

Relevance: To get an inside view on the India's trade negotiations.

News: India has decided to enter into trade agreements with key partners like the UK, UAE and Australia and announced an ambitious plan for an early harvest deal by March 2022.

These trade agreements coincides with India coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic-related slowdown and wants to become “Atmanirbhar” and play “a bigger role in the global value chain”.

What are the challenges?

India's **previous negotiations** on trade agreements has not provided Indian exporters a level playing field.

—For example, in the case of early harvest with Thailand, Thailand has benefitted more compared to India.

India offered little and received a lower level of commitment, compared to its competitors in these markets.

The possibilities of attracting more FDI, gaining greater **market access, and partnership** have always taken a back seat in our industry consultations.

Policy uncertainty has been a key issue in many sectors in the case of India. Policies designed to meet certain objectives, like reducing the trade imbalance with China, ended up adversely affecting countries other than China.

India has one of the **highest tariffs** in the world. Since the trade agreements lead to tariff liberalisation, Indian industry always worries about tariff liberalisation intensifying competition in the domestic market.

India's defensive policies like the ban on some GI products are considered by some countries as a violation of India's GI obligation under TRIPS.

What should India do in the new trade agreements?

The consultations have to **look beyond tariffs**. The focus should be on attracting investment and the development of value chains.

Allowing greater market access can help other countries to source more from India, as seen in the case of ASEAN countries, and there is a good chance that our exports will increase.

Win-Win deal-Gains can be cross-sectoral, focus should be on areas of export competence and interest. For example, access to cross markets for Indian IT companies and UK liquor companies.

As India enters into trade negotiations, there is a need for **policy consistency and transparency**.

It is important to make India a bigger player in the **global value chain**, import substitution may not lead to greater global integration.

There is a **need for alignment** between domestic policy objectives and that of trade agreements to further India's position in trade negotiations.

India may **look at best practices** of countries like Vietnam, which has successfully signed trade agreements, as it designs its domestic policies and enters into trade agreement negotiations.

12. Over-valued unicorns in a distressed economy

Source: This post is based on the article "**Over-valued unicorns in a distressed economy**" published in **The Hindu** on **24th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – issues related to Startup sector

Relevance: Unicorns in India and their future growth

News: India's largest IPO (Paytm) made a disastrous stock market debut and ended its first trading day at a discount of 27% to the issue price. Questions are, hence, being raised on the valuation of the firm and the IPO.

Paytm, along with an educational technology start-up, are being viewed as one of the 'shining beacons' among a growing list of unicorns in India.

But the not so enthusiastic response towards the giant IPO casts doubts about the valuations of unicorns in India.

What are the reasons for the remarkable growth of Unicorns in India?

In recent years, the growth of **unicorns** in India is remarkable, covering diverse sectors. Digital payment in FinTech sector and educational sector has achieved unprecedented growth. The reasons are:

Market opportunity due to a growing smartphone user base: The country has around 640 million Internet users, of which 550 million are smartphone users. Rising Internet penetration and growth of digital payments are also crucial factors.

Impact of the Pandemic: it has been a blessing in disguise for EdTech firms. Many are forced to shift to e-education.

The expectation that startups have the ability to sustain an initial level of hyper growth: because start-ups with limited resources aim at technology disruption.

Why Paytm's IPO didn't go well?

Paytm that came out with the giant IPO was considered by many as a technology disruptor and game changer which created hype and overvaluation. However, it failed to sustain the hype because of the following reasons

Core business model is not unique: Paytm doesn't do anything different from its competitors'. For example, it is losing market share as more and more people are opting for UPI-based payments to directly transfer money from their bank accounts, instead of wallets.

Funding losses: The structure of the group has an inherent weakness. There are 39 subsidiaries and over half of these put together contribute to a mere 5% of its revenues.

What is wrong with India's overhyped unicorns?

Too many acquisitions: Many firms are doing multiple acquisitions. For eg: The Edtech startup (*whose name is not mentioned in the article*) acquired nine other firms in one year. Too many acquisitions with big ambitions to grow inorganically puts pressure on the balance sheet in the years to come, as some new acquisitions are likely to fail.

Overestimation of demand projections: Data by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) points that there are just about 23 million households which earn more than ₹5 lakh per year i.e., less than ₹42,000 a month, which is about 7% of all Indian families. If firms want to go beyond this 7% of households, they have to offer bigger discounts, burning more cash in the process.

Saturation point reached: The current state of Indian economy and employment situation are in a misery. Due to this, tech companies are already reaching the saturation point of their real customer-base i.e. consumers who can afford to consume without discounts.

Hence, India is witnessing new unicorns emerging every month, which are products of inflated valuations to tap more funds to burn more cash. These valuations are solely on the basis of future earnings, with virtually no profits to show in the present.

13. The road to a Himalayan blunder

Source: This post is based on the article "**The road to a Himalayan blunder**" published in **The Hindu** on **24th November** 2021.

Syllabus: GS3 – Disaster management

Relevance: Vulnerability of Himalayan states, Chardam project, manmade disaster

News: The Char Dham road expansion project, to be executed by Min of Road Transport and Highways (MoRTH), was inaugurated in 2016.

In 2018, it was challenged by an NGO for its potential impact on the Himalayan ecology.

The Supreme Court (SC), in 2020, after consultation with the high-powered committee (HPC) and on the basis of MoRTH guidelines, said that the width of the roads cannot exceed 5.5 m.

Must Read: [Green and secure: Char Dham Highway project must see government and environmentalists work together](#)

The Ministry of Defence (MoD) filed an appeal for a double-lane road with an even higher road width to meet the requirement of the army.

Subsequently, Min of Road Transport and highways (MoRTH) amended its 2018 circular and raised the 5.5m width limit to 10m.

The case is in SC.

If the government does not desist from widening the roads under this project, it will be a Himalayan blunder.

What are the stances taken by the govt and the petitioners in this case?

Govt argues that wide roads are necessary for the sake of national security in the Garhwal region.

The petitioners, residents of the valleys in the Garhwal region, stress on the need for a regulated and narrower intermediate road width with a walking footpath.

What is the purpose of Char dham project?

Char Dham road project aims to **provide all-weather connectivity** to the four major shrines of Yamunotri, Gangotri, Kedarnath and Badrinath.

It was envisioned that providing infrastructural support will **increase pilgrimage tourism** from the Indian plains and provide local economic dividends.

However, in the process to boost economy, the government has ignored the ill effects of rampant construction on the fragile Himalayan range.

Why broader roads are not safe in Uttarakhand Himalayas?

Terrain of the Himalayas in Uttarakhand is different from the terrain in Ladakh: Valleys in Uttarakhand are narrow and close-ended with steep slopes of 60-70 degrees. On the other hand, the valleys in Ladakh have a slope elevation of 30 degrees.

Uttarakhand Himalayas is prone to frequent disasters. For instance, recent floods in the Dhaulti Ganga, Rishi Ganga and Alaknanda rivers claimed over 200 lives.

Will increase man-made disasters: It will significantly reinforce mass wasting processes and erosion rates given the steepness of the slopes, earthquake activity and erosivity of increased monsoonal precipitation. **For instance**, during the monsoons, owing to the massive hill-cutting for the Char Dham road project, several landslides have occurred in the region.

Hence, the unique Himalayan landscape with steep slopes and sharp gradients is not amenable to human engineering.

What is the way forward?

– **Disaster-resilient, safe and stable infrastructure** is the only solution for commuting by road in the hills.

– **Minimum human-induced disturbances:** Any human-induced change beyond the Himalayas' carrying capacity will have an impact on stream run-offs and erosional or depositional processes. Considering such vulnerabilities, we need to keep the scale of human-induced disturbances to the minimum level possible.

14. Dear 'The Economist', climate change is a global predicament

Source: This post is based on the article "Dear 'The Economist', climate change is a global predicament" published in **Live mint** on **24th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues related to the energy sector

Relevance: Greenhouse gas emissions, Climate change, Energy transition

News: The Economist recently published a series of reports blaming countries like China and India for much of the carbon-emissions problem.

Such international media focus on just Indian and Chinese carbon emissions is unfair and doesn't help the larger cause of climate change.

There is no denying that, in 2020, in absolute terms, China and India emitted more carbon dioxide than the US and Europe.

However, labelling carbon emissions as a chiefly India-China problem is injustice to the cause and doesn't help solve it.

Nor does it help alleviate the structural issues ailing the transition of developing economies like India towards cleaner sources of energy.

Why it is unfair to blame that carbon emissions are chiefly an India-China problem?

Firstly, per capita carbon dioxide emissions of developed countries are still higher than India and China per capita emissions. For instance, in 2020, the per capita carbon dioxide emission of the US was 1.9 times that of China and eight times that of India.

Secondly, such a simplistic picture hides the complete truth. **For instance,** Although China was responsible for more carbon emissions than US and EU put together, in 2020, but it was also the world leader in solar and wind power, EV cars, and high-speed rail transport.

Thirdly, In the Indian case, the production of solar power has been rising, the government has set ambitious targets on electric vehicles to reduce India's dependence on petrol and diesel, and reduce emissions in the process.

However, there are certain structure challenges for India while transiting towards a clean energy economy.

What are the structural challenges for India that hampers India's transition towards clean energy?

Firstly, Coal-based power continues to be the dominant source of energy. In 2010-11, it formed 54% of the power produced. In this context, growth of electric vehicles that end up using electric energy derived from coal will have no impact on the net carbon emissions.

Secondly, if solar-power capacity expands fast, then many coal-based power plants will end up in further financial trouble than they already are, and this will create problems for banks which have lent them money.

Thirdly, As per the British economist Lord Nicholas Stern '*climate change results from history's greatest market failure—the failure to attach a price to the costs of carbon dioxide emissions*'

In this backdrop, it is widely believed that taxing fossil fuels at high rate will bring down the consumption of fossil fuels. In India, the government already taxes petrol and diesel at a very high rate. So, despite attaching costs, the market failure argument doesn't hold good for India.

Fourthly, the impact on fiscal resources: If electric vehicles become popular, tax collections from petrol and diesel are likely to come down.

15. [New cryptocurrency bill seeks to ban private players](#)

Source: This post is based on the following articles:

'New cryptocurrency bill seeks to ban private players' published in **The Hindu** on **23rd Nov 2021**.

'Bill to ban private cryptos this session' published in **Business Standard** on **23rd Nov 2021**.

'Crypto, not currency – Cryptocurrency: Ideal law will ban use as legal tender, allow it to be an asset' published in **TOI** on **23rd Nov 2021**.

'Govt plans Bills to bar pvt cryptocurrency with a few 'exceptions', repeal farm laws' published in **The Indian Express** on 24th Nov 2021.

'Govt to move bill to ban all 'private cryptocurrencies' published in **Livemint** on 24th Nov 2021.

Syllabus: GS3 – Science and Technology- Developments and their Applications and Effects in Everyday Life.

Relevance: Regulation of Cryptocurrency

News: The government has listed **the Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021** for the upcoming winter session of Parliament, starting November 29.

The bill is **yet to be officially approved** by the Cabinet.

This is among the 26 pieces of legislation, including the repeal of three farm laws, listed for the session.

About Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021

As per the government notification on Lok Sabha website – The bill seeks to prohibit all **private** cryptocurrencies in India, however, it **allows for certain exceptions** to promote the underlying technology of cryptocurrency and its uses.

Currently, there is no regulation or any ban on the use of cryptocurrencies in the country.

Through the cryptocurrency legislation, a **facilitative framework** will be created for an **official Central Bank Digital Currency (CBDC)**.

Various exchanges together have 15 million KYC-approved users, with an investment value of \$6 billion.

Further details of the bill are not out yet.

What are private cryptocurrencies?

Whatever cryptocurrency is not issued by the government, can be considered private, though there is no clear definition of private cryptocurrency.

According to some definitions,

– Bitcoin, Ethereum and many other crypto tokens are based on public blockchain networks, which mean transactions made using the networks are traceable while still providing a degree of anonymity to users.

– On the other hand, private cryptocurrencies could refer to Monero, Dash and others, which though built on public blockchains, hide the transaction information to offer privacy to users.

What is the way forward?

The need of the hour is to balance innovation and regulation.

As per D. Subbarao (*former Governor of the Reserve Bank of India*),

Internationally, regulatory responses to cryptos have fallen into three broad categories:

– **Passive tolerance:** It involves prohibiting regulated institutions from dealing in cryptos without explicitly clarifying their legal status. RBI tried this option but the Supreme Court struck it down.

– **Total ban:** A second approach is a total ban like in China. But that model entails the risk of pushing the trade into invisible and illegal channels, possibly inflicting even greater damage.

– **Regulation:** A third approach is to follow countries such as the UK, Singapore and Japan that have allowed space for cryptos to operate under a regulatory radar but without recognising them as legal tender. India will be well advised to follow this middle path.

Hence, the ideal way forward will be to ban Cryptocurrency use as legal tender while allowing it to be an asset.

16. Why Cities Must Lead The Climate Battle

Source: This post is based on the article “Why Cities Must Lead The Climate Battle” published in **TOI** on **23rd Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the importance of the role of the cities in fighting the climate change.

News: Glasgow Climate Pact makes no explicit mention of the critical role of urban areas in finding solutions to the climate problem. Once again, the challenges of cities have taken a backseat in global negotiations on climate change.

Why towns and cities will play a critical role in the fight against climate change?

- **More people now live in towns and cities** than in rural areas.
- Towns and cities are **responsible for producing over three-quarters of the world’s carbon emissions** that cause the climate to change.
- Additionally, urban areas are disproportionately located along coasts and rivers, **highly exposed to climate-induced disasters** such as floods and sea level rise.
- With over one in three urban residents living in slums and one in four earning less than \$2 a day, cities also contain vast numbers of people who **lack the capacity to withstand the impacts of a changing climate**.

What are some potential negative implications of climate change on the urban population?

Climate disasters faced by Indian cities: From past few years, Indian cities have faced the brunt of the climate change.

- Floods in Chennai (*this month and in 2015*)
- Heatwaves (*such as the one in Ahmedabad in 2010*)
- Water scarcity (*such as in Maharashtra in 2016 when the water had to be shipped in on trains*)

Deteriorating health of urban residents due to changing disease patterns

An increase in violence due to extreme heat

As a result of all of the above, the **overall reduced wellbeing of city dwellers** and an **impact on the economic productivity** of urban areas that currently account for over 80% of the world’s GDP.

What is the way forward?

Consultations with city residents: Comprehensive climate action plans need to be produced through genuine consultation with a wide cross-section of urban residents. **For instance,**

– **Odisha:** Innovative public-private partnerships between municipal bodies in Odisha and research institutions. This has led to an improved understanding of practical steps that can be taken to reduce emissions and build resilience in cities.

Role of state govt: The role of state governments is critical. They must ensure that all departments work together to make urban climate action a reality. A good example of this

is **Maharashtra's** recent commitment to ensure that 43 cities in the state systematically reduce emissions.

Addressing problems of the urban poor: Our cities are fueled by those living in slums and working in the informal economy. Unfortunately, they are the ones disproportionately affected by a changing climate. Therefore, any move to help cities deal with climate change must have their interests at its core.

Climate finance: A key component of equipping cities to deal with climate change is the provision of finance. Time and time again, including this year's COP has proved that international climate finance is not a certainty. Hence, our state governments must enable cities to generate their own streams of finance for tackling climate change. This can be done via:

– **issuing municipal green bonds:** These have been used by cities such as **Cape Town** to raise large amounts of money to deal with crippling water scarcity. Cities such as **Pune** have issued bonds in the past, but there is a lack of understanding and most cities also lack the basic financial systems for issuing these. The international community must share lessons in such innovative climate finance approaches.

17. Privatised Post-Repeal: Selling sarkari banks & PSUs is critical.

Source: This post is based on the article “**Privatised Post-Repeal: Selling sarkari banks & PSUs is critical**” published in **Times of India** on 25th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS 3-Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development, and employment.

Relevance: To understand the need and challenges of privatization.

News: In the upcoming winter session of Parliament, 'The Banking Laws (Amendment) Bill, 2021' to be proposed, will facilitate the transfer of ownership of two PSBs, by making changes in concerned laws.

In the last session of Parliament, GoI said privatisation was ongoing in the case of 21 PSUs. The exercise was completed in the case of one of them, [Air India](#).

What is the need for privatization?

Privatization is essential to **redeploy public resources** in areas such as education and healthcare.

It helps PSUs get the benefit of **additional capital** and a clear approach to business, thereby helping the economy.

PSU staff will be beneficiaries of it.

A few big-ticket privatisations will convey to stakeholders about the **reformist spirit** of the economy.

What are the challenges?

PSBs have carried the burden of the NPA problem. Any potential buyer will need GoI to absorb some NPA.

Loss-making PSUs, burdened by debt and staffed by an unionised workforce, make it tough to privatise. The privatisation of 'Air India' is an example.

18. A food crisis of the government's own making

Source: This post is based on the article “A food crisis of the government's own making” published in **The Hindu** on 25th November 2021.

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

Relevance: To understand the dilemma of crop yield and organic farming.

News: Recently, the Sri Lanka government banned agrochemical fertilizers, to switch to 100% organic agriculture.

The example of Sri Lanka is an eye-opener for the other countries as well. It proves that any unplanned attempt to move to organic farming may prove to be disastrous for the agriculture sector.

What were the issues associated with the plan of the Sri Lanka government?

It neither had solid scientific information nor a clear action plan to move to organic farming. It was based on the raw advice of some officials that only organic and traditional agriculture is safe for the environment and human beings.

Furthermore, it announced the compensation for the loss due to reduced crop yield due to a lack of agrochemicals. However, it created no mechanism to identify the reasons behind reduced crop yield, which could also happen due to natural causes, farmers' attitudes, and so on.

It failed to consider the fact that globally, only 1.5% of farmland is organic, due to various issues associated with it. The country **lacked the capacity** for mass production of organic fertilizers in a short period of time.

Meemkem and Qaim (2018) pointed out in an analysis that organic agriculture on average could result in a **yield drop of 19%-23%**, depending on the crop and agro-climatic region.

As the crisis deepened, it purchased a liquid nano-N fertilizer from Indian Farmer Fertilizer Corporative Limited (IFFCO). It was actually a nano-urea, which could not be used for organic farming. Health concerns that might arise on long-term exposure to nano-particles were also not clear.

Thus, due to an unplanned decision, Sri Lanka had to use a fertilizer, which had no proven record regarding efficiency and safety.

What were its impacts?

Failure to maintain the same level of yield lead to **food shortage, increase food prices.**

The government ultimately has to resort to **food imports**, thereby hurting the public exchequer.

Also, the imported food is produced using agrochemicals because of the higher price of organic food. This was in contrast to the initial objective.

What steps are needed to be taken?

To switch to 100% organic agriculture, a country must have robust **scientific evidence** and a carefully planned **methodology** along with **targeted actions.**

19. What \$650 billion can buy – On India's currency reserves

Source: This post is based on the article “What \$650 billion can buy” published in **Business standard** on 25th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS3 – Significance of RBI in maintaining the stability of the economy

Relevance: India's rising foreign exchange reserves and the way forward

News: India's foreign exchange reserves have gone up by over \$160 billion since the beginning of the last fiscal year and are currently at about \$640 billion.

Since, India has one of the largest foreign exchange reserves, the debate has shifted to what it should do with the pool. Many options are being debated.

But it will be more effective if the higher reserves can be used to maintain the financial stability, given the global economic environment.

What are the various options, and the issues with them?

Firstly, using reserves to finance infrastructure needs. But it's not clear how this can be done.

Secondly, using foreign currency to buy foreign goods and services, or assets. But it is unlikely to be preferred as it will have a variety of macroeconomic implications.

Thirdly, forming a sovereign wealth fund, that would allow India to buy assets overseas.

Finally, there are suggestions that the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) should diversify its investment to increase yields. Since it invests in highly liquid assets, such as US government securities, returns are usually low. However, this will increase risks and could potentially defeat the purpose of holding reserves.

So, the best option would be to use the reserves to maintain financial stability, given the global economic environment.

Why the reserves should be used to maintain financial stability?

Firstly, India is a net importer of goods and services from the rest of the world, and India regularly runs a current account deficit.

Secondly, India's reserves essentially reflect the excess flow of capital, and part of it could get reversed quickly as the US Federal Reserve has decided to "taper" its asset purchase program. This could result in tightening of global financial conditions, and capital could flow out from a country like India, at least temporarily.

As a consequence, a fall in currency triggered by large capital outflows can **pose risks to financial stability**.

In such a situation, the RBI will be able to control volatility in the currency market, due to its large forex reserves.

What is the way forward?

While higher reserves provide stability on the external account, the RBI cannot endlessly keep accumulating foreign exchange. Because of two reasons,

– **One**, higher reserves can potentially attract more capital flows and **makes currency management difficult**. This would keep putting **upward pressure on the rupee** and affect India's competitiveness.

– **Two**, sustained intervention by the RBI will push up the level of rupee liquidity in the system and increase inflation risks.

So, instead of heavily intervening in the currency market, India can **revisit the kind of foreign flows it needs**. **Foreign direct investment** and **equity flows** should be preferred to debt. Policymakers must align the capital account to broader macroeconomic objectives.

20. Farm Laws: Is MSP guarantee really the elixir that Indian agriculture needs?

Source: This post is based on the article “Farm Laws: Is MSP guarantee really the elixir that Indian agriculture needs?” published in DTE on 25th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues related to MSP

Relevance: MSP and its negative consequences

News: Recently, the Prime Minister announced the withdrawal of the farm bills. He also stated that the government would form a committee to discuss how the system of minimum support price (MSP) could be more effective.

The committee proposed by the Centre will have representatives from Union and state governments, farmer groups, as well as agricultural scientists and economists.

Irrespective of the committee’s decision, a statutory guarantee to MSP will be a problem. So other options should be evaluated.

Read more: <https://blog.forumias.com/explained-in-perspective-farm-distress-and-the-demand-for-guaranteed-msp/>

What options have experts suggested in place of MSP?

Experts have recommended the following measures that the government can adopt instead of MSP:

- Giving remunerative prices to farmers for their produce.
- Letting the market determine the prices.
- Building mechanisms to safeguard farmers against fluctuations, like government interventions when commodity prices become dearer.
- Building efficient markets and provide price or income support for efficient production.

What measures can be looked into to protect farmers against price fluctuations?

Experimenting with Bhavantar Bhugtan Yojana. It is a price differential scheme to compensate farmers in the event of a price crash that was started as a pilot scheme in Madhya Pradesh (2018). It was not relaunched the next year owing to criticism regarding cartelisation and depressed prices.

Re-examining the Income assurance scheme introduced during Atal Bihari Vajpayee’s rule: The model calculated the seven-year average income. Based on this, if a farmer didn’t get the best yield or price in three of the last seven years, the government would compensate them.

Government should create an index of the farmers for providing price support during distress. The index should contain information’s on irrigated area, land, types of crops produced on an average, insurance cover, weather vulnerability. This index can be used for providing price support during distress.

21. Farm bills may be repealed, but farmers will still need help

Source: This post is based on the article “Farm bills may be repealed, but farmers will still need help” published in Indian Express on 25th November 2021.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues related to Agriculture

Relevance: Diversification of agricultural labor force

News: Recently, the Prime Minister announced the withdrawal of the farm bills.

In this context, the farm bills, whether they are passed or not, were unlikely to have made any sustained difference to the life of the farmer.

Because, the farm bill that stands withdrawn didn't have any policy solution to address the issues faced by agriculture sector and lift the Indian farmers out of a low-income existence. Solutions to improve the life of farmers lies in the development of non-farm sector (service and manufacturing).

Why farm bills were inadequate to address the key problems faced by the agriculture sector?

Indian agriculture is unproductive: This is the fundamental reason why the Indian farmer is poor. The land, despite many improvements in irrigation, seeds, fertilisers and mechanisation, just doesn't have enough in it to sustain the sheer number of people dependent on it.

Agriculture today employs 45% of India's workers, while only producing around 10% of its output.

In this backdrop of unproductive farms, farm laws that aimed towards better price realisation of agricultural products by bringing changes with agricultural marketing laws are **inadequate to address the low productivity** of Indian agriculture.

Why labor shifted from agriculture to non-farm sector in industrialised countries when they were at similar income levels a century ago?

Firstly, the difference between labour productivities in the non-agricultural and agricultural sectors was much smaller in the industrialised countries due to relatively few policy controls on prices and quantities. Hence, the initial misallocation of labour was smaller.

Secondly, deterioration in the agriculture in the currently industrialised countries generated a push factor that induced labour to shift out of agriculture.

Thirdly, expansion of large scale, low-tech industrial employment, provided the avenues to absorb the surplus agricultural labour.

Why the shift is not happening in India?

Welfarism approach towards agriculture: Measures such as, minimum support prices, subsidies to cultivators and interest rate subventions on crop loans hardly do anything for long-term changes in the agriculture. Instead, they trap farmers by giving them marginally stronger incentives to remain in agriculture though productivity and incomes are declining.

Failure of India's large-scale, low-tech manufacturing sector: This is the sector that typically absorbs surplus agricultural labour in bulk while also providing them with significant improvements in incomes. This sector has completely failed to grow in India.

Less productive service sector: In India, the majority of the non-agricultural employment growth has happened in the service sector. Unfortunately, 80% of this service sector employment is in very low productivity.

What is the way forward?

The need of the hour is for the non-agricultural sectors to step up and provide a viable alternative to low productivity agriculture.

The government, thus, needs to focus on incentivising entrepreneurs to invest in large-scale manufacturing by legislating labour reforms.

22. Pointers that India is witnessing a K-shaped recovery

Source: This post is based on the article “Pointers that India is witnessing a K-shaped recovery” published in **The Hindu** on **25th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to Growth, Development and Employment.

Relevance: Economic Cycle- Expansion, recession, recovery

News: There have been talks about a V-shaped recovery for quite a while, ever since the first lockdown following the novel coronavirus pandemic.

Though, India is on a recovery path, but it can't be classified as a V-shaped recovery because the pandemic has had an uneven impact on different socio-economic groups.

The recovery we see today is more **K-shaped** than V-shaped with some groups and industries recovering much more rapidly than others.

A V-shaped recovery is characterized by quick and effective recovery in measures of economic performance after an acute decline in the economy.

What are some indications of a K-Shaped recovery in India?

Decline in two-wheeler sales: The sales of two-wheelers are the second-lowest it has been in seven years. Two-wheelers represent the economic situation of the lower and middle-class groups and India's small businesses.

What are the reasons behind India's K-Shaped recovery?

Sustained loss in disposable income due to the taxation policy of government: Government taxation policies continue to be regressive, with increased indirect taxes and lower direct taxes placing greater tax burden on the poor. While inflation increased, the incomes of the middle and lower-middle-class have remained constant.

Lower Budget allocation accounts for MGNREGA tends to increase the pressure on unemployment figures: MGNREGA acts as an alternative employment source for the informal sector at the time of distressed economy.

However, the Government of India had cut its budget allocation towards MGNREGA by 34% for 2021-2022 when there is a greater demand now for MGNREGA jobs.

Further, the lower Budget allocation accounts for the inability to compensate workers in time and fairly.

The recovery in the stock market and other such financial assets over the past year benefitted only a few sections of the population: Less than 5% of India invest in equities, which means that less than 5% of India directly benefited from said recovery. The lower middle class, which does not invest in such assets, has no protection against inflation.

Disproportional benefit of the asset price inflation favored the upper-middle-class and this further explains the inherent K-shape of the recovery.

What is the way forward?

The Government should address this phenomenon and works towards aiding the middle and lower-middle class.

First, Social welfare schemes must be given greater importance to assist households to get through this period. International examples from The U.S. and European economies can be a case point.

Second, Government should try to increase progressive (direct) taxes and reduce regressive (indirect) taxes to ease the financial pressure on lower-income households.

23. A unified regulatory framework

Source: This post is based on the articles:

'The growth and inclusion potential of India's telecom space' published in **The Indian Express** on **25th Nov 2021**.

'A unified regulatory framework' published in **The Hindu** on **25th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Infrastructure

Relevance: Telcos and internet firms need to be governed by a uniform regulatory framework

News: With 5G technologies on the horizon, new dynamics are emerging wherein there is a growth of an **integrated sphere of cooperation** as well as **competition** between telcos and Internet companies.

This has fueled the need for regulatory parity between them.

What is the new integrated sphere of competition and cooperation b/w telcos and internet companies?

This new architecture, that has been talked about in the article, involves elements of both competition and cooperation b/w telcos and internet firms.

Note: *Telcos here refers to telecom companies like Airtel, Jio etc., while internet companies here refers to companies like Amazon, Google etc*

Competition in substitute services:

– **OTT messaging services:** The growth in over-the-top (OTT) messaging services by Internet firms has been accompanied by significant reductions in the revenues of text messaging services provided by telcos. **For instance**, the quarterly SMS volume in the U.K. has declined by half to 10 billion by 2021 in the past five years.

– **VoIP services:** Similarly, the growth of Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) services offered by OTT service providers is also a threat to telcos.

Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP), is a technology that allows one to make voice calls over a broadband Internet connection.

Cooperation in complementary value networks: Under this, network operators, handset manufacturers, platform vendors, and content providers are offering a bouquet of services. These are termed as Complementary value networks or 'Walled Gardens'.

Must Read: [What is a complementary value network?](#)

Despite the fact that services can be substituted and despite increasing competitive pressures within walled gardens, there is an **asymmetric regulatory stance** with respect to telcos and Internet companies.

What is an example of asymmetric regulation wrt telcos and internet companies?

Net Neutrality: One example of the prevailing asymmetric regulation are wrt net neutrality provisions. These provisions prohibit discriminatory treatment of Internet companies by the telcos, but impose no such regulatory limitations on internet companies.

The net neutrality principles prohibit **service providers** from discriminating against Internet

content and services by blocking, throttling or according preferential higher speeds.

Over the past decade, the Internet has evolved to a point where many Internet companies also provide an essential service and enjoy significant market power. **For instance:** Web search, is a market dominated by Google, an internet company. Without **search neutrality**, search results may be manipulated to favor certain firms.

What is the way forward?

- **Net neutrality principles need to be applied to Internet companies** as well.
- **Interconnection regulation:** It is mandatory for telcos to provide “equal access” for interconnecting with other telcos’ networks. Similarly, social media networks, instant messengers, and indeed any Internet service that exhibits critical mass dynamics needs to be governed by interconnection regulation.
- Presently in India, while the sector regulator makes rules for telcos, the competition regulator oversees the behavior of the Internet firms. It is time for a **unified regulatory framework**, like in the case of European Union.

24. Do not ignore livestock’s contribution to climate change

Source: This post is based on the article “**Do not ignore livestock’s contribution to climate change**” published in **Livemint** on **25th Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the need to initiate a dialogue around reducing Greenhouse emissions from animal agriculture and livestock production.

News: About 103 countries, took the [Global Methane Pledge](#), which includes a commitment to reduce emissions of this gas by 30% from 2020 levels by the end of this decade.

But the problem of emissions from animal agriculture and livestock production is also central to the global discussion on climate change.

And much of the developed world is not even talking about it.

This is an opportunity for India to assume a leadership position in building a dialogue and furthering action around this issue.

Why reduction of livestock production matters?

According to the IPCC,

- Livestock production currently contributes at least **14.5 %** of all greenhouse gas emissions. And, if current production levels continue on the same trajectory, it is expected to account for nearly **81% of emissions**, possibly raising global temperatures by **1.5° Celsius** by 2050.

What are India’s challenges in lowering of GHG emissions from ruminant animals?

Huge population of cattle: With a livestock count of over half a billion, as per the 20th livestock census of the department of animal husbandry, India is the world’s **third-largest emitter of greenhouse gases such as methane**, which is produced by ruminant animals.

India’s rural economy is dependent on animal agriculture: Two-thirds of India’s 1.3 billion-plus population still lives in rural parts of the country. A sizeable number is dependent on animal agriculture (i.e. dairy, poultry and fisheries).

Policy priority: The Indian government’s investments also prioritize animal agriculture as a livelihood option. **For instance:**

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

- In 2018, govt launched the **Dairy Infrastructure Development Fund** to incentivize investment by the cooperative sector for the development of dairy infrastructure.
- In 2020, India announced a ₹15,000-crore **Animal Husbandry Infrastructure Development Fund**.

What is the way forward?

- **Transition to an economy that promotes a lifestyle and diet based on plant nutrients.** Our huge population is a strain on the limited resources we have, and so depending on animal-based sources of food such as milk is a problem. Also, research by the University of Oxford indicates that a shift to a plant-based diet could **free up 75% of agricultural land**.
- **Raising crops only for human use** may boost available food calories by up to 70%, effectively feeding 4 billion people.
- **Large investments** aimed at boosting animal agriculture that will lead to climate change **should be discouraged**.

India:

Food system transition policy: India needs to grow and consume food differently. It must develop a comprehensive policy that

- moves farmers to sustainable modes of plant-based food production
- diverts subsidies from industrial livestock production and its associated inputs, and
- looks at job creation, social justice, poverty reduction, animal protection and better public health as multiple aspects of a single solution.

25. Decline in India's camel population is worrying

Source: This post is based on the article “**Decline in India's camel population is worrying**” published in the **Indian Express** on **25th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 3: Conservation, environmental pollution and degradation

Relevance: Understanding the need to empower Raikas and control the decline of the camel population.

News: According to the article published in National Geographic, the camel population in India has been in decline, especially in Rajasthan because of the Indira Gandhi Canal which hampered the movement of Raikas and Camels.

What were the reasons behind the decline in the camel population?

Fewer dairy benefits: Long gestation period (15 months); limited saleable meat yield (less than 5 kg a day), high cost of maintenance, high cost of milk, and strong flavour of camel milk, all make it unsuitable for the domesticating camel for economic benefits.

Change in lifestyle: Replacement of the nomadic-pastoral way of life by agriculture. Individually owned farmlands that are often fenced restrict the movements of camels. Camels are rarely used for ploughing along with that shrinking of grazing grounds, shortage of fodder also a reason for reduced camel population.

Other means of transport: Camels are replaced largely by road networks.

Raikas- *The Raikas are a specialized caste of pastoralists from northwestern India, particularly the arid and semi-arid parts of Rajasthan. Although they also raise goats, cattle, sheep, and water buffalo, the most important animal for Raika's cultural identity is the camel. The Raika and their camels talk to each other; this language/conversation is called akal-dhakaal.*

Fewer benefits for Raikas: Raikas do not sell dead camels for their bones and also do not eat camel meat. Raikas believe they were born of Lord Siva's skin to protect camels.

How does the Rajasthan government aims to protect camels?

Rajasthan's government enacted **The Rajasthan Camel (Prohibition of Slaughter and Regulation of Temporary Migration or Export) Act, 2015**. The Act aims to prohibit the slaughter of camels and also to regulate their temporary migration or export from Rajasthan. But the Act does not show positive results. Camels are now sold in the grey market, further driving down camel prices. Camels that should normally command a price of Rs 40,000 plus, reportedly sell in this grey market for less than Rs 5,000. The ban has benefitted only the meat traders and corrupt officials.

What the government should do?

Camel-rearing still has potential economic opportunities and have great demand in the Middle East. So, the government should

1. Focus on controlling the decline of the camel population,
2. Empower Raikas with education, trading skills, etc.

26. After farm laws repeal, farmer unions want legal guarantee for MSP. Should the govt give in?

Source: This post is based on the article "After farm laws repeal, farmer unions want legal guarantee for MSP. Should the govt give in?" published in **ToI** on **26th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – issues related to MSP

Relevance: Legalising MSP

News: Despite the announcement by the PM to repeal the three farm laws, farmers are demanding that, MSP should be made a legal entitlement.

This article provides both the side of the arguments (support and against) w.r.t legalising MSP demand. Some points are already covered in the following article:

Read more: <https://blog.forumias.com/explained-in-perspective-farm-distress-and-the-demand-for-guaranteed-msp/>

What are the arguments in support of legalising MSP?

Farmer distress: Survey after survey has shown that income from farming is inadequate to sustain basic financial needs of farming households. Hence, MSP represent a lifeline for farmers, and they want that lifeline to be given legal sanctity.

India's Food security: India's food independence and security against hunger are non-negotiable and this independence and security depends on farmers continuing to farm and produce food to feed nearly 1.38 billion citizens.

Lack of avenues to absorb the out-of-work farmers elsewhere in the economy: The proponents of free-market price discovery argue that this very mechanism will push farmers out of farming where excess labour is currently unproductive. However, Indian economy currently doesn't have the capacity to absorb the 900 million farmers of India.

Fundamental right: The demand for legal guarantee of MSP also stems from the constitutional fundamental right to life and livelihood. It is the constitutional duty of the government to ensure and enforce this fundamental right in favour of the farmers of India.

What are the arguments against legalising MSP?

Other effective alternatives exist: If the objective of MSP is to help the poor, we can now effectively use the most direct way. For less than the amount spent on MSP, we can lift millions out of poverty by transferring funds into their bank accounts.

If our objective is to reduce farm price volatility, then direct funds transfer to the poor can partially address that objective along with a well-regulated crop insurance system.

Impact on Nutrition and export earnings: MSP is given only for a few crops, which means there is excessive production of these at the expense of other crops that may be more nutritious and could earn us export revenues.

Impact on water security: A distorted focus on few crops also depletes the water table.

Give rise to vicious demands: There is a demand to expand MSP to more crops, which is financially unviable for the government.

Effects of MSP on equity: Poor farmers get virtually nothing from MSP because they have little or no surplus, and many subsist as agricultural labourers.

In sum, MSP may have a few positives, but it has many negatives and should be deployed only with great circumspection.

27. Setting the tone at Glasgow, the job ahead in Delhi

Source: This post is based on the article “**Setting the tone at Glasgow, the job ahead in Delhi**” published in **The Hindu** on **26th Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: Understanding the significance of Glasgow summit and what needs to be done to realize the targets set under it.

News: Net zero target set by India has cemented its position as a world leader in global climate change policy landscape.

Now, keeping in line with the spirit of climate justice, rich countries need to veer away from their unsustainable lifestyles and wasteful consumption patterns.

India too needs to focus on sustainable well-being.

How the Glasgow Climate Pact indicates a changing world order?

The carbon colonialism of the West was called out by the poor countries at Glasgow when the UK, along with G7 countries, tried to push for a phase out of coal in the final pact.

India and China came together on the last day of the COP26 at Glasgow to effect a change in the language of the pact from ‘phase out’ of the coal-based power to ‘phase down’.

That G7 had to accommodate this change indicates the coming of a world order in which the G7 no longer sets the rules.

Must Read: [Coal controversy at the Glasgow summit](#)

What is the way forward?

– **Reduced consumption by the West:** Consumption of affluent households both determines and accelerates an increase of emissions of carbon dioxide. In the West, these factors have overridden the beneficial effects of changes in technology. This is visible in the increasing carbon footprint. Thus, the West must begin by reducing its consumption.

India:

- In parallel with the **infrastructure and clean technology thrust**, the consumption patterns need to be shifted away from resource and carbon-intensive goods and services. **For instance:** mobility from cars and aircraft towards buses and trains, and nutrition from animal and processed food towards a seasonal plant-based diet.
- Along with reducing demand, **resource and carbon intensity of consumption has to decrease**, e.g. expanding renewable energy, electrifying cars and public transport and increasing energy and material efficiency.
- **More equal distribution of wealth with a minimum level of prosperity and affordable energy use for all:** For instance, housing and doing away with biomass for cooking.
- **Floor' and 'ceiling' of sustainable well-being:** The Govt must set up focused research groups for the conceptual frame of sustainable well-being. It should analyze the factors of affluent overconsumption. It should further create awareness around how much energy we really need for a decent level of well-being.
- After the Stockholm Declaration on the Global Environment, the Constitution was amended in 1976 to include Protection and Improvement of Environment as a **fundamental duty**. Further, the Parliament used Article 253 to enact the **Environment Protection Act** to implement the decisions reached at the Stockholm Conference.

Under Article 253, Parliament has the power to make laws for implementing international treaties and agreements and can legislate on the preservation of the natural environment.

The decisions taken at COP26 need to be enabled by a new set of legislation around ecological limits, energy and land use, including the efficient distribution and use of electricity, urban design etc.

Must Read: [Glasgow Climate Pact \(GCP\) – Explained, pointwise](#)

28. Decomputerize to decarbonize: A climate debate we can't avoid

Source: This post is based on the article “**Decomputerize to decarbonize: A climate debate we can't avoid**” published in **Livemint** on **25th Nov 2021**.

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

Relevance: To understand the carbon footprint of computers.

News: Our planet faces an existential threat, with climate change and global warming threatening to make it un-liveable in a few decades.

Digitization doesn't just pose a risk to people, It also poses a risk to the planet.

How computerization and technology adoption is contributing to climate change?

One huge factor ruining our planet is the uninhibited **computerization and technology adoption**, as is visible from the following facts:

- A UN study revealed that the **manufacture of one desktop computer** took 240 kg of fossil fuels, 22 kg of chemicals and 1,500 kg of water.
- A University of Massachusetts team calculated that **training one model for natural-language processing** emits 626,155 pounds of carbon dioxide, what 125 New York–Beijing round trips will produce. OpenAI has estimated that the computing used to train a single AI model is increasing by a factor of 10 every year.

Natural Language Processing (NLP) —the branch of artificial intelligence (AI) that helps 'virtual assistants' like Alexa understand humans.

- **Hundreds of data centres** that Google, Microsoft and others use water and power at alarming rates. As per reports, data centres consume **200 terawatt hours per year**. This is

roughly the same amount as South Africa, and is likely to grow 4-5 times by 2030, which would put it on par with Japan, the world's fourth-biggest energy consumer.

– **Semiconductor chips:** A fabrication unit takes \$20 billion to build and need **2-4 million gallons of ultra-pure water per day**, roughly equal to the needs of an American city of 50,000 people.

In fact, the carbon footprint of the world's computational infrastructure has matched that of the aviation industry at its peak, and it is increasing at a faster rate.

Hence, decomputerization is necessary for decarbonization.

What is the way forward?

Though we don't need a 'Luddite revolution' but in order to decarbonize, we must decomputerize. This does not mean getting rid of computers, but only the unnecessary ones in our homes and offices.

Luddites were the members of the organized bands of 19th-century English handicraftsmen who rioted for the destruction of the textile machinery that was displacing them. Today, the term is usually referred to any person who is against technology.

29. Airport Lessons

Source: This post is based on the article “**Airport Lessons: Private airports are good for everyone**” published in **Times of India** on **26th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development, and employment.

Relevance: To understand the need of private participation in airport development in India.

News: The Jewar International Airport, a greenfield project will be the second airport in NCR. Both international airports in NCR will then be under private management.

It demonstrates India's success in the last two decades in attracting private capital and management into airport infrastructure development and maintenance.

How private players' participation was facilitated in airport development over the years?

The watershed moment was 2006, when Delhi and Mumbai airports were leased out for 30 years to private entities under a PPP model.

It was followed by greenfield airports in Bengaluru and Hyderabad.

Further, in 2008, a key development was the creation of a **statutory body**, Airports Economic Regulatory Authority (**AERA**) which regulates airport tariffs.

– It helped in getting both private capital and also buy-in from passengers.

The importance of a regulator can be gauged by the fact that in **the case of railways**, a lack of a regulator has hampered its efforts to attract private capital.

How has private participation helped?

It resulted in **economic benefits from the increasing traffic** – 341 million passengers in 2019-20. This revenue stream allowed Airports Authority of India (AAI) to develop airfields in locations that can't attract private capital right now.

What is the way forward?

The future of greenfield airports and expansion of existing ones will depend on states. National Civil Aviation policy expects them to acquire land and provide it free for airports.

30. Chinese med imports up 75%, raises concerns

Source: This post is based on the article “**Chinese med imports up 75%, raises concerns**” published in **Times of India** on **26th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 -Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources, growth, development, and employment.

Relevance: To get an inside on the medical technology sector, our med-tech imports and issues associated.

News: China has become the largest exporter of medical devices to India, overtaking US and Germany during 2020-21.

The imports of med-tech and medical devices having jumped up to 75% from China alone, whereas overall increase in med-tech imports from all nations is just about 7%.

What are the reasons for the huge increase in imports?

Due to Covid-19 crisis, international supply chains initially got disrupted. To maintain investments in this field and ensuring supplies, the government resorted to **reducing duty on Covid-critical devices** to zero temporarily, which led to a huge influx of imports.

Most of the increase is attributed to imports of critical items like oximeters, diagnostic instruments, digital thermometers and chemical reagents, which were needed during the pandemic as a **quick scale-up wasn't possible**.

What are the issues with imports?

These **harm the domestic industry**.

The nil customs duty did not benefit consumers and, with no MRP printed on devices, there was **massive profiteering** due to the huge mark-ups.

Such huge imports are also a **challenge to India's 'Atma Nirbhar' policy** as private sector procurement largely has not been supporting 'Make in India', with China continuing to be a major supplier.

What is the way forward?

The Centre's bulk purchases have been mainly restricted to respiratory care and oxygen delivery equipment due to the pandemic. Hence, impetus needs to be given to **build capacity in other segments**.

Medtech sector can't be 'Atma Nirbhar' in a few months. We need to build **technology, quality, supply chain** and **right policy**.

31. Indian agriculture needs a Verghese Kurien

Source: This post is based on the article “**Indian agriculture needs a Verghese Kurien**” published in **The Hindu** on **27th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Issues related to Cooperative sector

Relevance: Verghese Kurien's legacy, cooperative movement

News: 26th Nov, 2021 was Kurien's 100th birth anniversary

What is the legacy of Verghese Kurien?

Architect of a rural revolution: He transformed the lives of millions of farmers in Gujarat. Poverty alleviation and social transformation was central to his idea of Co-operative model.

Professional integrity: There were many who saw him as an outsider due to his diverse socio-economic background. But Kurien won the farmers over with his professional integrity and his vision of a central role for farmers in India's journey of development.

Launched the White Revolution: He was behind the design of Amul as a co-operative, that later became a global brand and transformed India as the largest milk producing nation in the world.

Co-operative model of business development: He decided that Amul would grow and establish its identity neither as a public sector undertaking nor as a private corporate entity. He felt that, the co-operative model, was in the best interests of Gujarat's milk producers.

Learning from the Best practices: He borrowed the ideas and the practices of the corporate world in areas such as innovation in marketing and management, branding and technology etc

How has Amul performed in the years after the demise of Verghese Kurien?

Amul has grown steadily on the strong foundation laid by its visionary leader, diversifying its product range and adding new ones.

Amul remains one of India's best-known food brands and is an inspiration to other dairy cooperatives such as Nandini in Karnataka, Aavin in Tamil Nadu and Verka in Punjab.

Has cooperative sector benefitted from Amul's success?

Sadly, Amul's success has not been the catalyst for an economic transformation at the grassroots level. It has neither resulted in similar movements across other agricultural commodities in India.

The cooperative movement in India is in a **state of uncertainty**. It has suffered due to lack of professional management, adequate finance and poor adoption of technology.

32. Is crypto mania more a symptom than a cause?

Source: This post is based on the article "Is crypto mania more a symptom than a cause?" published in **The Indian Express** on **27th Nov 2021**.

Syllabus: GS3 – Science and Technology- Developments and their Applications and Effects in Everyday Life.

Relevance: Understanding the reasons as to why Cryptocurrencies are attractive assets and why banning cryptocurrencies might not be a bad idea

News: Instead of rooting for its ban, we must try to decipher the reasons behind popularity of Cryptocurrencies and why they appear so attractive an asset for investors.

What are the reasons behind fascination and attraction around Cryptocurrencies?

– They are a fascinating technological innovation. Part of their initial attraction was that they promised a **new governance order**.

– Faced with the inflation of the 1970s, thinkers like Friedrich Hayek theorized about reasserting the dominance of private currencies, protected from the state. This required a **solution to the problem of 'trust'** on which every currency depends. Crypto seemed to solve that problem, with its decentralised architecture and community and self-verification protocols.

– The global economy currently has an **abundance of cheap money**, while small savers are desperate for return. In this context, it is easy for the powerful to misallocate money, and the small saver to indulge in speculation via cryptocurrency.

Why a new governance order backed by Crypto can never be a reality?

This obvious due to the following reasons:

- **No state is going to let go of its power to assert control over the monetary system.** The sustenance of state-sponsored fiat money is one of the great achievements of modern state formation, and the foundation of its power and legitimacy.
- **Crypto requires substantial material infrastructure**, which a state could always control. States can shut down mining, as China has done.
- Neither Bitcoin, nor any other cryptocurrency currently possess stability, efficiency, privacy and safety that would allow it to dominate central bank money. Crypto is now considered more like an asset.

Are there any tangible benefits to Cryptocurrency?

Some financial products bring genuine gains for the economy or development, others pose a risk. Cryptocurrency doesn't bring any concrete development benefits.

The underlying technology of Blockchain can be harnessed for potential benefits even without crypto. Hence, a ban on cryptocurrency should not be a major problem.

Why a ban instead of regulation is a good choice for India?

Because the insulation of the financial system from the volatility of crypto markets will be difficult to achieve for the following reasons:

The first reason is **political economy**. A large number of investors, and some influential ones, will become a vested interest in their own right, potentially demanding the socialisation or mitigation of losses. Now RBI is facing lobbying by investors as an interest group.

A major new class of assets, especially if volumes grow, will have **systemic effects on the rest of the economy**. For instance:

- In a crisis, if stable coin redemptions go up, RBI will have to step in.
- Opportunity costs of investments flowing into crypto on prices of other assets and monetary instruments.

What is the way forward?

- RBI should avoid a scenario where it bans but then carves out exceptions.
- Ensure that trade does not go offshore. Not fully banning and allowing it offshore will be the worst of both worlds.
- Lastly, RBI's case would be strengthened if it spelled out the systemic risks that crypto might pose to the stability of the real economy.

Must Read: [Cryptocurrency: Ban or regulation – Explained, pointwise](#)

33. The dreaded rainforest shift

Source: This post is based on the article “**The dreaded rainforest shift**” published in **Down To Earth** on 26th Nov 2021.

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

Relevance: Understanding the role of amazon rainforest in the world's climate, its change from a carbon sink to source.

News: A study was conducted in which vertical profiling measurements of the air above the Amazon rainforest was done over a period of nearly one decade.

The study shows that major portions of the Amazon rainforest have shifted from a **carbon sink to a carbon source**. Recent deforestation in Brazil's Amazon rainforest- up 22% in one year, is at the highest level in nearly two decades.

What are the main results of the study and the reason for the shift?

The study shows the **eastern Amazon rainforest** has become a significant source of carbon emissions, competing with cars, trains, planes, and power plants.

-Multiple factors behind this shift from carbon sink to carbon emitter are global warming, deforestation, and fire all happening in the eastern Amazon.

Western Amazon is also facing pressure from logging, agriculture, and mining, extending deeper into the forest. Therefore, it will soon look like eastern Amazon.

What are the impacts seen?

This shift has severe **planet-wide negative implications**.

The temperatures across the southeastern Amazon have risen dramatically in comparison to the western part of the rainforest.

Transpiration of around 20 billion tons of water was used to evaporate per day in the region. This huge flow of vapor into the atmosphere was also called **invisible flying rivers**. Due to deforestation, this is hampered.

- The release of water vapor into the air and circulation of water and weather patterns throughout the globe is also impacted.

What is the way forward?

Due to the inter-connectedness of all ecosystems, it is one of the most important roles for humans to act as caretakers and protectors of natural systems.

The neoliberal capitalism's politics of growth at any cost, destroying ecosystems along the way, must be stopped through youth participation.

Brazil is a signatory to CoP26 to end deforestation by 2030. It should keep its promise and an anti-environmental stance should be shed away.

34. Yes, there are two Indias, and they are not getting any closer together

Source: This post is based on the article "Yes, there are two Indias, and they are not getting any closer together" published in **Business Standard** on **26th November 2021**.

Syllabus: GS 3 Indian Economy and issues relating to planning, mobilization, of resources.

Relevance: To understand the stark contrast within India's development.

News: Ministry of Health and Family Welfare (MOHFW) has released the 2019-21 National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5).

Read more: [NFHS-5 and its findings – Explained, pointwise](#)

Why it is called two India?

There is a stark contrast of development that exist between better performing Indian states and less performing Indian states. The fifth [National Family Health Survey](#)'s findings make it clear yet again that there are indeed two Indias. For example,

In social development: Tamil Nadu has less than a third of the diarrhoea cases when compares to Bihar. Similarly, Bihar has only two-thirds of Tamil Nadu's ratio of literate women or doctors per 1,000 population, but a 50% higher ratio of stunted and wasted children.

In economy: State's comprising most of Southern and Western India and states like Haryana have an annual net income per head of about \$3,000. Their per capita income is closer to the Philippines.

Bihar with barely a third of India's net income per head might get bracketed with Niger. UP might get clubbed with Niger's neighbour in the Sahel, Mali.

So economically, Africa's Sahel region and the Philippines co-exist in India.

Note: Niger is ranked 204th out of 215 countries and territories on per capita income.

What are the impacts of these two India?

Private investment will go to India that might catch up with the Philippines, not the India that compares with the Sahel.

Poorer states' own tax resources are much lower when compares to the better-off states.

Are these two India's getting closer?

Even though there is a difference when the gap is smaller than for some other metrics. For example, on metrics like households that have electricity, women with bank accounts and drinking water, the difference is less.

Progressively, these two India's have to get closer. But that is not the reality for two reasons.

1. **Infrastructure does not reap enough benefits:** For instance, UP claimed that it will have Asia's largest airport at Jewar. But the real catchment area for that airport is not in the hinterland of Western UP but in the urban and industrial areas like the National Capital Region.

2. **State's Policies against migration:** Migration to more prosperous places will create a level playing field. The Covid lockdown showed how [migrants are spread across India](#). But, states like [Haryana are creating laws that favour locals](#) in employment, even though people from other states are willing to work for low wages.

This will hamper 1. The creation of enough jobs in India, 2. Less-educated Indians are forced to leave the state, 3. Make less competition between states, 4. Hamper the economy.