



# Monthly Editorial Consolidation



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## Bonds For Climate

This editorial is based on “Going green with sovereign bonds” which was published in The BusinessLine on 28/06/2022. It talks about the Sovereign Green Bond and its importance in tackling climate change.

**Tags:** Indian Economy, GS Paper 2, Government Policies & Interventions, GS Paper 3, Capital Market

The Prime Minister of India laid out India’s vision and commitment of a **Net Zero** economy by 2070 at the **COP26** in November last year. This strategic direction offers India an opportunity to lead the developing world in green transition.

With quick policy support, India has successfully demonstrated the creation of a **solar power** market at price points that developing countries can afford. Another timely idea is the issuance of ‘**Sovereign Green Bonds (SGB)**’.

The government of India proposes to issue sovereign green bonds for the first time this year. The Finance Minister announced the government’s intention to issue Sovereign Green Bonds (SGBs) in **Budget 2022-23** to mobilize resources for green infrastructure.

The proceeds will be deployed in public sector projects which help in reducing the carbon intensity of the economy.

In this context, let’s understand the basics of SGB and its significance.

### What do We Mean by Green Bonds?

- **Green bonds** are issued by companies, countries and multilateral organisations to exclusively fund **projects that have positive environmental or climate benefits** and provide investors with fixed income payments.
  - The projects can include **renewable energy, clean transportation** and **green buildings**, among others.
- Proceeds from these bonds are earmarked for green projects. This is unlike standard bonds, the proceeds of which can be utilized for various purposes at the discretion of the issuer.
- By the end of 2020, 24 national governments had issued Sovereign Green, Social and Sustainability bonds totalling a cumulative USD 111 billion dollars, according to the London-based Climate Bonds Initiative.

### What are the Benefits of Sovereign Guarantee to Green Bonds?

- Sovereign green issuance sends a powerful signal of intent around **climate action** and **sustainable development** to governments and regulators.

- It will catalyze domestic market development and provide impetus to institutional investors.
- With the **IEA’s World Energy Outlook 2021**, estimating that 70% of the additional USD 4 trillion spending to reach net-zero is required in emerging/developing economies, sovereign issuance can help kickstart these large inflows of capital.
- Green premium on bonds provides a **yield discount** of 10-20 basis points making them attractive.
- Development of a sovereign green benchmark could eventually lead to the creation of a vibrant ecosystem of raising green bonds from international investors.

### What do We Mean by Green Bond Principles (GBP)?

- The Zurich-headquartered International Capital Market Association has come up with a set of voluntary guidelines and criteria known as the Green Bond Principles (GBP).
  - The principles cover use of proceeds, project evaluation and selection, management of proceeds and reporting.
  - They provide for use of proceeds for projects in climate change mitigation and adaptation, conservation of natural resources and bio-diversity and pollution prevention and control.
  - The three leading user segments are energy, buildings and transport.

### What is the Status of Green Bonds?

- **Global Status:**
  - **The Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)** funds are estimated at \$40 trillion with Europe accounting for about half this.
    - It is estimated that by 2025, ESG assets will account for about one-third of the total global assets under management.
    - The ESG debt funds pie is around \$2 trillion, of which over 80% is “environmental” or green bonds, and the rest social and sustainability bonds.
- **National Status:**
  - According to the Climate Bonds Initiative, an international organization working to mobilize global capital for climate action, Indian entities have issued green bonds for over \$18 billion.

### What Else are We Doing to Achieve Net Zero?

- **India’s Renewable Energy Targets:**

- India's **renewable energy targets** have steadily become more ambitious, from the 175 GW by 2022 declared at Paris, to 450 GW by 2030 at the UN Climate Summit, and now 500 GW by 2030, announced at COP26.
- India has also announced the target of 50% installed power generation capacity from non-fossil energy sources by 2030, raising the existing target of 40%, which has already been almost achieved.
- India has also announced a **Hydrogen Energy Mission** for grey and green hydrogen.
- In energy efficiency, the market-based scheme of **Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT)** has avoided 92 million tonnes of CO2 equivalent emissions during its first and second cycles.
- **Reforms in Transport Sector:**
  - India is accelerating its e-mobility transition with the **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles Scheme**.
  - India leapfrogged from Bharat Stage-IV (BS-IV) to **Bharat Stage-VI (BS-VI) emission norms** by April 1, 2020, the latter being originally scheduled for adoption in 2024.
  - A voluntary **vehicle scrapping policy** to phase out old and unfit vehicles complements the existing schemes.
  - The Indian Railways is also charging ahead, targeting the **full electrification of all broad-gauge** routes by 2023.
- **India's Support to EVs:**
  - India is among a handful of countries that support the global **EV30@30** campaign, which aims for at least 30% new vehicle sales to be electric by 2030.
  - India's advocacy of five elements for climate change — "**Panchamrit**" — at the COP26 in Glasgow is a commitment to the same.
  - India has taken various measures to develop and promote the EV ecosystem:
    - The remodeled **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Electric Vehicles (FAME II)** scheme
    - **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI)** scheme for Advanced Chemistry Cell (ACC) for the supplier side
    - The recently launched PLI scheme for Auto and Automotive Components for manufacturers of electric vehicles.

#### ➤ **Role of Government Schemes:**

- **The Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana** has helped 88 million households to shift from coal based cooking fuels to LPG connections.
- More than 367 million LED bulbs have been distributed under the **UJALA** scheme, leading to a reduction of 38.6 million tonnes of CO2 per year.
- These two and other similar initiatives have helped India achieve a reduction of 24% in the emission intensity of its GDP between 2005 and 2016.

#### ➤ **Role of Industries in Low-Carbon Transition:**

- The public and private sectors in India are already playing a key role in meeting the climate challenge, helped by growing customer and investor awareness, as well as increasing regulatory and disclosure requirements.
- For instance, the Indian cement industry has taken pioneering measures and achieved one of the biggest sectoral low carbon milestones worldwide.
- There is greater synergy of India's climate policy with the actions and commitments of its private sector.

#### **What should be Our Approach Moving Forward?**

##### ➤ **Masala Bonds:**

- **Masala Bonds (MB)** are rupee-denominated bonds, i.e., the funds would be raised from overseas markets in Indian rupees.
  - MB issued in Foreign Markets would address the **currency risk** problem of the issuer and would also attract a large pool of capital.
  - It helps strengthen the foreign investments in the country as it facilitates foreign investors' confidence in Indian currency.
- The government should take several policy, regulatory and developmental steps to improve the opportunities for green and sustainable investing.
- The government should have a policy on sovereign green bonds covering considerations for the choice of currency and markets, guarantees and credit enhancements, priorities on use of proceeds etc.
- To deepen the reach of **green finance** there is a need to develop capacity in smaller firms and the unorganized sector to be eligible users, for which a programme should be launched, ideally in association with international stakeholders under the Paris Agreement.



## Perennial Disaster - Floods

This editorial is based on “*Keeping head above water in Silchar*” which was published in *The Hindu* on 02/07/2022. It talks about the floods in Assam, its effect on different spheres of life and suggests measures to tackle it.

**Tags:** Geography, GS Paper 1, Important Geophysical Phenomena, Geographical Features and their Location, GS Paper 3, Disaster Management

The **Brahmaputra** Valley that encompasses the **Northeast** part of India witnesses **floods** almost every year, leaving behind a tale of death and destruction.

Even before the onset of **monsoon** in **Assam** this year, never stopping rain has wreaked havoc, with much of Assam submerged, crops destroyed and lakhs displaced.

The Brahmaputra is also critical to the **Kaziranga National Park** as it is bound by the river on one side. In recent years, however, the extent of devastation due to floods has increased significantly.

Let's understand how a state is being flooded heavily every year and analyze the factors behind it.

### What do We Mean by Flood?

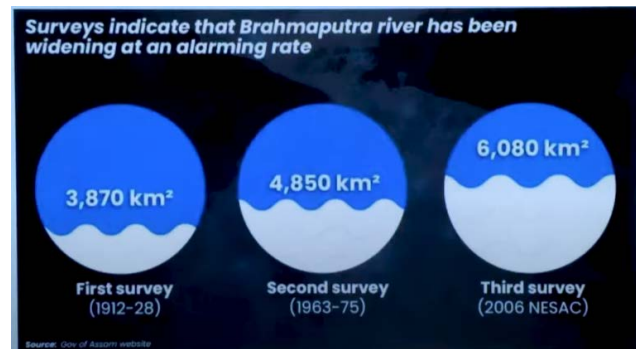
- A flood is an overflow of water that submerges land that is usually dry.
- In the sense of “flowing water”, the word may also be applied to the inflow of the tide.
- There are three common type of floods:
  - **Flash Floods:**
    - Caused by rapid and extensive rainfalls.
  - **River Floods:**
    - Caused when consistent rain or snow melt forces a river to exceed capacity.
  - **Coastal Floods:**
    - Caused by storm surges associated with tropical cyclones and **tsunami**.
- Between 1998 - 2017, 2 Billion people have been affected worldwide due to floods.

### Why Assam Gets Flooded Every Year?

- **The Brahmaputra factor:**
  - Assam is situated at the foothills of the **Himalayas** and comprises two valleys namely Brahmaputra and Barak, named after their names.
  - The mighty Brahmaputra river originates from the Himalayas and enters India through **Arunachal Pradesh** before flowing into the Bay of Bengal.
    - It flows through Assam over a length of around 650 km with an average width of

5.46 km, making it the principal river that crisscrosses the floodplains.

- Coming from the Kailash range (high elevation), the river gets highly sedimented by the time it enters Assam (low elevation).
  - Due to this flattening of the slope, there is a sudden drop in velocity and the river deposits huge quantities of sediment and other debris collected from hilly terrains on the riverbed, raising its level.
  - During summers, the sedimentation increases as soil erodes with the melting of glaciers.
- **The Monsoon Factor:**
  - The monsoon is intense in the Northeast.
    - According to the State Disaster Management Authority, annual rainfall averages around 2900 mm with maximum **precipitation** in June and July.
  - The Water Resources Ministry of Assam states that 85% of the annual rainfall in the Brahmaputra basin takes place during the monsoon months.
  - Besides, the valley gets a good amount of rainfall in April and May due to thunderstorm activities which account for flooding during heavy rain in June, when the soil is already saturated.
- **Riverbank Erosion:**
  - As sedimented rivers move through the state along with their tributaries, they take with them soil and sediment from banks.
  - Soil erodes and rivers expand as it gets more area and this results in flooding. This erosion of the land alongside rivers has emerged as a serious problem for Assam:
    - A major cause of the internal displacement of people due to the disappearance of villages.
    - The width of Brahmaputra has increased up to 15km due to bank erosion at some places in Assam.



- **Human intervention**
  - **Construction of Embankments:**

- Embankments are constructed to confine the course of a river. This solution, however, has evolved to be an added challenge over time in Assam.
  - Construction of embankments first started in Assam in the 1960s to control floods.
    - Six decades later, most of these embankments have either outlived their utility or are in bad condition. Many others were washed away.
    - Every year, as floods follow monsoon, river water breaches these barriers and inundates houses and land.
    - Successive Governments in Assam have spent nearly Rs 30,000 crore on building embankments over the last six decades.
    - One such incident is noted in Mahisha Beel, a town in Silchar where people cut the embankment at Bethukandi to drain out excess water into the Barak River that flows down from Manipur and meanders into Bangladesh.
      - ◆ This is believed to be one of the core reasons for flooding in the Silchar region.
  - Embankments led to encroachment of river banks with an increasing number of people building houses and setting up establishments close to the river.
  - **Population Boom:**
    - Population boom in the State which has put more pressure on the State's ecology.
      - The population density of Brahmaputra valley has increased from 9-29 people per sq. km. in 1940-41 to 398 per sq. km in the plain areas of Assam as per the **2011 census**, according to a report by the Brahmaputra Board.
        - ◆ The board under the **Ministry of Jal Shakti** monitors the Brahmaputra and Barak Valley and covers States under the Brahmaputra basin.
  - **Other Factors:**
    - Other man-made factors like deforestation, hill cutting, encroachments and destruction of **wetlands** have also worsened the flood situation.
  - **Climate change:**
    - A Report by the State government states that extreme rainfall events will increase by 38%.
    - Heavy rainfall replacing continuous low or normal rainfall during monsoon combined with the melting of glaciers due to rising temperatures will mean:
      - Rivers from the Himalayas will be carrying more water and sediment even before they enter Assam where smaller rivers are swelled up due to incessant rainfall.
      - This increases the possibility of frequent flash floods in low-lying areas.
  - **Other Factors:**
    - Lack of drainage system in the state.
    - Unplanned urban growth.
    - Construction of Dams, Hydro Projects, Irrigation Projects etc.
- ### **How Floods Affect Assam Adversely?**
- **Kaziranga National Park:**
    - More than 15% of the Kaziranga National Park has been inundated with the Brahmaputra flowing above the danger level, an official statement noted.
      - At least five animals, including a leopard, have been killed in floods in the national park so far this year.
    - Although, excessive water is considered beneficial for the park as it would:
      - help replenish Kaziranga's water bodies and maintain its landscape.
      - function as a breeding ground for fish.
      - help get rid of unwanted plants such as water hyacinth.
    - However, large frequent floods have started creating problems for the national park.
      - **NH-37:**
        - When the flood water hits a certain level, the animal moves towards safer, higher ground in the Karbi Anglong hills. However, they have to cross NH-37 which cuts across the park, which leads to the killing of animals in road accidents.
          - ◆ Animals are also killed by poachers who take advantage of their vulnerability.
      - Human-animal Conflict:
        - Animals also move towards villages in floods, this leads to human-animal conflict.
  - **Effects on Infrastructure:**
    - Train services got disrupted as water affected railway tracks at several places.
    - All modes of transport went on halt except Boats, which charged as much as ₹100 per 100 m in some areas to make up for their inability to fish or ferry people to rivers for a living.
    - Food and potable water is not easily available.
    - Roads and bridges have suffered serious damage.

- Almost all the power stations are invariably situated near the rivers because they draw water from the river to cool down the equipment and pump back the hot water into the river.
  - The flooding damaged the electricity supply in many districts.

#### ➤ **Effects on Common Lives:**

- More than 5,000 villages and croplands have been inundated, with the Brahmaputra river breaching its embankments due to incessant rainfall.
- Heavy rain has triggered landslides in Cachar, Dima-Hasao, Goalpara, Hailakandi, Kamrup (Metro) and Karimganj districts, throwing normal life out of gear.
- The destruction is not limited to humans alone. Some 60,000 animals have been washed away and around 36 lakh were affected in the current wave of floods, according to the ASDMA report.

### **What Measures Can be Taken in Future Flood Events?**

#### ➤ **Information Communication:**

- It should be ensured that more credible information is made available so that preparedness can be improved and residents can be alerted.
- Experts have indicated that the region needs more institutionalized and technologically advanced systems to allow for credible and fast warning systems.

#### ➤ **Protecting Kaziranga:**

- Emphasis needs to be put on securing animal corridors and ensuring a safe passage to the Karbi hills.
  - Need for a landscape-scale conservation approach that recognises the value of the Karbi Anglong hills.
    - The highlands of Karbi Anglong, where the animals take refuge, are the lifeline of the park during the floods.

#### ➤ **Constructing Sluice Gates:**

- Sluice Gates should be constructed on tributaries of Brahmaputra and other rivers like Barak etc. It would prove to be an effective step.
  - Sluice Gate's valves are designed to seal in one direction and commonly are used to control water levels and flow rates in rivers and canals. They also are used in wastewater treatment plants.

#### ➤ **Other Measures:**

- A Centre for Disaster Management should be established in Assam to carry out studies for effective implementation of measures.



## **Death Behind Bars**

*This editorial is based on "Technology is no panacea for custodial deaths" which was published in The Hindu on 04/07/2022. It talks about the cases of custodial deaths, arrival of technology in the interrogation process and related issues.*

**Tags:** Governance, GS Paper 2, Fundamental Rights, Judgments & Cases, Dispute Redressal Mechanisms, Judiciary, Government Policies & Interventions, Transparency & Accountability, E-Governance, Role of Civil Services in a Democracy

India has a grim record in police brutality and **custodial violence**. Between 2001 and 2018, 1,727 persons died in police custody, but only 26 policemen were convicted for such deaths.

Custodial deaths are common despite enormous time and money being spent on training police personnel to embrace scientific methods of investigation. This is because police personnel are humans from different backgrounds and with different perspectives.

In this context, let's understand the issues revolving around custodial deaths.

### **What do We Mean by Custodial Deaths?**

- Custodial deaths in India may refer to the deaths of persons in police custody and also to the deaths of persons in judicial custody while undergoing trial or serving a sentence.
  - It is not uncommon knowledge that the police, when they grow increasingly frustrated with the trajectory of their interrogation, sometimes resort to torture and violence which could lead to the death of the suspect.
  - It includes torture, death and other excesses in police custody or prison.

### **What has been the Status of Custodial Deaths in India?**

- According to **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** data, Over the last 20 years, 1,888 custodial deaths were reported across the country, 893 cases registered against police personnel and 358 personnel charge-sheeted. But only 26 policemen were convicted in this period, official records show.
  - Except in Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Odisha, no policeman was convicted for such deaths across the country.
  - Apart from custodial deaths, more than 2,000 human rights violation cases were also recorded against the police between 2000 and 2018. And only 344 policemen were convicted in those cases.

## **What could be the Possible Reasons for Custodial Deaths?**

- **Absence of Strong Legislation:**
  - India does not have an anti-torture legislation and is yet to criminalise custodial violence, while action against culpable officials remains illusory.
- **Institutional Challenges:**
  - The entire prison system is inherently opaque giving less room to transparency.
  - India also fails in bringing the much desired Prison Reforms and prisons continue to be affected by poor conditions, overcrowding, acute manpower shortages and minimal safety against harm in prisons.
- **Excessive Force:**
  - The use of excessive force including torture to target marginalised communities and control people participating in movements or propagating ideologies which the state perceives as opposed to its stature.
- **Lengthy Judicial Processes:**
  - Lengthy, expensive formal processes followed by courts dissuade the poor and the vulnerable.
- **Not Adhering to International Standard:**
  - Although India has signed the United Nations Convention against Torture in 1997 its ratification still remains.
  - While Signing only indicates the country's intention to meet the obligations set out in the treaty, Ratification, on the other hand, entails bringing in laws and mechanisms to fulfill the commitments.

## **What are the Provisions Available Regarding Custody?**

- **Constitutional Provisions:**
  - **Article 21:**
    - Article 21 states that **"No person shall be deprived of his life or personal liberty except according to procedure established by law"**.
      - Protection from torture is a fundamental right enshrined under Article 21 (Right to Life) of the Indian constitution.
  - **Article 22:**
    - Article 22 provides **"Protection against arrest and detention in certain cases"**.
      - The right to counsel is also a fundamental right under Article 22(1) of the India constitution.
- **Legal Provisions:**

## ○ **Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC):**

- **Section 41 of Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC)** was amended in 2009 to include safeguards so that arrests and detentions for interrogation have reasonable grounds and documented procedures, arrests are made transparent to family, friends and public, and there is protection through legal representation.
- **Mathura Case of 1972:**
  - The Mathura rape case was an incident of custodial rape in India on 26 March 1972, wherein Mathura, a young tribal girl, was allegedly raped by two policemen on the compound of Desaijanj Police Station in Gadchiroli district of Maharashtra.
  - This case led to Government of India to amend the rape laws in our country. In 1983, a new category was added to criminal laws dealing with rape.
    - The law mandates that a court presume a woman who says she did not consent to sexual intercourse is telling the truth.
    - Mathura's case also led to in camera rape trials being conducted as closed proceedings and to a ban on identifying victims by their real names.
    - Besides defining custodial rape, the amendment shifted the burden of proof from the accuser to the accused.
    - It also demanded that before sunrise and after the sunset, women can not be called to the police station.

## **What is the Role of Technology in Custodial Interrogation?**

- **Brain Fingerprint System:**
  - BFS is a type of **lie-detection technique** through which a person's brain waves are measured to find out if the individual is telling the truth while answering questions put to him/her.
  - The technique helps investigative agencies uncover clues in complicated cases.
- **Robots:**
  - Police departments are increasingly using **robots** for surveillance and bomb detection.
  - Many experts today believe that robots can meet or exceed the capabilities of the human interrogator.
    - Suspects might be more receptive to opening up to automated conversational counterparts than the police.



- Robots equipped with AI and sensor technology can build a rapport with the suspects, utilize persuasive techniques like flattery, shame and coercion, and strategically use body language.
- The University of Arizona has created automated interrogation technology called **The Automated Virtual Agent for Truth Assessments in RealTime (AVATAR)**.
  - The system uses visual, auditory, near-infrared and other sensors to scrutinize a suspect's eye movements, voice, and other qualities throughout an interaction.
- **Artificial Intelligence:**
  - **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** and Machine Learning (ML) are emerging as a tool of interrogations. AI can detect human emotions and predict behavior.
  - Therefore, these are also options. ML can in real time alert superiors when police are meting out inhumane treatment to suspects.
- **Related Concerns:**
  - There exists the risk of bias, the peril of automated interrogation tactics, the threat of machine learning algorithms targeting individuals and communities, and the hazard of its misuse for surveillance.
  - While the technology available to the police and law enforcement agencies is constantly improving, it is a restricted tool that can't eradicate custodial deaths.

### **What should be Our Approach Moving Forward?**

- **India should ratify the UN Convention Against Torture:**
  - It will mandate a systematic review of colonial rules, methods, practices and arrangements for the custody and treatment of persons subjected to any form of arrest, detention or imprisonment.
  - It will also mean that exclusive mechanisms of redress and compensation will be set up for the victim besides institutions such as the Board of Visitors.
- **Police Reforms:**
  - **Guidelines** should also be formulated on educating and training officials involved in the cases involving deprivation of liberty because torture cannot be effectively prevented till the senior police wisely anticipate the gravity of such issues and clear reorientation is devised from present practices.
- **Access to Prison:**
  - Unrestricted and regular access to independent and qualified persons to places of detention for inspection should also be allowed.

- CCTV cameras should be installed in police stations including in the interrogation rooms.
- **Surprise inspections by Non-Official Visitors (NOVs)** should also be made mandatory which would act as a preventive measures against custodial torture which has also been suggested by Supreme Court in its landmark judgment in the Shri Dilip K. Basu Case in 2015.
- **Implementation of Law Commission of India's 273rd Report:**
  - The report recommends that those accused of committing custodial torture – be it policemen, military and paramilitary personnel – should be criminally prosecuted instead of facing mere administrative action establishing an effective deterrent.
- **Other Measures:**
  - Formulation of a multi pronged strategy by the decision makers encompassing legal enactments, technology, accountability, training and community relations.
  - To keep police excesses in check, dissemination of information about the constitutional right to legal aid and availability of free legal aid services is necessary.
    - The installation of display boards and outdoor hoardings in every police station/prison is a step in this direction.
  - If India wants to remain as a society governed by the rule of law, it is imperative for the judiciary to bridge the gap of accessibility to justice between the highly privileged and the most vulnerable.
    - Accessing justice in India is not merely an aspirational goal. Judiciary needs to work hand in hand with various wings of the government to make it a practical reality.



## **Plastic-waste management**

*This editorial is based on "Microbes that devour plastic offer hope for recycling plans" which was published in The Mint on 04/07/2022. It talks about the plastic waste management and related issues.*

**Tags:** Biodiversity & Environment, GS Paper - 2, Government Policies & Interventions, GS Paper - 3, Environmental Pollution & Degradation

Plastic has become one of the most pressing environmental issues that we are facing today. **India is generating about 3.5 million tonnes of plastic waste annually.**

Right from municipal solid waste, plastic waste, to automobile waste, **the amount of waste is expected to be 3 times by 2025**. Less than one tenth of plastic is recycled. The huge volumes of leakages in plastic wastes demands a clarion call for a various efforts for plastic waste management in the country.

In this context, let's understand the issues associated with plastic waste and solutions.

### **What is the Significance of Plastic?**

- Resistant, inert, and lightweight, plastic offers many benefits to companies, consumers, and other links in society. This is all because of its **low-cost and versatile** nature.
- In the **medical industry**, plastics are used to keep things sterile. Syringes and surgical implements are all plastic and single use.
- In the **automotive industry**, it has allowed a significant reduction in vehicle weight, reducing fuel consumption and, consequently, the environmental impact of automobiles.
  - Plastics **protect our heads in the form of helmets**. They keep us **safer in our cars in the form of seatbelts, fuel tanks, windscreens and airbags**.

### **Where does the Real Problem Lie?**

- **Single Use Plastic:**
  - Plastics are primarily **produced from crude oil, gas, or coal**, and **40% of total plastic is discarded after a single use**.
    - Our relationship with plastic is short-term focused. Many of these products, such as plastic bags and food wrappers, have a **lifespan of mere minutes to hours**, yet they may **persist in the environment for hundreds of years**.
- **Microplastics:**
  - **Sea, sunlight, wind, and wave action break down plastic waste into small particles**, often less than one-fifth of an inch across **called microplastics**. Spread throughout the water column and have been found in every corner of the globe.
    - **Microplastics are breaking down further into smaller and smaller pieces.- Plastic microfibers**. They have been **found in municipal drinking water systems and drifting through the air**.

### **No Strict Adherence to Plastic Waste Management:**

- Globally, about **one fourth of plastic waste is never collected**.

- In less wealthy countries, **waste plastic is sometimes burned in the open**, releasing toxic chemicals into the air.

### **What are the Issues Associated with Plastic-Waste in India?**

- **More Plastic Per Person:**
  - Like much of the world, India is struggling to dispose of its growing quantities of plastic waste given how ubiquitous it has become- **from our toothbrushes to debit cards. A little over 10,000 tonnes a day of plastic waste remains uncollected**.
- **Unsustainable Packaging:**
  - India's packaging industry is the biggest consumer of plastics. A 2020 study on **packaging in India projects a loss of almost 133 billion dollars worth of plastic material value over the next decade due to unsustainable packaging**.
    - **Unsustainable packaging involves general packaging through single use plastic**.
  - **Online Delivery:**
    - The popularity of online retail and food delivery apps, though restricted to big cities, is contributing to the rise in plastic waste.
    - India's **biggest online delivery startups Swiggy and Zomato are each reportedly delivering about 28 million orders a month**.
    - **E-commerce** companies too have come under fire for excess use of plastic packaging.
- **Upsets the Food Chain:**
  - Polluting **plastics can affect the world's tiniest organisms, such as plankton**. When these organisms become poisoned due to plastic ingestion, this **causes problems for the larger animals that depend on them for food**.
    - Larger items, such as plastic bags and straws, can choke and starve **marine life**, while smaller fragments (microplastics) can cause liver, reproductive, and gastrointestinal damage in animals and it can **directly impact the blue economy as well**.
- **Impact on Human Health:**
  - The **World Health Organisation** published shocking research in 2018 that exposed the **presence of microplastics in 90% of bottled water**.
    - **We absorb plastic through our clothes, 70% of which are synthetic and the worst fabric for the skin**.
    - **We even breathe plastic when due to poor waste management by burning the trash in the open air**.

- Plastic toxicity in humans can lead to hormonal disruption and adverse reproductive and birth outcomes.

### **How is India Addressing the concerns regarding Plastic-Waste?**

- **National Dashboard on Elimination of Single Use Plastic and Plastic Waste Management:**
  - India launched a nationwide awareness campaign on Single Use Plastics on **World Environment Day** in June 2022.
  - A **mobile app for Single Use Plastics Grievance Redressal** was also launched to empower citizens to check sale/usage/manufacturing of SUP in their area and tackle the plastic menace.
- **Plastic Waste Management Amendment Rules, 2022:**
  - It prohibits the manufacture, import, stocking, distribution, sale and use of several single-use plastic items as of July 1, 2022.
  - It has also mandated **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)** that incorporates circularity by making **manufacturers of products responsible for collecting and processing their products upon the end of the products' lifetime.**
- **India Plastics Pact:**
  - It is the **first of its kind in Asia.** The Plastics Pact is an ambitious and collaborative initiative to **bring stakeholders together to reduce, reuse and recycle plastics within the material's value chain.**
- **Mascot 'Prakriti':**
  - To spread awareness among masses about small changes that can be sustainably adopted in lifestyle for a better environment.
- **Project REPLAN:**
  - **Project REPLAN (stands for REducing PLastic in Nature)** launched by **Khadi and Village Industries Commission (KVIC)** aims to reduce consumption of plastic bags by providing a more sustainable alternative.

### **What are the Effective Solutions to Plastic-Waste Management?**

- **Identifying Hotspots:**
  - Identifying key **hotspots of Plastic leakage associated with production, consumption, and disposal of Plastic** can assist governments in developing effective policies that address the plastic problem directly.

### ➤ **Designing Alternatives:**

- Identifying plastic items that can be replaced with non-plastic, recyclable, or biodegradable materials is the first step. Find alternatives to single-use plastics and reusable design goods by working with product designers.
  - Promoting the use of **Oxo-biodegradable plastics**, that are manufactured to be **broken down by ultra-violet radiation and heat, more quickly than regular plastics.**

### ➤ **Breaking Down Plastic Waste:**

- Plastic has become so enmeshed in our ecosystem that **bacteria have evolved to digest it.**
  - **Plastic-eating bacteria, discovered in Japan,** have been cultivated and modified to digest polyester plastics (food packaging and plastic bottles).

### ➤ **Recycling through Technologies and Innovation:**

- **Waste is valuable and Waste is a resource, especially plastic.** Recycling, especially plastic recycling, sets a system in place which **creates a value chain for waste.**
- **Thiagarajar College of Engineering in Madurai has received a patent for manufacturing tiles and blocks from waste plastic.**
  - The manufactured tiles could withstand heavy loads and could be used as a construction material.

### ➤ **Promoting a plastic-free workplace:**

- All catering operations should be prohibited from using single-use plastics.
  - To encourage workers and clients to improve their habits, all single-use goods can be replaced with reusable items or more **sustainable single-use alternatives.**

### ➤ **Circular Economy for Plastic Management:**

- Circular economy can reduce material use, redesigns materials to be less resource intensive, and recaptures "waste" as a resource to manufacture new materials and products.
  - **Circular economy** is not just applicable to the global currents of plastic and clothes, but can also **contribute significantly to the achievement of sustainable development goals.**
  - **Circular economy** can reduce material use, redesigns materials to be less resource intensive, and **recaptures "waste" as a resource to manufacture new materials and products.**

### ➤ **Multi-stakeholder collaboration:**

- Government ministries at the **national and local levels must collaborate** in the **development, implementation and oversight of policies,** which

includes **participation from industrial firms, non-governmental organisations and volunteer organisations.**

### What are the Current Global Initiatives to Tackle Plastic-Waste?

#### ➤ Resolution:

- In 2022, **124 countries, parties to the United Nations Environment Assembly, including India,** signed a resolution to draw up an agreement which will in the future make it legally binding for the signatories to **address the full life of plastics from production to disposal, to end plastic pollution.**

- As of July 2019, **68 countries have plastic bag bans with varying degrees of enforcement.**

#### ➤ European Union:

- In July, 2021, the **Directive on Single-Use Plastics** took effect in the **European Union (EU).**

#### ➤ Closing the loop:

- It is a project of the **United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific** assists cities in developing more inventive policy solutions to tackle the problem.

#### ➤ The Global Tourism Plastics initiative:

- It aims to reduce plastic pollution from the tourism sector through a set of actionable commitments by 2025.
  - The Initiative will also **engage the value chain to promote 100% of plastic packaging to be reusable, recyclable or compostable** and commit to collaborate and invest in increasing the recycling and composting rate for plastics.



## Online Dispute Resolution Mechanism in Indian Judiciary

*This editorial is based on "A disruption that India's legal profession sorely needs" which was published in The Mint on 05/07/2022. It talks about the Online Dispute Resolution and related applications.*

**Tags:** Governance, GS Paper - 2, Judiciary, E-Governance

The **Judicial System in India** is under tremendous pressure. **As of May 2022, over 4.7 crore cases are pending in courts across different levels of the judiciary** while nearly **1,82,000 cases have been pending for over 30 years.**

Amid the **rising trend of litigation**, more people and organisations are approaching courts. **National Judicial Data Grid**, a database of the **Department of Justice**, shows that courts saw an **increase of over 27% in pendency between December 2019 and April 2022.**

Inadequate infrastructure has resulted in **overburdened courts**, which in turn has led to a **massive backlog of cases.** In this context, let's understand how technology can be leveraged for India's judiciary.

### What is the Existing Technological Infrastructure In the Indian Judicial System?

#### ➤ NICNET :

- In 1990, the **National Informatics Centre** took up **computerization in respect of the Supreme Court of India.**

- **All High Courts have been computerised and interconnected** through NIC's **satellite-based computer-communication network NICNET.**

- NIC has also implemented the **List of Business Information (LOBIS)** in all High Court Courts.

#### ➤ Project eCourts:

- It aims to **enhance judicial productivity**, both qualitatively & quantitatively and to **make the justice delivery system affordable, accessible, cost-effective, predictable, reliable and transparent.**

- It also provides efficient & time-bound citizen-centric services delivery as detailed in **e-Court Project Litigant's Charter.**

#### ➤ Integrated Case Management System (ICMS):

- It was launched in 2017 for **integrating the Supreme Court and the High Courts of the country and enabling e-filing throughout the country.**

- Presently, several High Courts in the country including those at **Delhi, Punjab, Bombay, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka and Allahabad** have enabled e-filing and presentation of evidence on electronic platforms in their commercial divisions.

#### ➤ Migration to **Online Dispute Resolution (ODR) System:**

- ODR is the system of resolution of disputes, particularly small- and medium-value cases, using digital technology and techniques of **Alternate Dispute Resolution,**

- ODR has received impetus across Government, businesses and even the judicial processes to tide over the constraints due to **Covid-19 pandemic.**

### What are the Benefits of the Online Dispute Resolution System?

#### ➤ Managing Time and Cost:

- ODR has the potential to reduce legal costs, by way of reduced time for resolution and by doing away with the need for legal advice in select categories of cases.
- **Flexible Nature:**
  - Compared to rigid court procedures followed for ages, **ODR encourages speedy resolution in a versatile and informal way.**
  - It eliminates the need for travel and synchronisation of schedules.
- **Encourages Negotiations:**
  - ODR tools such as **online negotiation and mediation** are premised on **mutually arriving at an agreement**, they make the dispute resolution process less adversarial and complicated for the parties.
- **Simple to Access:**
  - In accordance with the convenience and requirement of the parties, **ODR can be accessed anywhere at any time where the internet is accessible.**
- **Storing Data:**
  - **Document storage has been replaced by the ODR mechanism** as one of the most common problems faced in Indian courts.

### ***What are the Problems Associated With Online Dispute Resolution?***

- **Structural Problems:**
  - **Lack of Digital infrastructure:**
    - A **pre-condition to ODR** integration is **robust technology infrastructure across the country.**
      - This includes **access to computers, smart phones and medium to high bandwidth internet connection** for at least the length of time it takes to conduct meaningful hearings.
      - The **lack of such requirements is likely to disadvantage those that have limited access to digital infrastructure.**
  - **Lack of Digital Literacy:**
    - According to the **Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology**, only **38% of households in India are digitally literate.**
      - In **urban areas**, digital literacy is relatively higher at **61%** relative to just **25% in rural areas.**
    - As per **Internet India Report 2019**, **women constitute only 1/3rd of internet users in India.**
    - Therefore, there is a need for programmes that focus on **boosting internet accessibility in rural areas** combined with dedicated initiatives to **popularise basic skill sets required to access ODR services.**

### ➤ **Operational Problems:**

- **Privacy and Confidentiality Concerns:**
  - It includes **online impersonation, breach of confidentiality** by circulation of documents and data shared during ODR processes, **tampering of digital evidence or digitally delivered awards/ agreements.**
- **Enforcement of the outcome of ODR process:**
  - Enforcement of arbitral awards in India is complex and burdensome.
    - It requires stamp duties in most of the States. The **archaic requirement to attach an eStamp certificate to the document creates barriers in an otherwise end-to-end online process.**

### ➤ **Behavioural Problems:**

- **Lack of Trust in ODR Services:**
  - This mistrust stems at several levels from **scepticism (feeling of doubt) regarding technology to questions regarding enforceability of ODR outcomes.**
- **Mutual Consent of Parties:**
  - Admissibility of the ODR is one of the main and critical problems.
    - **Mutual consent of the parties is necessary for triggering the ODR procedure**, whether through an explicit contractual clause or through a separate mutual agreement between the parties, **otherwise, any decision made impartially is not legally legitimate and binding on the parties.**

### ***How can We Improve Online Dispute Resolution Mechanism?***

#### ➤ **Increase Access to Digital Infrastructure:**

- Increased physical access to technology and infrastructure can only be achieved by the combined efforts of two key stakeholders - the **Government and the judiciary.**
  - **National Digital Communication Policy, 2018** and **National Broadband Mission** aims to provide **universal broadband connectivity** and facilitate effective participation in the global digital economy.

#### ➤ **Increase Digital Literacy:**

- Physical access to technology and infrastructure is only one aspect of access to digital infrastructure. To unlock its true potential, users of such technology should be digitally literate.

- **Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyaan (PMGDISHA)** will go a long way to ensure access to justice in even the remotest and the most marginalised sections of the society.
- **Innovative Platforms:**
  - To maximise access ODR Platforms should be designed mobile friendly to enable their wide adoption. Further, it is also desirable **inclusion of voice prompts technology given the limitations in digital literacy.**
  - **LIMBS** is a **web-based application for monitoring cases** involving the central government of India, in a more effective and transparent manner.
    - It is an initiative of the **Department of Legal Affairs (DoLA), Ministry of Law and Justice.**
- **Capacity Building:**
  - There is a need to introduce training programmes, **strengthen paralegal services within communities**, and introduce **uniform training standards** based on practical skills through demonstrations and simulations for all ODR professionals throughout the country.
  - The Government initiative **Study Webs of Active-Learning for Young Aspiring Minds (SWAYAM)** can be harnessed for ODR courses and ODR training can be provided by this platform.
- **Suitable Regulation:**
  - It is necessary that the regulatory model adopted by India **protect the rights of the end users** while ensuring that **over-regulation does not stifle innovation.** Including, Amendments in the existing legislations to incorporate ODR to introduce **mandatory pre litigation online mediation for certain classes of cases.**
  - Recently, a group of ministers was constituted to evaluate the establishment of a **ODR-enabled GST Appellate Tribunal.**
    - It will function as an independent body **Section 111 of the Central Goods and Service Tax Act, 2017** clarifies that the **GST tribunal will have the power to regulate its own procedure.**
- **Mainstream E-stamping:**
  - As **ODR often deals with inter-state disputes where disputing parties are residing in different jurisdictions**, there is a need to harmonise stamp-duty and procedural requirements across different States.
  - **Allow online notarisation:**

- **Online notarisation through secure e-signature and electronic notary seal** can address this challenge and provide an online mode for authentication and validation.
- **Digital lockers can be provided to the notaries** to store and maintain all the necessary records for the documents notarised through online notarisation.
- **Block-Chain Technology:**
  - It can be leveraged for **protection of e-evidence from being tampered** with, thereby providing tamper-proof storage of evidence.
- **Government Participation:**
  - Government and **Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs)** are amongst the biggest litigants in India.
    - Adoption of ODR to **resolve inter and intra Governmental disputes** would be a key step in boosting confidence in the process.
    - This will **automatically address the issue of trust in ODR processes and outcomes.**

#### What are the Other ODR Systems across the Globe?

- **United Kingdom:**
  - In the United Kingdom, **CASEMAN**, a part of the local county court management system, performs myriad tasks, like creating initial court records for registration of cases, issuing summons and monitoring them, storing electronic copies of evidence, generating cause-lists, updating records, maintaining court diary, and automatically generating other relevant documents and records.
- **Australia:**
  - In the Australian Federal Court, documents are filed electronically on the **e Lodgment system**, at any time, from anywhere. They are then sealed, or stamped, electronically.
- **Canada:**
  - Canada has introduced its online **Civil Resolution Tribunal (CRT)** which deals with small claims disputes, as well as property issues of any amount in the province of British Columbia.
- **Rwanda:**
  - Rwanda is using the **Electronic Filing System (EFS)** to move towards paperless court services.



## Fast-Moving Consumer Goods Sector in India

This editorial is based on “Packaged goods marketing in rural pockets gets a facelift and a digital push” which was published in The Mint on 07/07/2022. It talks about the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods Sector and challenges related to it.

**Tags:** Indian Economy, GS Paper - 3, Growth & Development, Food Processing

**Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG)** can be defined as packaged goods that are consumed or sold at regular and small intervals. **Household and personal care products accounts for 50% of the sales** in the FMCG industry, **healthcare accounts for 31-32%** and **food and beverage accounts for the remaining 18-19%**.

FMCG is the **fourth largest sector in the Indian economy**. It provides employment to around 3 million people accounting for approximately **5% of the total factory Employment in India**. It is an important contributor to India’s **GDP growth**. Growth in the country’s FMCG sector is being fuelled by improving scenarios in both demand as well as supply side.

As per reports by **CRISIL**, the **FMCG sector is set for double-digit growth in 2022 at 10-12 percent**. Let us understand the future of FMCG industries in India and related challenges.

### What are the Driving Factors Responsible for the Growth of the FMCG Sector ?

#### ➤ Digitisation:

- In a country where **80% of sales still occur from local Kirana stores**, it becomes critical to make sure that orders from such channels remain steady. **That’s what digitisation has ensured over the past couple of years** during multiple waves of the **coronavirus pandemic**.
  - **E-commerce** share of total FMCG sales is expected to **increase 11% by 2030**.
- FMCG companies are **bringing together suppliers, inventory management, and distributor management within one ecosystem with the help of digital capabilities**.
  - Technologies like **Artificial intelligence, Big Data and Predictive Analysis** are being increasingly used by FMCG companies to predict customer behaviour accurately, helping them to understand what actually interests their customers.

- Online grocery stores and online retail stores like **Grofers, Flipkart, and Amazon** are making **FMCG products more readily available**.
- **Digital payments** like **E-wallet and UPI** are making the **transactions smoother and more convenient**.
- The number of **online users in India is expected to cross 850 million by 2025**.

#### ➤ Increased Initiatives and Investments by the Government:

- The FMCG sector in India witnessed a robust **Foreign Direct investment (FDI) inflow of 18.19 billion dollars in 2020**.
  - **Goods and Service Tax (GST)**: GST has been quite favourable for FMCG companies. It brought the Indian Market under the same umbrella.
    - With the implementation of Goods and Services Tax, **the GST council has reduced the tax rates down to 5%** on most of the **processed food items, increasing the consumption of food products**.
  - Along with that, the **Production Linked Incentive (PLI)** scheme proposed in November 2020 turned out to be extremely beneficial for the sector to **boost manufacturing capacity and exports**.
  - The FMCG sector will also gain support from **growth from the Inland Waterways Authority of India**.

#### ➤ Growing Rural Market:

- The **Retail market in rural India and rise in rural consumption is also responsible for driving the FMCG market**.
  - The **contribution** of the Retail market in rural India is **36% in the overall FMCG spending**.

#### ➤ Growing Youth Population:

- Drift in the youth population in India is **changing consumption trends**, inclining more towards ready-to-eat food culture.
  - India has **more than 50% of its population below the age of 25** and **more than 65% below the age of 35**.
  - The **Processed Food Market of India** is projected to reach **470 billion USD by the year 2025**, from the 263 billion USD in 2020-21.

#### ➤ New Product in the Market:

- The FMCG sector raises product-launch capacity of different industries.

- In November 2021, **Tru Nativ**, a smart nutrition FMCG company, **launched India's first family friend natural protein- 'Everyday Protein'** to defeat India's macronutrient deficiencies by providing **natural food fortification solutions to customers**.
- **Beco**, a startup in India, is **revolutionising the FMCG market** with low-cost, **environmentally friendly consumer goods**.

### **What are the Challenges Associated with the FMCG Sector?**

- **High Inflation:**
  - The domestic FMCG industry is **hit hard by inflation levels** leading to **successive price hikes as well as impacting volumes**.
  - The **rural markets continued to witness a slower growth compared to the urban markets during the April-June, 2022**.
  - **Impacts:**
    - Increase in crude oil price means that crude oil-linked intermediates are likely to be expensive, affecting input costs for fabric and personal care products.
    - Higher fuel prices will add to freight costs. Packaging costs will also go up.
- **Counterfeiting:**
  - Distribution centres, retail outlets, and third party logistics providers are the most vulnerable to infiltration of counterfeit products.
    - **Counterfeit products** are fakes or unauthorised replicas of the real product.
- **Poor Supply Chain Infrastructure:**
  - Lack of storage and transport facilities coupled with rising costs of raw materials and energy has been a major challenge for the Indian FMCG market.
    - Growth of many categories of FMCG have been severely constrained by the lack of cold chain infrastructure in the Indian market landscape.
      - A **Cold Chain Infrastructure** includes **temperature-controlled storage space, and transportation**, trained operational, and servicing personnel with efficient management procedures.
- **Large Geographical Expanse:**
  - Large states in India such as Madhya Pradesh present a problem of large distances between two adjacent markets.

- This has a **crippling effect on the viability of channel partners**, which are serving the isolated markets.

### **What should be Our Approach Moving Forward?**

- **Efficient Supply Chain Management:**
  - To prevent losses from the mismanagement of supply chain, FMCG companies in India have to ensure that they **exercise greater control over their distribution channel and not just leave it to the market forces**.
- **Prevention of Counterfeiting:**
  - Indian FMCG companies can **collaborate with the retail industry** to offer greater visibility and traceability.
    - Measures such as **regular spot checks, proper monitoring system, collaboration with local and national law enforcement agencies** can be taken to curb counterfeiting.
- **Cyber-Security:**
  - Digitalisation in the consumer market is **becoming a threat to privacy**. The FMCG sector should adopt Cybersecurity measures to secure data and ensure consumer safety with a **healthy National CyberSpace**.
- **Reducing Transportation Costs:**
  - Manufacturing Industries collaborating with the third-party logistics partner can help in reducing the excess shipping cost.
- **Increasing Production Capacity:**
  - **Specialisation of labour** and more **integrated technology** boost production volumes.
    - Emphasis should be given on **skill development** to produce a skilled efficient labour workforce.
      - In November 2021, **Flipkart signed an MoU with the Ministry of Rural Development of the Government of India (MoRD)** for their ambitious **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana - National Rural Livelihood Mission (DAY-NRLM)** programme to **empower local businesses** and **Self-Help Groups (SHGs)** by **bringing them into the e-commerce fold**.
    - With **proper utilisation of machinery**, production cost per unit can be reduced that will in result boost the purchasing power of consumers.





## Digital Speech in India

This editorial is based on “*Takedown Transparency*” which was published in *The Indian Express* on 07/07/2022. It talks about Digital India, Freedom of Speech and challenges in Information Technology Rules.

**Tags:** Governance, GS Paper 2, Fundamental Rights, Judgments & Cases, Dispute Redressal Mechanisms, Parliament, Government Policies & Interventions, Transparency & Accountability

As the Government of India celebrates eight years of the **Digital India** programme, Twitter has filed a writ petition in the Karnataka High Court against its order to block tweets and handles of users.

Over the last decade there has been a **ten-fold increase in broadband connectivity** to 600 million broadband subscribers in India.

But, we need to assess “**Is mere connectivity enough to fulfil the democratic promises of the Constitution?**”.

In this context, let’s understand Twitter’s case, IT Rules and related spheres.

### What Do We Need to Know About the Issue?

- Twitter has legally challenged the government **against its directions to block tweets and even handles** issued by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology under **Section 69A of the Information Technology Act, 2000**.
- There are issues with its own transparency mechanisms in content moderation decisions.
  - However, It has been prompted to go to court to protect the integrity of its platform rather than in arrogant defiance against the laws of India.
- As per parliamentary data, the number of such orders has risen from 471 in 2014 to 9,849 in 2020 representing a 1991% increase.
  - Beyond mere numbers, a comprehensive qualitative assessment of such orders is prevented by official secrecy.
  - The need for disclosure emerges directly from a joint reading of the **Shreya Singhal and Anuradha Bhasin judgments**.
- **Government and Accounts Takedown:**
  - Recent disclosures in the last week of June 2022 revealed that Twitter withheld a number of accounts and tweets in India.
  - Many of these belonged to politicians, journalists, activists and even a global think tank such as Freedom House.
  - Similar situations witnessed in February and April 2021, when takedown orders were reportedly

issued for content about the **farmers’ protests** and criticism of the Union government’s response to the **second wave of Covid-19**, respectively.

### How does the Government Regulate Digital Speech?

#### ➤ Information Technology Act, 2021:

##### ○ About:

##### ● Mandates Social Media to Exercise Greater Diligence:

- IT Rules (2021) mandate social media platforms to exercise greater diligence with respect to the content on their platforms.

##### ● Establish a Grievance Officer:

- They are required to establish a grievance redressal mechanism and remove unlawful and unfitting content within stipulated time frames.
- The grievance officer of the platform’s redressal mechanism is responsible for receiving and resolving complaints of the users.

##### ○ Draft Amendments Proposed:

##### ● Grievance Appellate Committee:

- It proposed an additional level of oversight, namely, the **‘Grievance Appellate Committee’**, functioning over and above the intermediary’s grievance redressal officer.
- Broadly, in case a user is not satisfied with the resolution provided by the intermediary, she/he can appeal against the decision at the appellate rather than going directly to court.
- However, this did not take away the user’s right to appeal in any other court.

#### ➤ Section 66A of IT Act 2000:

- **Section 69A** empowered police to make arrests over what policemen, in terms of their subjective discretion, could construe as “**offensive**” or “**menacing**” or for the purposes of **causing annoyance, inconvenience, etc.**
- It prescribed the punishment for **sending messages through a computer or any other communication device** like a mobile phone or a tablet, and a conviction **could fetch a maximum of three years in jail**.
- The **court struck down Section 66A as unconstitutional** in 2015 . However, it is **still being used in several instances**.

➤ **Section 69A of IT Act 2000:**

- It confers on the **Central and State governments the power** to issue directions “to intercept, monitor or decrypt any information generated, transmitted, received or stored in any computer resource”.
- **The grounds on which these powers may be exercised are:**
  - In the interest of the **sovereignty** or integrity of India, defence of India, the security of the state.
  - Friendly relations with foreign states.
  - Public order, or for preventing incitement to the commission of any cognizable offence relating to these.
  - For investigating any offence.
- Section 69A enables the Centre to ask any agency of the government, or any intermediary, to block access to the public of any information generated, transmitted, received or stored or hosted on any computer resource.
  - Any such request for blocking access must be based on reasons given in writing.

***What are the Challenges in Government’s Regulations?***

➤ **Information Technology Act:**

- **Made Government the Arbiter to Suppress Speech:**
  - This would have made the government the arbiter of permissible speech on the internet and incentivised social media platforms to suppress any speech that may not be palatable to the government.
  - It will empower the government to censor speech on grounds not stated under Section 69A of the IT Act, 2000 or **Article 19(2)** of the Constitution.
- **Obligation on Social Media to Resolve Complaints:**
  - The draft put forth the obligation that all social media intermediaries resolve all complaints within 72 hours of reporting.
  - Intermediaries are known to invest sizable time in thoroughly scrutinising and determining the content and user accounts they are called to censor.
  - The shortened timelines therefore invited fears of a hastier approach to get things done.

➤ **Section 66A:**

○ **Based on Undefined Actions:**

- The court observed that the weakness of Section 66A lay in the fact that it had created an **offence on the basis of undefined actions**: such as causing “inconvenience, danger, obstruction and insult”, which do not fall among the exceptions granted under **Article 19** of the Constitution, which guarantees the freedom of speech.

○ **No Procedural Safeguards:**

- In addition, the court had noted that Section 66A **did not have procedural safeguards** like other sections of the law with similar aims, such as the need to obtain the concurrence of the Centre before action can be taken.
- Local authorities could proceed autonomously, literally on the whim of their political masters.

○ **Against the Fundamental Rights:**

- Section 66A was contrary to both Articles 19 (free speech) and **21 (right to life)** of the Constitution.
- Right to know is the species of the right to speech and expression provided by the **Article 19(1) (a)** of the constitution of India.

***What should be Our***

***Approach Moving Forward?***

- Making platforms share more information could prove counterproductive in a country where the citizens still do not have a data privacy law to guard themselves against excesses committed by any party.
  - In this context, there is a need to expedite the passing of the **personal data protection bill, 2019**.
- After that, if regulation is still deemed to be necessary, then it must be implemented through legislation that is debated in **Parliament** instead of relying upon executive rule-making powers under **Section 69A of the IT Act**.
- **Deliberating with Stakeholders:** There are indeed many problems with the new rules, but the major issue was that these were introduced without much public consultation.
  - The solution to ongoing criticism about these rules is to start afresh with the publication of a white paper.



## Urban Poverty

This editorial is based on “Welfare of the urban poor cannot be an afterthought in economic growth plans” which was published in The Indian Express on 08/07/2022. It talks about urban poverty and short to medium term solutions.

**Tags:** Social Justice, GS Paper - 2, Poverty, Poverty and Developmental Issues, Issues Relating to Poverty & Hunger, Inclusive Growth, Government Policies & Interventions

India has been among the fastest growing economies in the world for close to two decades. In this economic development of India, its cities have a major role to play. Cities are India’s economic power houses and a magnet for a large rural population seeking a better life.

With development of the manufacturing and services sector, the population pressure on cities has escalated. According to a survey by the UN State of the World Population report in 2007, by 2030, 40.76% of India’s population is expected to reside in urban areas.

Urban poverty is a form of poverty that is particularly visible in megacities, characterised by poor living circumstances and income, as well as a lack of essential utilities for a decent standard of life.

Urban poverty in India is unique, particularly in the way that it follows certain patterns of growth. Though the proportion of urban poor has reportedly declined over the past decades, the numbers keep adding up.

Let us understand the extent of Urban Poverty in India and related challenges.

### What are the Reasons Behind Urban Poverty?

- **Large Scale of Rural-Urban Migration:**
  - The urban poor is largely the overflow of the rural poor who migrate to urban areas in search of alternative employment and livelihood.
    - Lack of infrastructure in rural areas (push factor), rapid industrialisation in urban areas (pull factor) leading to migration due to asymmetrical development.
- **Lack of Skills:**
  - Most of the poor are not able to participate in the emerging employment opportunities in different sectors of the urban economy as they do not have the necessary knowledge and skills to do so.
    - It has led to generations of unskilled or semi-skilled people who find it difficult to find decent paying jobs.
- **Indebtedness:**
  - Unemployment or underemployment and the casual and intermittent nature of work in urban

areas lead to indebtedness, that in turn, reinforces poverty.

- **Unemployment** refers to the economic situation in which an individual who is actively searching for employment is unable to find work.
- **Underemployment** is a situation where there is a mismatch between the employment opportunities and the skills and education level of the employees.

### ➤ Inflation:

- A steep rise in the price of food grains and other essential goods further intensifies the hardship and deprivation of lower-income groups in urban areas.

### What are the Challenges faced by Urban Poor?

#### ➤ Overcrowding:

- Millions of people migrate to the cities to take up informal jobs such as domestic help, driving cars for middle-class people, taxi driving, construction site work, etc.
  - This creates overcrowding in the already packed urban infrastructure.

#### ➤ Water and Sanitation:

- The COVID-19 pandemic has revealed the poor sanitation standards of slum areas. Washing hands and observing physical distancing was impossible to follow in slums.
  - Nearly 21.8 percent of slum households in Delhi depend on shared water sources such as public taps.

#### ➤ Health Care:

- The low income of these communities means that standard medical help is often unaffordable.
  - Therefore, on occasions when it rains or the neighbourhood is flooded, their settlements become breeding grounds for various parasites and infections and the cycle repeats itself.

#### ➤ Education:

- For children living in slums, a host of issues affect their education.
  - Even if some children of slum households get enrolled in a school, they have to drop out to support their family financially and are deprived of education.

#### ➤ Risk of Forceful Eviction:

- Lack of affordable housing leaves the people address-less on paper. They settle wherever they can, but as more people join, a whole community

of undocumented settlers emerges that creates a risk of forceful eviction.

- **Forced eviction** is defined as the **permanent or temporary removal against the will** of individuals, families and/or communities **from the homes and/or land which they occupy**.

### **How can the Condition of Urban Poor be Improved?**

#### ➤ **Proper Social Security:**

- **Most relief funds and benefits do not reach slum dwellers**, mainly because these **settlements are not officially recognised by the government**.
- An **absence of proper social security measures for informal workers** has come to the fore and has a **huge impact on urban poverty**. Thus, **new approaches to urban planning and effective governance** are the need of the hour.
- A mirror scheme of **MNREGA** can be initiated in Urban areas as well for providing employment benefit to Urban slum population.

#### ➤ **Better Access to Basic Amenities:**

- Providing Basic amenities such as Clean Water, Sanitation and Electricity to the slum areas should be at priority.
- Along with rehabilitating and upgrading slums, there is a need to establish **identity markers based on the National Food Security Act List** as well as record the deprived households without access who may have been left out of this list.

#### ➤ **Community Connect Campaigns:**

- Special Community Connect Campaigns to **ensure access to social welfare schemes should be started**.
- Such campaigns should cover schemes related to **LPG connection, bank accounts, life and accident insurance and Employees State Insurance facilities**, and healthcare programmes like **Ayushman Bharat and Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana (PMJAY)**.
  - Through a **participatory identification of the poor by a community connect process**, it should be **possible to delete the non-entitled beneficiaries of NFSA as well**.

#### ➤ **Basti-level Self-Help Groups:**

- Complete coverage of deprived households in urban areas by **SHGs** should be attempted in a **mission mode**.
  - This process should be **accompanied by access to credit for diversification of livelihoods**.

- Loans for street vendors under **Svanidhi Scheme** is a good step in that direction.

- Creating **basti-level women's collectives** will address several difficult challenges.

#### ➤ **Migration Support Centres:**

- The arrival process of migrants to cities in search of work has to be made less traumatic. For this **Migration Support Centres** can be established.
- The expansion of rental housing and property titles to settlers who fulfil the basic requirements will ease access to credit.
  - Support for the destitute and the homeless must be made a priority.

#### ➤ **Enforcing Minimum Wages:**

- Workers engaged in the unorganised sector do not have the benefit of several laws such as the **Minimum Wages Act or the Factories Act**.
- Labour contractors very often disburse lower than the minimum wages. There is a need to **enforce uniform minimum wages throughout the country's unorganised sector as well**.

#### **What are the Recent Government Initiatives for Improving Conditions of Urban Poor?**

- **Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana**
- **Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation**
- **Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana (National Urban Livelihoods Mission)**
- **Jal Jeevan Mission Urban**
- **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (Self-Reliant India)**
- **PM- Awas Yojana- Urban.**



## **Energy Poverty**

*This editorial is based on "The clock is ticking on the issue of energy poverty" which was published in The Indian Express on 08/07/2022. It talks about energy poverty and related issues.*

**Tags:** Indian Economy, GS Paper - 3, Solar Energy, Renewable Energy, Growth & Development, Energy Security

The **World Economic Forum** defined **Energy Poverty** as the **lack of access to sustainable modern energy services and products**. It can be found in all conditions where there is a **lack of adequate, affordable, reliable, quality, safe and environmentally sound energy services** to support development.

Despite the fact **Energy is the Engine of Civilization**, nowadays access to adequate and affordable sources is not equally distributed on the planet. In **South Asia alone, over 1 billion people** are struggling with extremely limited access to energy.

**Human development** and energy use are intrinsically linked. Energy is needed to fulfil basic human needs, like **clean air, health, food and water, education and human rights**; and it is **fundamental to the development of every economic sector** but energy costs are sky-high due to **geopolitical tensions** across the globe.

**Energy Scarcity in the Shadow of Plenty**, despite the **Liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) and the Light-emitting diode (LED) revolutions in India**, access to energy is found to be limited among Indian households, especially among the rural households. Let us understand Energy Poverty in the context of India and alternative sources of energy.

### **What are the Causes of Energy Poverty in India?**

- **Lack of Energy Infrastructure:**
  - Because of the **lack of modern energy infrastructure like power plants, transmission lines, underground pipelines** to deliver energy resources such as natural gas, petroleum to rural areas leads to energy poverty.
    - They have heavily relied on traditional biomass such as wood fuel, charcoal, burning crop residue and wood pellets.
    - Nigeria, the largest **oil-producing country** in Africa, is second only to India in the number of people living without electricity.
      - **Without infrastructure** for gathering or delivering natural gas much of the **natural gas produced in oil fields of Nigeria is flared off.**
- **Lack of Affordability:**
  - Households at lower levels of income and development tend to be at the bottom of the energy ladder, **using fuel that is cheap and locally available but not very clean nor efficient.**
- **Inefficiency of Energy:**
  - **Disproportionately high loss of useful energy during energy conversions** is a prime factor of Energy Poverty.
    - **Energy poverty rates tend to drop by 0.21% when energy efficiency index scores increase by 1 point**, thus showing the **direct effect of energy efficiency in energy poverty.**
- **Geopolitical Tension:**
  - Geopolitical instability results into disturbance in global energy supply chain,

- **India's oil import bill soared to 119 billion dollars** in the fiscal year that ended on March 31, 2022 as **energy prices exploded after the Ukraine conflict.**

### **How is Energy Poverty Linked with Income Poverty in India?**

- Energy poverty is regarded as one of the aspects of **income poverty.**
  - Provision of energy services like electricity facilitate industrial and agricultural growth in the country.
  - **Such growth and development enhance the livelihood opportunities** in terms of greater level of employment and entrepreneurial opportunities.
  - This shall further translate into higher income of the households and subsequent reduction in poverty levels.
- The poor households, both urban and rural, spend a larger share of their total expenditure on acquiring energy fuels as compared to households above the poverty line.
  - In view of economic development, it becomes important for the households to have access to clean energy fuels on a regular basis.

### **What are the Impacts of Energy Poverty in India?**

- **Vicious Labyrinth:**
  - **Insufficient energy usually translates into the impossibility to develop agriculture and manufacturing** thus trapping the energy poverty affected population trapped in a vicious circle, **they cannot afford the energy that can drive them out of poverty.**
- **Health Hazard:**
  - Burning of traditional energy fuels such as wood, dung, crop residue causes indoor air pollution which causes considerable damage to human health.
    - It is estimated that **1 of every 4 of the annual global premature deaths caused by Household Air Pollution (HAP) occur in India.**
    - Out of whom **90 percent are women, as they work in close proximity to these fuels in poorly ventilated kitchens.**
- **Energy Crisis:**
  - **Escalation in energy demand**, continued dependence on fossil-based fuels for energy generation and transportation is **not only depleting natural resources**, but is **resulting in a steady increase of carbon dioxide emissions** which is responsible for **increasing average global temperatures.**

- Concentration levels of **greenhouse gases** are rising steadily.

### **What Measures can be Adopted to Curb Energy Poverty?**

- **Global Intergovernmental Organisation:**
  - Powerful platforms like the **G-20** and the **BRICS** need to focus more on energy access, poverty and security. Global intergovernmental organisation should be established **dedicated to just energy transition, energy access and justice and energy and climate.**
- **Creation of Database for Effective Policy Making:**
  - To facilitate policy makers and other relevant stakeholders it is important to collect data of **intra household and collective differences** to clearly establish the relationship between energy, income and gender disparity and bridge the energy gap between different sections of society.
- **Shifting the Focus Towards Renewable Energy Sources:**
  - Energy generated from renewable sources (**solar energy, biogas** etc) will be cleaner, greener and more sustainable.
    - Projects involving renewable sources can also make a **positive contribution to low-carbon development strategies** and will generate **employment opportunities** for the working population of the country.
- **Robust Institutional Mechanism:**
  - **Linkage between different sectors such as the energy sector, manufacturing sector, health sector, and the finance sector** is required to provide energy efficient machinery and subsidies to the households in India.
    - There is a **need for institutions in different sectors to come together and offer services as bundled packages for alleviating energy poverty.**
- **Translating Goals into Implementable Action:**
  - **Awareness Campaign:**
    - Awareness campaigns related to subsidies and tutorials related to advances in technology must be organised at the lowest level to improve awareness towards efficient energy consumption.
  - **Monitoring:**
    - There is a need to set up a monitoring mechanism to **oversee implementation of policies in true spirit.**

### **What are the Initiatives Shaping India's Energy Transition?**

- **Electrification:**
  - **Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (SAUBHAGYA)**
  - **Green Energy Corridor (GEC)**
  - **National Smart Grid Mission (NSGM) and Smart Meter National Programme**
- **Renewable Energy:**
  - **National Solar Mission (NSM)**
  - **National Biofuels Policy and SATAT**
  - **Small Hydro Power (SHP)**
  - **National Hydrogen Energy Mission (NHEM)**
  - **Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme**
- **Energy Efficiency:**
  - **Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA)**
- **Clean Cooking:**
  - **Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY)**
- **Industrial Decarbonisation:**
  - **Perform, Achieve and Trade (PAT)**
- **Sustainable Transport:**
  - **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles (FAME)**
- **Climate Smart Cities:**
  - **Smart City Mission (SCM)**
- **Global Initiatives:**
  - **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**
  - **Clean Energy Ministerial (CEM)**
  - **Mission Innovation (MI)**



## **Sri Lanka's Crisis**

*This editorial is based on "Sri Lanka uprising: A new social contract" which was published in The Indian Express on 11/07/2022. It talks about the Sri Lanka Crisis and related issues.*

**Tags:** International Relations, GS Paper - 2, Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests, India and its Neighbourhood

**Political parties in Sri Lanka are scrambling to form an all-party government, a day after President Gotabaya Rajapaksa and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe pledged to resign in the wake of historic citizens' protest.**

**The anti-government sentiment across various parts of Sri Lanka has triggered a state of political instability.**

It is fueled by the anti-government **protests** and demonstrations by the public **due to the economic crisis in the country.**

The Sri Lankan economy has been facing a crisis owing to a serious **Balance of Payments (BoP) problem.** Its **foreign exchange reserves are depleting rapidly** and it is becoming increasingly **difficult for the country to import essential consumption goods.**

The **Sri Lankan rupee has lost more than 80% of its value,** food costs have skyrocketed by over 50% and **tourism- one of the country's main revenue sources has significantly diminished due to the Covid-19 pandemic.**

Let us understand what led to political and economic instability in Sri Lanka and its impacts.

### What Led to the Sri Lankan Crisis?

#### ➤ Background:

- When Sri Lanka emerged from a **26-year long civil war in 2009,** its post-war GDP growth was reasonably high at 8-9% per annum till 2012.
- However, its **average GDP growth rate almost halved after 2013** as global commodity prices fell, exports slowed down and imports rose.
- Sri Lanka's budget deficits were high during the war and the global financial crisis of 2008 drained its forex reserves which led to the country **borrowing a 2.6 billion dollars loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in 2009.**
  - It again approached the IMF in 2016 for another **USD 1.5 billion loan,** however the conditionalities of the IMF further deteriorated Sri Lanka's economic health.

#### ➤ Sri Lanka's Fertiliser Ban:

- In 2021, all fertiliser imports were completely banned and it was declared that Sri Lanka would become a 100% organic farming nation overnight.
- This overnight shift to organic fertilisers heavily impacted food production.
- Consequently, the Sri Lankan President declared an economic emergency to contain rising food prices, a **depreciating currency,** and rapidly depleting forex reserves.
  - The lack of foreign currency, coupled with the overnight ban on chemical fertilisers and pesticides, has sent food prices soaring.

#### ➤ Recent Economic Shocks:

- The **Easter bomb blasts of April 2019** in churches in Colombo resulting in 253 casualties, consequently, **dropped the number of tourists sharply leading to a decline in foreign exchange reserves.**

- The newly led government by Gotabaya Rajapaksa in 2019 promised lower tax rates and wide-ranging SoPs for farmers during their campaign.
  - The quick implementation of these promises further exacerbated the problem.

- The **Covid-19 pandemic in 2020** impacted exports of tea, rubber, spices, garments and the tourism sector.

- **China's Debt Trap Policy** played a significant role in **economic instability in Sri Lanka.**

- The Crisis in Sri Lanka is triggered due to a **shortage of foreign exchange (forex) reserves,** which have **dropped by 70% over the last two years to just USD 2 billion by the end of February 2022.**
  - Meanwhile, the country has foreign debt obligations of about USD 7 billion in 2022.

#### ➤ Current Political Vacuum:

- **Prime Minister Wickremesinghe and President Gotabaya Rajapaksa signalled the willingness to resign** making way for an **all-party government to take over.**

### How is the Crisis in Sri Lanka Impacting India?

#### ➤ Challenges:

##### ○ Economic:

- **Sri Lanka's share in India's total exports has declined** from 2.16% in FY15 to just 1.3 per cent in FY22.
  - **Automotive firms like Tata Motors and TVS Motors have stopped exports** of vehicle kits to Sri Lanka and halted production at their Sri Lankan assembly units due to its **unstable forex reserves and fuel shortages.**

##### ○ Refugee:

- Whenever a political or social crisis has occurred in Sri Lanka, **India has witnessed a large influx of ethnic Tamil community refugees** from the **Sinhala Land to India through the Palk strait and Gulf of Munnar.**
  - However, **India may find it difficult to handle such an influx and needs a robust policy in place to handle the crisis.**
    - ◆ The state of **Tamil Nadu** has already started feeling the impact of the crisis with the reported **arrival of 16 persons from Sri Lanka through illegal means.**

#### ➤ Opportunities:

##### ○ Tea Market:

- Amid the **sudden halt of tea supply by Sri Lanka to the global tea market,** India is keen to plug the supply gaps.

- **India could strengthen its footprint in Iran and as well as new markets such as Turkey, Iraq.**
  - Big Sri Lankan tea importers from Iran, Turkey, Iraq and Russia are reportedly visiting India for tea plantations in Assam and Kolkata.
  - As a result, at recent Kolkata auctions, the **average price for orthodox leaf saw an increase of up to 41 per cent** compared to corresponding sales last year.
- **Apparel (Clothing) Market:**
  - Many apparel orders from the United Kingdom, European Union, and Latin American countries are now being diverted to India.
    - Several orders have been given to companies in Tirupur, the hub of the textile industry in Tamilnadu.

### **Why Helping Sri Lanka is in India's Interests?**

- Sri Lanka has been a strategically important partner for India. India can make use of this opportunity to **balance its diplomatic ties with Sri Lanka, which have been distant owing to Sri Lanka's proximity with China.**
  - As the disagreement between Sri Lanka and China intensified on the fertiliser issue, India's fertiliser delivery to Sri Lanka on the latter's request is seen as a **positive development in the bilateral relations.**
- Extending diplomatic ties with Sri Lanka will **ease India's effort to keep the Sri Lankan archipelago out of China's 'string of pearls' game** in the Indo-Pacific.
  - To the extent India can extend help to alleviate the hardships of Sri Lankans, it should be done with due care **keeping in mind that the optics of its aid matters too.**

### **How can Sri Lanka overcome the Crisis?**

- **Implementing Democracy in True Spirit:**
  - There is a need for strong political consensus in Sri Lanka for better crisis-management. **Militarisation of Administration can be reduced.**
    - Considerations are needed to help the poor and vulnerable get back on their feet and prevent long-term scarring.
    - The steps include an **increase in agricultural productivity, increased job opportunities** in non-farming sectors, **better implementation of reforms** and **reviving the tourism sector.**
- **Support from India:**
  - India, which has followed the **"Neighbourhood First policy"** to cement bonds with its neighbours,

can walk that extra mile to help Sri Lanka out of the current crisis and help Sri Lanka towards realising its potential, to reap the rewards of a stable, friendly neighbourhood.

- **Indian businesses can build supply chains that intertwine the Indian and Sri Lankan economies** in goods and services ranging from essential goods to Information technology services.
  - Since mid-March, over **270,000 metric tonnes of diesel and petrol have been delivered to Sri Lanka.**
  - In addition, around 40,000 tonnes of rice have been supplied under the recently extended USD 1 billion credit facility.
- **India can charter the trajectory of Sri Lankan presence in Multilateral forums** like **G20** that will provide Sri Lanka a base of assistance from Developed Nations.

### ➤ **Bailout from International Monetary Fund:**

- **Sri Lanka has approached the IMF for the bailout.** The IMF can support Sri Lanka's efforts to overcome the current economic crisis.
  - The IMF can **restore macroeconomic stability and debt sustainability**, while **protecting the poor and vulnerable, safeguarding financial stability**, and **stepping up structural reforms to address corruption vulnerabilities** and unlock Sri Lanka's growth potential.

### ➤ **Prospects of Circular Economy:**

- With reference to economic instability in Sri Lanka, the dependence on imports can be minimised by the **circular economy**, it will offer a sustainable alternative to aid a **recovery.**



## **I2U2- The West Quad**

*This editorial is based on "India's new West Asia approach is a welcome break with past diffidence" which was published in The Indian Express on 12/07/2022. It talks about I2U2 grouping and related India's participation in the I2U2 summit.*

**Tags:** International Relations, GS Paper - 2, Groupings & Agreements Involving India and/or Affecting India's Interests, Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests

**I2U2** is the new grouping formed by four nations- **India, Israel, UAE, and the US.** It was given the name **International Forum for Economic Cooperation.**



It is focused on expanding economic and political cooperation in the Middle East and Asia, including through trade, combating climate change, energy cooperation, and coordination on other vital shared interests. The four-nation framework would foster support and cooperation in various domains like infrastructure, technology and maritime security.

The first virtual summit of I2U2 will focus heavily on the global food and energy crisis resulting from the conflict in Ukraine.

### What is the Background of I2U2 Grouping?

#### ➤ Abraham Accords:

- In September, 2020, Israel, UAE and Bahrain signed **Abraham Accords** brokered by the United States which has subsequently led to normalising of relations between Israel and a number of Arab Gulf countries.
  - **I2U2 was initially formed in October, 2021** following the Abraham Accords, to deal with issues concerning maritime security, infrastructure and transport.
    - The aim was to harness the unique array of capabilities, knowledge and experience of all four nations which ultimately lead to the formation of I2U2.

### What can be the Prime Areas of Cooperation of I2U2?

#### ➤ Security:

- This will help the countries in exploring security cooperation among the four nations within the framework of these new groupings.
  - **India already has a robust bilateral security cooperation with Israel, the US and the UAE.**

#### ➤ Technology:

- Each of these countries is a technological hub. **Biotechnology** is prominent in each of these countries as well.
- **Israel is called a Startup Nation already.** India has been also developing a widening **startup ecosystem** of its own.
- UAE also recognises that the future of the world economy is not going to be built around just hydrocarbons, oil and gas. It needs to work in the technology sector too.
  - In May this year, a project was commissioned in which **Ecoppia, an Israeli company, would manufacture robotic solar cleaning technology in India, meant for a project in the UAE.**

#### ➤ Food Security:

- Joint efforts by these four countries become crucial to tackle and reduce the consequences of **food security** and safety.
  - According to the 2020 report by **'The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World,'** around **14 percent of India's total population is undernourished.**

#### ➤ Trade and Connectivity:

- I2U2 can **revitalise and re-energise the system of trade and commerce** among the four countries.
  - After the US, **UAE is the second-largest export destination of India.**
- **Connectivity:**
  - **I2U2 will boost India's project along with UAE and Saudi Arabia** to build a connectivity corridor that runs from India to the Arabian gulf across the Arabian peninsula to Israel, Jordan and from there to the European Union.
    - If this corridor is completed then **India will be able to cut the cost of moving a container significantly (for instance from Mumbai to Greece by over 40%).**

### What is the Significance of I2U2 for India?

#### ➤ India's West-Asian Policies:

- Until now, India's West Asian policies have largely insisted on keeping its bilateral relationships separate from each other.
  - **This is the first step to bring those relationships with UAE and Israel together and merge them.**
  - **Advantage from Abraham Accords:**
    - India will get advantage of the Abraham Accords to **deepen engagement with Israel without risking its ties with the UAE and the other Arab states.**

#### ➤ Benefit Market:

- India is a **massive consumer market.** It's a frontline producer of **high-tech and highly sought-after goods** as well that will attract investors from West Asia.

#### ➤ Thrust to Geopolitical Presence:

- **I2U2 will boost India's geopolitical presence** especially in West Asia and India will strategically and economically establish itself as a World player.

#### ➤ Indian Diaspora and Remittances:

- There are around 8 to 9 million Indians in West Asia, 2.5 million in the United Arab Emirates alone. **They are India's goodwill ambassadors.**

- Indian communities in West Asia have a significant impact upon the Indian economy, through inward remittances. **Further cooperation with West Asian countries through I2U2 will enhance inward remittance.**
  - According to a **UN report on international migration**, in 2017, inward remittances from the Gulf into India were 38 billion U.S. dollars.

### What are the Challenges Associated with I2U2?

- **Challenges for Israel:**
  - As far as the quest for peace and resolution of the Arab-Israeli problem is concerned, the Abraham Accords are a major breakthrough.
    - However, the other states in the region are still reluctant to maintain friendly bilateral relations with Israel.
  - Also, at the grassroot level, the **Israel-Palestine conflict** is still a major area of concern.
- **Internal Conflicts of the Arab World:**
  - **Iran-Saudi:** The **Shia-Sunni conflict** between Iran and Saudi Arabia is also going on which is also running through Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Yemen.
- **Possible Splitting of Countries:**
  - The internal conflicts in the Arab world will possibly lead to the significant partners of India like Iran split from the former into another group.
  - The developing situation might lead to the creation of two groups one with **China, Pakistan, Russia, Iran and Turkey** while **India, Israel, USA and UAE** are likely to be on the other side.
- **China's Expanding Role in the Middle East:**
  - India must also look at the presence of China which has been expanding its footprint in the region.
  - **Israel:**
    - **Israel's Haifa port has been expanded by China**, more than one and a half billion-dollar investment in Haifa has been made by China.
    - China is also building the Ashdod port which is the only port Israel has in the mediterranean.
  - **UAE:**
    - UAE was one of the first countries that got **Huawei's** (Chinese MNC) assistance for its **5G project**.

### What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Seizing the Opportunity:**
  - The I2U2 is a win-win proposition for all the countries concerned. **India needs to play a more**

**active role as far as cooperation with West Asia is concerned.**

- India must navigate this area which is full of landmines, very cautiously because the fundamental interests of India: **energy security, food security, workers, trade, investment and maritime security lie in this region.**
- **Reassuring Other Partners in West Asia:**
  - Two countries, specifically, need to be reassured that this new arrangement is not aimed at them: **Iran and Egypt.**
    - **For India, Iran is important** in relation to the present context of Afghanistan. **India must deal with the challenges both diplomatically and strategically in this region.**
    - **Egypt has friendly relations with all the four countries** in this alliance but it must be reassured that it will not be impacted economically or politically.
- **Mutual Cooperation Among the Four Countries:**
  - There are challenges in dealing with the complications of the West Asian region.
    - **Balancing the rival countries diplomatically and strategically** in order to maintain friendly relations with each other can be done **through mutual cooperation among the four countries.**

■■■

## Urban Local Government in India

*This editorial is based on "The scale of municipal finances is inadequate" which was published in The Hindu on 13/07/2022. It talks about the challenges associated with Urban Local Bodies (ULBs) and the measures that can be taken to empower them.*

**Tags:** Governance, GS Paper - 2, Separation of Powers, Local Self Governance

**Urbanisation has become a common feature of Indian society.** With cities being the main beneficiaries of **globalisation**, along with **increasing urban population**, millions of people chasing jobs are **migrating to cities.**

This signifies the need to position **Indian cities as drivers of the structural transformation of the Indian economy.** It requires enhancement and upgradation of infrastructure which calls for active support by **State Governments** and also the **Central Government.**

Our **Constitution** provides a clear mandate for **Democratic Decentralisation** not only through the

**Directive Principles of State Policy** but more specifically through the **73rd and 74th Amendments of the Constitution** which seek to create an institutional framework for ushering in **grassroot democracy** through the **medium of genuinely self-governing local bodies in both urban and rural areas of the country.**

However, despite the constitutional mandate, the **growth of self-governing local bodies as the third tier of governance in the country has been uneven and slow.** The transfer of **3F ( funds, functions and functionaries )** has been nominal (with notable **exceptions** such as **Kerala**).

**Integrating Institutional reforms in local governance with economic reforms** was **Gandhiji's** far-sighted vision of '**Poorna Swaraj**'. But **Reserve Bank of India (RBI)** in a report **State Finances, Study of Budgets of 2021-22**, released in November 2021 stated that, with the **third-tier governments** in India playing a frontline role in combating the pandemic by implementing containment strategies, healthcare, their **finances have come under severe strain, forcing them to cut down expenditures and mobilise funding from various sources.**

#### What is the Structure of Urban Local Government in India?

The **Urban Local Government** consists of **eight types of Urban local bodies.**

- **Municipal Corporation:**
  - **Municipal corporations** are usually found in **big cities** such as Bangalore, Delhi, Mumbai, Kolkata, etc.
- **Municipality:**
  - The **smaller cities** tend to have the provision of **municipalities.**
    - The Municipalities are often called upon by other names such as the **municipal council, municipal committee, municipal board**, etc.
- **Notified Area Committee:**
  - Notified area committees are set up for the fast-developing towns and the **towns lacking the basic amenities.**
    - All the members of the notified area committee are nominated by the state government.
- **Town Area Committee:**
  - The town area committee is found in the **small towns.**
    - It has **minimal authority such as street lighting, drainage roads, and conservancy.**
- **Cantonment Board:**
  - It is usually set up for a civilian population living in the cantonment area.

- It is **created and run by the central government.**

#### ➤ **Township:**

- Township is another form of urban government to provide basic facilities to the **staff and workers living in the colonies established near the plant.**
  - It has **no elected members and is merely an extension of the bureaucratic structure.**

#### ➤ **Port Trust**

- Port trusts are established in the **port areas such as Mumbai, Chennai, Kolkata**, etc.
  - It manages and takes care of the port.
  - It also provides basic civic amenities to the people living in that area.

#### ➤ **Special Purpose Agency:**

- These agencies undertake the designated activities or specific functions belonging to the municipal corporations or municipalities.

### **What are the Problems Faced by Urban Local Bodies?**

#### ➤ **Financial Paucity:**

- Financial stringency has become the biggest hurdle in good governance at ground level.
- Dependence on **Intergovernmental Transfers:**
  - The Urban local government heavily depends on the state governments for getting grants-in-aid out of the consolidated fund of state.

#### ○ **Acute Share in Revenue:**

- Generally, their **source of income is inadequate as compared to their functions. Their chief sources of income are the varied types of taxes.**
- However, **taxes collected by the urban bodies are not sufficient to cover the expenses of the services provided.**
- **Though they can impose certain new taxes**, the elected members of these local bodies hesitate in doing so for **fear of displeasing their electorate.**

#### ➤ **Unplanned Urbanisation:**

- In **absence of proper planning**, the **Municipal Services** find it difficult to cope with the increasing needs of the population, both qualitatively and quantitatively.
  - The **administrative machinery of local bodies is insufficient. Judicious use of land is not being made**, colonies are set up without proper facilities such as schools, parks and hospitals, the growth of slums is not checked, traffic congestion.

- This also leads to urban poverty, unemployment and ecological degradation.
- **Excessive Control of State Government:**
  - The State Government takes control of the Urban local bodies which are legislative, administrative, judicial and financial keeps urban municipal governments subordinate units rather than functioning as institutions of self-governance.
    - Municipalities need to balance their budgets, by law, and any municipal borrowing has to be approved by the state government.
      - Unlike the Centre and the States, no distinction is made between revenue expenditure and capital expenditure at the Urban Local Government level.
- **Multiplicity of Agencies:**
  - Formation of single purpose agencies under the direct supervision of the state government and without any accountability towards urban local government. The municipal bodies have to contribute to the budget to these agencies while having no control over them.
    - Example: State Transport Corporation, State Electricity Board, Water Supply Department etc.
- **Low level of People's Participation:**
  - Despite a relatively higher level of literacy and educational standard, city dwellers do not take adequate interest in the functioning of the urban government bodies.
    - The multiplicity of special purpose agencies and other urban bodies confuses the public about their role boundaries.

### **How can We Empower Urban Local Governments?**

- **Making Urban Local Bodies Financially Independent:**
  - For the ULB to be independent and financially secure, fiscal decentralisation is very crucial.
  - Strengthening Municipal Revenue:
    - All Finance Commissions have recognized the need to augment property tax revenue to improve municipal finances. Especially:
      - The 12<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission encouraged the use of the Geographical Information System (GIS) and digitization to improve property tax administration.
      - The 13<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission mandated the setting up of the State Property Tax Board as one of the conditions necessary for performance grant eligibility of states.

- ◆ The aim of the State Property Tax Board is to help municipal corporations and municipal councils put in place a transparent and efficient property tax regime.
    - The 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission recommended that municipalities be enabled to levy vacant land tax.
- **Better Financial Database:**
  - Lack of maintenance and audit of accounts at the local level leaves non-verifiable financial data for municipalities leading to a denial of performance grants.
    - Both the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> Finance Commissions included better data availability as a conditionality for accessing performance grants.
- **Ensuring Active Citizen Participation:**
  - For transparency and accountability in the governance process, there needs to be active citizen participation.
    - To ensure this, ULBs can create functional, decentralised platforms such as area sabhas and ward committees, which facilitate discussion and deliberation between elected representatives and citizens.
- **Creating Citizen Grievance Redressal Mechanism:**
  - ULBs can establish a technology-enabled platform to register complaints, which will make city governments responsive to the needs of citizens.
    - Through this mechanism, citizens should also be allowed to provide feedback and close complaints.
    - Addressing these structural and architectural problems of urban governance will ensure effective service delivery in cities, improving the quality of life for its citizens



## **Demand for Dravida Nadu**

*This editorial is based on "Dravida Nadu: Once a belief, now party tool" which was published in The Indian Express on 10/07/2022. It talks about the demand of Dravida Nadu and related challenges.*

**Tags:** Indian Polity, Federalism, Co-operative Federalism, Centre-State Relations

**Dravida Nadu as a political idea** was originally floated by Periyar E.V. Ramasamy who came up with the slogan "Tamil Nadu for Tamils" in 1938 in response to the plan to introduce compulsory learning of Hindi across India.

Initially, the demand of Dravida Nadu proponents was limited to Tamil-speaking region, but later, it was expanded to include other Indian states with **Dravidian-language speakers** in majority (present day **Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Kerala and Karnataka**). Other names for the proposed sovereign state included “**South India**”, “**Deccan Federation**” and “**Dakshinapath**”.

At various time periods, demand for Dravida Nadu can be interpreted differently. Sometimes it has meant **greater devolution of powers to the states**, at others it's meant **full sovereignty and complete secession**.

### **What is the Background of Dravida Nadu?**

#### ➤ **Before Independence:**

- The **concept of Dravida Nadu had its root in the Anti-Brahminism movement in Tamil Nadu**, with early demands of **social equality**, and greater power and control.
  - However, over time, it came to include a separatist movement, **demanding a sovereign state for the Tamil people**.
- **In 1921**, the **Justice Party** was the major political party backing this movement.
  - At the time, the presence of Brahmins in the Madras government was disproportionately higher than their population in the state.
- In 1925, Periyar started the Self-Respect Movement.
  - He **emphasised the distinct cultural identity of the Tamil nation**.
- **In 1938**, the **Justice Party and Self-Respect Movement came together**, representing the merger of the party and the movement.
  - In **1944**, its new outfit was named **Dravidar Kazhagam**.

#### ➤ **Post-Independence:**

- **In 1956**, **States Reorganisation Act**, which created linguistic States, weakened the demand further.
- **In the 1980s**, a minor militant organisation called **Tamil Nadu Liberation Army** revived the demand for Dravida Nadu, when the **Indian Peacekeeping Force (IPKF)** was sent to Sri Lanka.

### **What are the Reasons for Demanding a Separate State?**

- **Linguistic Factor:** The idea of **making Hindi the common language was not acceptable to Periyar**, who viewed it as an attempt to make Tamils subordinate to North Indians which gave a **thrust for separate Dravida Nadu**.
  - They **continued to protest against the introduction of Hindi in education**.

- **Political Factors:** **State autonomy has been one of the top political agendas of the political parties in Tamil Nadu**, with its election manifestos beginning with a reference to federalism.
  - Parties used a **unique medium of propagation of its ideas, through the Tamil film productions**.

- **Economic Factors:** From an economic point of view, their argument points out that they receive **inadequate benefits in comparison to their contribution to the Indian Economy**.
  - It is the **second largest economy in India** and **contributes 8.8% to the National Gross Domestic Product**.

- It is the **second largest economy in India** and **contributes 8.8% to the National Gross Domestic Product**.

- **Demographic Factors:** Northern states have higher population growth than the southern states.

- **Population is one factor determining Finance Commission devolutions** and the **state-wise distribution of Lok Sabha seats was frozen on the population basis of the 1971 census** through a Constitutional amendment valid until 2026.

- In this context, **demographic divergence has led to the origination of sub-nationalism**. Southern states like Tamil Nadu **feared substantial seat share in the Parliament of India that urged the separatist tendency**.

### **What Challenges are Associated with Demand for a Separate State?**

- **Pandorabox of Issues:** Autonomy of one state will open the **pandora box of issues among other states** that will impact effective governance and **spirit of Nationalism**.

- **Against Constitutional Provision:** **India** is an indestructible ‘**Union of States**’ rather than just a mere federation.

- Under **Article 3 of Constitution of India**, the **states have no right to secede from the Union**. Thus, the demand for autonomy of state is against the Constitution.

### **What Should be the Way Forward?**

- **Effective All India Service:** Being a **centralised permanent entity**, the **All India Services** form the **basic administrative system of India** to devise and implement welfare policies, developmental schemes and **ensure efficient functioning of government machinery at the grassroots**.

- **Effective All India Service** will not only ensure uniformity in administration throughout the nation, but **also spread the message of integrity among the various parts of the country**.

- **Promoting Cooperative Federalism:** On the premise that strong states make a strong nation, promotion of **cooperative federalism** will guide all the governing bodies to come forward and cooperate to resolve common **social, political, economic and civic problems**.
  - According to the **Sarkaria Commission's report** on Centre-State Relations, If the economic liberalisation and development of states is undertaken in a planned manner, the **separatist tendencies will be automatically controlled**.
- **Promotion of Composite Culture:** **Three language formula** can be implemented in an inclusive manner; uniform recognition can be given to all the languages of India.
  - To inculcate the feeling of oneness, **Incredible India programme** in all parts of India can be promoted in true spirit.
- **Empowering Inter-State Council:** **Cognizance of regional problems and devising solutions** for the same at **inter-state council level** should be maintained in true spirit.
  - The most serious clashes have arisen over the sharing of river waters, with every state aiming to maximise its share. Such issues can be addressed in a cooperative manner.



## Person with Disabilities in India

*This article is based on "The great omission in the draft disability policy" which was published in The Hindu on 15/07/2020. It talks about the inclusiveness and empowerment of persons with disabilities in India.*

**Tags:** Social Justice, GS Paper - 2, Government Policies & Interventions, Welfare Schemes

**Disability** results from the **interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers** that **hinder their full and effective participation in society** on an equal basis with others.

**As per Census 2011**, at the all India level, disabled persons constitute **2.21%** of the total population. **7.62% of the disabled persons belong** to the age group **0-6 years**.

India signed the **United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disability**. and subsequently ratified the same on **October 1, 2007**. Enactment of a new disability legislation (**Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016**) increased the number of disabilities from 7 conditions to 21.

Focus on disabilities has been shifted from the individual to society, i.e., **from a medical model of disability to a social or human rights model of disability**.

### What are the Various Models of Disability?

- **Medical Model:**
  - In the medical model, individuals with certain **physical, intellectual, psychological and mental impairments** are taken as disabled.
    - According to this, the **disability lies in the individual as it is equated with restrictions of activity** with the burden of adjusting with the environment through **cures, treatment and rehabilitation**.
- **Social Model:**
  - The social model focuses on the **society which imposes undue restrictions on the behaviour of persons with impairment**.
    - In this, **disability does not lie in individuals, but in the interaction between individuals and society**.

### What is the Constitutional Framework for Disabled in India?

- **Article 41** of the **Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP)** states that the State shall make effective provision for **securing the right to work, to education and to public assistance** in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and **disablement**, within the limits of its economic capacity and development.
- The subject of '**relief of the disabled and unemployable**' is specified in the **state list of the Seventh Schedule** of the constitution.

### What are the Issues Related to Persons with Disability in India?

- **Discrimination:**
  - Continuous discrimination on the basis of the stigma attached to persons with disabilities, **compounded by a lack of understanding of their rights**, makes it difficult for them to attain their valued "functioning".
    - **Women and girls with disabilities** are at a higher risk of experiencing sexual and other forms of **gender-based violence**.
- **Health:**
  - A **large number of disabilities are preventable**, including those arising from medical issues during birth, maternal conditions, malnutrition, as well as accidents and injuries.

- However, **there is a lack of awareness, lack of care, and lack of good and accessible medical facilities.**
- **Education and Employment:**
  - **Lack of availability of special schools**, access to schools, trained teachers, and educational materials for the disabled.
  - **Even though many disabled adults are capable of productive work**, disabled adults have far **lower employment rates than the general population.**
- **Political Participation:**
  - The exclusion of disabled people from the political space happens at all levels of the political process in the country, and in different ways such as:
    - **Lack of live aggregate data** on the exact number of the disabled people in the constituencies.
    - **Inaccessibility of the voting process** (no widespread adaptation of **braille electronic voting machines**).
    - Barriers to participation in Party Politics.
  - **Political Parties** in India **generally do not find the disables as the large electorate** to specifically address their needs.
- **Lax Implementation:**
  - The government has had some admirable initiatives to improve the condition of PwDs.
    - However, even now, **most buildings in India are not disability-friendly, despite** the government of India, under the **Accessible India Campaign**, instructing all ministries to make their buildings accessible to persons with disabilities.
    - Similarly, the **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act** has **provided for a quota of reservation for persons with disabilities** in government jobs and higher education institutions, but the **majority of these posts are vacant.**

### **What Should be the Way Forward?**

- **Preventive Actions:**
  - **Preventive health programs need to be strengthened and all children need to be screened at a young age.**
  - **Kerala has already started** an early prevention programme.
    - The **Comprehensive Newborn Screening (CNS)** programme seeks early identification of deficits in infants and reduces the state's burden of disability.
- **Community-Based Rehabilitation (CBR) Approach:**
  - The **CBR approach** is needed to ensure that people with disabilities are able to maximise their physical

and mental abilities, have access to regular services and opportunities, and **achieve full integration within their communities.**

- **Increasing Public Awareness and Understanding of Disability:**
  - **Governments, voluntary organisations, and professional associations** should **consider running social campaigns** that change attitudes on stigmatised issues related to PwDs.
    - In this context, **mainstream media has taken the right path** by increasingly showing positive representations of people with disabilities, from the movies like **Taare Zameen Par** and **Barfi**.
    - **Special schools** with the label **special needs** can have a stigma or negative connotation. Students may only learn and interact with peers with special needs.
      - They won't be exposed to a wide range of influences.
      - There should be a **proper channel of transition between special schools and the outer world to promote inclusiveness** among the disabled.
- **Collaboration With States:**
  - **Awareness regarding care for pregnant mothers** and good and accessible medical facilities across the **rural heartland** are the **important pillars for addressing the occurrence of disabilities.**
    - For facilitation of both these factors, the **state governments should be actively supported by the union government for fiscal decentralisation in their health sector** as health comes under the 'state subject' in our constitution.

### **What are the Recent Initiatives to Empowerment of Disables?**

- **India:**
  - **Unique Disability Identification Portal**
  - **Accessible India Campaign**
  - **DeenDayal Disabled Rehabilitation Scheme**
  - **Assistance to Disabled Persons for Purchase/fitting of Aids and Appliances**
  - **National Fellowship for Students with Disabilities**
- **Global:**
  - Incheon Strategy to "Make the Right Real" for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.
  - United Nations Convention on Rights of Persons with Disability.
  - **International Day of Persons with Disabilities**
  - **UN Principles for People with Disabilities**



## Demographic Transition in India

This article is based on “*The population question*” which was published in the *The Hindu BusinessLine* on 15/07/2022. It talks about the demographic transition in India and associated challenges.

**Tags:** Indian Society, GS Paper - 1, GS Paper - 2, Government Policies & Interventions, Population and Associated Issues

With a population of 1.4 billion, India accounts for about **17.5 per cent of the world’s population**, **1 of every 6 people on the planet live in India**.

According to the 2022 edition of the **United Nations’ World Population Prospects (WPP)**, India is projected to surpass China as the world’s most populous country in **2023**. India is currently at a stage of **demographic transition** with a substantial percentage of the youth population.

The Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI) has released ‘**Youth in India 2022’ Report**, which shows that the population share of the youth is starting to decline whereas the share of the elderly is expected to increase during **2021-2036**.

The **proportion of elderly population to the total population has increased** from 6.8% in 1991 to **9.2% in 2016** and is projected to reach **14.9% in 2036**. On the contrary, **youth in the age group of 15-29 years** comprise **27.2%** of the population for the year **2021** which is expected to **decrease to 22.7 by 2036**.

The **large number of youths** in the light of its impact on **work participation** and **dependency ratios**, has been called a **window of opportunity** in terms of **growth and development** of our country, an **opportunity which would need to be seized before the window closes**.

### What is India’s Demographic Dividend?

#### ➤ About:

- According to the **United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)**, **demographic dividend** means the **economic growth potential that can result from shifts in a population’s age structure**.
  - Mainly when the **share of the working-age population (15 to 64) is larger than the non-working-age share of the population (14 and younger, and 65 and older)**.

#### ➤ Median Age:

- The **median age in India is 28 years.**, compared to 38 in China and the US, 43 in Western Europe, and 48 in Japan.

#### ➤ Diversity in India’s States:

- While India is a young country, the **status and pace of population ageing vary among States**.
  - Southern States, which are advanced in demographic transition, already have a higher percentage of older people.
    - While **Kerala’s population is already ageing**, in **Bihar** the working age cohort is **predicted to continue increasing till 2051**.
- The differences in age structure **reflect differences in economic development and health of the states**.

### How can India take Advantage from the Demographic Dividend?

- **Increase in Fiscal Space:** Fiscal resources can be diverted **from spending on children to investing in modern physical and human infrastructure** that will increase economic sustainability of India.
- **Rise in Workforce:** With more than **65% of the working age population**, India can rise as an economic superpower, supplying more than half of Asia’s potential workforce over the coming decades.
  - **Increase in the Labour Force** that enhances the productivity of the economy.
  - **Rise in Women’s Workforce** that naturally accompanies a **decline in fertility**, and which can be a new source of growth.

### What are the Challenges Associated with Demographic Dividend in India?

- **Unfulfilled Educational Requirements:** While over 95% of India’s children attend primary school, the **National Family Health Surveys** confirms that **poor infrastructure in government schools, malnutrition, and scarcity of trained teachers** have resulted in poor learning outcomes.
  - The **gender inequality in education** is a concern as in India, boys are more likely to be enrolled in secondary and tertiary school than girls.
    - However, in the Philippines, China and Thailand, it is the reverse and in Japan, South Korea, and Indonesia, the gender differences are rather minimal.
- **Low Human Development Parameters:** India ranked at **131st position by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Human Development Index 2020**, which is alarming.
  - Therefore, **health and education parameters need to be improved** substantially to **make the Indian workforce efficient and skilled**.



- **Jobless Growth:** There is mounting concern that future growth could turn out to be jobless due to **de-industrialization, de-globalization, and the industrial revolution 4.0.**
  - As per the **NSSO Periodic Labour Force Survey 2017-18**, India's labour force participation rate for the age-group 15-59 years is around 53%, that is, around **half of the working age population is jobless.**
    - The **informal nature of the economy** in India is another hurdle in reaping the benefits of demographic transition in India.
- **Absence of Proper Policies:**
  - Without proper policies, the increase in the working-age population may lead to rising unemployment, fuelling economic and social risks.
- **Rise in the Share of Elderly Population:** A greater proportion of youth at present will result in a greater proportion of elderly in the population in future.
  - This will create a **demand for better healthcare facilities and development of welfare schemes/programmes** for elderly people.
    - People, typically in **informal employment**, don't have **social security**, it will add burden to the respective state.

### What Should be Our Approach Forward?

- **Upgrading Education Standards:** Irrespective of rural or urban setting, the public school system must ensure that **every child completes high school education**, and is **pushed into appropriate skilling, training and vocational education** in line with market demand.
  - **Modernising school curricula**, deploying new technology to put in place **virtual classrooms** together with **Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs)** and **investing in open digital universities** would further help yield a **higher educated workforce.**
- **Fulfilling Health Related Requirements:** More finance for health as well as **better health facilities from the available funding** needs to be ensured and **reproductive healthcare** services need to be made accessible on a rights-based approach.
- **Bridging Gender Gaps in Workforce:** New skills and opportunities for women and girls befitting their participation in a **3 trillion dollar economy** is urgently needed. This can be done by:
  - **Legally compulsory gender budgeting** to analyse gender disaggregated data and its impact on policies
  - Increasing childcare benefits

- Boosting tax incentives for part-time work
- **Federal Approach for Diverse States:** A new **federal approach to governance reforms for demographic dividend** will need to be put in place for policy coordination between States on various emerging population issues such as **migration, ageing, skilling, female workforce participation and urbanisation.**
  - **Inter-ministerial coordination** for strategic planning, investment, monitoring and course correction should be an important feature of this governance arrangement.
    - **The Health and Education Ministries can collaborate** to disseminate key information to help adolescents safeguard their health and ability to learn.
- **Inter-Sectoral Collaborations:** Moving forward towards safeguarding the futures of adolescents, it is imperative to put in place mechanisms for better inter-sectoral collaboration.
  - For instance, **School mid-day meals** exemplify how **improved nutrition benefits learning.**
    - Studies have established strong **links between nutrition and cognitive scores** among teenagers.



## Startups in India and Data Localisation

*This editorial is based on "Data localisation norms may need easing, but startups should compete without relying on heavy hand holding of state" which was published in The Indian Express on 18/07/2022. It talks about the startup ecosystem in India and impact of Data Localisation.*

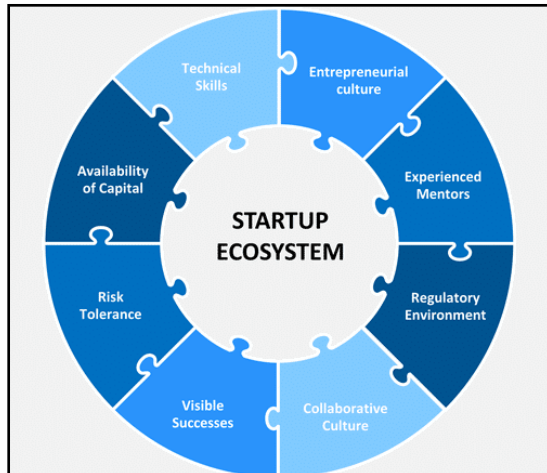
**Tags:** Indian Economy, GS Paper - 2, Government Policies & Interventions, GS Paper - 3, Employment Growth & Development, IT & Computers, Mobilisation of Resources.

**Startups** are the engine of exponential growth, manifesting the power of innovation. Several big companies today are the startups of yesterday, and have become the **shining beacons of innovation.**

India is home to the **third-largest base of technology startups in the world** after the US and China. With a growing entrepreneurship culture and a supportive ecosystem, India's startups and small businesses are not only expected to further drive economic and business transformation but also cement its position as a **key growth driver to India's dream of becoming a 5 trillion dollar economy.**

### What is the Startup Growth Scenario in India?

- **India is a hotspot for startups.** In 2021 alone, Indian startups have raised more than 23 billion dollars, spread over 1,000+ deals, with 33 startups entering the coveted unicorn club.
  - So far, the year 2022 has added 13 more startups to the unicorn club.
- According to the **India Venture Capital Report 2021** published by Bain and Company, the number of cumulative start-ups has grown at a **Compounded Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 17%** since 2012 and crossed 1,12,000.



### What has led to the Booming of India's Startup Ecosystem?

- **Recognition of Significance of Startups:** India has recognized the need to develop **innovation and incubation centres** for its large student community to foster innovation and entrepreneurial mindset through academic institutions.
  - A rising number of incubators and a steady inclination of young executives towards starting their own ventures is also propelling the entrepreneurship and early-stage startup ecosystem in India.
  - Establishment of new incubation centres - **Atal Incubation Centres (AICs) via the Atal Innovation Mission** has also nurtured innovative start-up businesses in their pursuit to become scalable and sustainable enterprises.
- **Availability of Potential:** A study on **tech startups of 2021** revealed that a **sizable number of edtech founders are young graduates from IITs and premier engineering colleges** or those who worked for global consulting firms.
  - This **availability of ambitions of young Indians with risk taking ability along with the right blend of passion, expertise, and mindset** of Indian

entrepreneurs puts India's early-stage startup ecosystem at an advantage in cashing on the opportunities of a booming market.

- **Startup Specific Initiatives:** The Government of India has been playing a crucial role in facilitating the growth of early-stage startups through the implementation of progressive policies and creating relevant infrastructure.
  - Under the **Startup India Initiative launched in 2016**, the government has endeavoured to simplify complex legal, financial and knowledge requirements in an effort to **encourage the participation of early-stage potential startups**.
- **Startup-Corporate Collaborations:** **Established corporates who lack innovation capacity** and agility, and **nimble early-stage startups who lack cash for growth** and networks for market access, provide a **unique and scalable platform for such collaborations** and multiplied wealth creation.
  - Various corporate-startup partnership programmes have been driving innovation and accelerating the growth of early startups in India.
    - **Microsoft India has accelerated more than 4,000 startups**, while **Tata Motors is engaged with half a dozen startups and exploring partnerships with 20 more**.

### Data Localisation – How will it Affect the Growth of Startups in India?

- **An Obstacle to Global Coverage:** In addition to Indian Customers, **Many start-ups have customers abroad** and a **localisation mandate could make it tricky for them to do business with international customers**.
- **Third Party Server Issue:** Many Indian Start-ups use third-party services from companies who may not have a physical presence in India and a **hard localisation mandate impedes cross-border business**.
  - These services often need to access your core database. Not just local start-ups, Big Tech like **Google and Meta have also raised concerns** on the proposed data localisation provisions.
- **Foreign Domiciliation:** Currently, **nearly 30 of India's unicorns are domiciled outside the country**, driven outside by outdated forex regulations, non-implementation of relevant federal regulations, tax terrorism, and lack of local capital incentives.
  - **DeepTech and healthcare start-ups still do not get adequate early capital to grow in this country and are forced to domicile outside**.
- **Impact on Data Service Export:** One of the major factors behind India becoming a world leader in digital services export is uninterrupted flow of data across borders and favourable policies.

- **Data Localisation** may add a regulatory compliance cost to the companies, particularly the **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises**.
- It will also **hinder the participation of domestic start-ups in global value chains**, thereby affecting foreign investment and innovation in the country.

#### What is Understood by Data Localisation?

- Data Localisation is **storing critical as well as non-critical data within the territorial boundaries of the country**.
- The most important aspect of data localisation is having control over our own data which makes the country **more resistant to issues around privacy, information leaks, identity thefts, security etc.**
  - It has also helped the countries develop their own startups, evolve locally and also thrive in their own language.
- The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has drafted a **Bill on Protection of Personal and Sensitive Data**.
  - Under the Draft Bill, **entities dealing with users' personal data are mandated to store a copy of such data within India** and the export of undefined "critical" personal data is prohibited.
    - **Personal data** includes **information- online or offline- that could be used to identify an individual** and hence allows profiling that person.

#### What Other Areas Require Attention?

- **Lack of Proper Funding:** Indian start-ups find themselves in a **steep funding downturn**.
  - According to the report by **PwC India**, funding in Indian start-ups dropped by 40% in the April-June quarter **due to geopolitical tensions** led by **Russia's invasion of Ukraine**, decrease in **tech stock valuations**, and **inflation**
- **Education and Upskilling:** In order to transition beyond the current capabilities and achieve the **demographic dividend**, education, reskilling, and upskilling of India's workforce is crucial.
  - It needs to be acknowledged that **apart from the domestic policy environment**, the **global environment and technological advances are also changing**, and it is imperative that **India is prepared for this revolution**.

#### What Efforts Shall be Made to Strengthen the Startup Ecosystem?

- **Data Protection:** India can adopt a '**regulatory sandbox**' approach including regulatory impact assessment.

- **Local private players** can be incentivised to establish **Data Protection Centres in India**.
- A **careful balance needs to be struck between privacy and innovation**.
- **Support from Investors:** The accelerated development of the start-up ecosystem needs significant funding and therefore the role of **venture capital and angel investors is critical**.
  - The venture capital investors need to have adequate **risk management frameworks** at the portfolio level, as it is a critical part of all successful venture capital operations.
- **Handholding by the Corporate Sector:** Apart from policy-level decisions that promote entrepreneurship, the onus is also on **India's corporate sector to foster entrepreneurialism**, and create **synergies to build impactful technology solutions**, and sustainable and resource-efficient growth.
- **Physical and Digital Connectivity:** The collective future efforts of the public and private sectors to improve physical and digital connectivity will help unlock the **untapped potential of rural and semi-urban India** to truly lead **Industry 4.0** and beyond.
- **Grabbing Opportunities amid Changing World Order:** With the recent events creating capital distrust in China, the world's attention is sharpening on the lucrative tech opportunities in India and the value that could be created.
  - For this, **India requires decisive policy measures in addition to the Digital India initiative**. India needs stronger regulations for both global and domestic investments in start-ups.
  - It is also important to create a **repository of investor-KYC, ensuring traceability and seamless governance**.



## Social Media and Politics in India

*This editorial is based on "How Twitter became the New Medium for Diplomacy" which was published in The Indian Express on 20/07/2022. It talks about the role of social media in polity and governance in India.*

**Tags:** Governance, GS Paper - 2, E-Governance, Transparency & Accountability, GS Paper 3, Social Media, IT & Computers

Human history **from the Stone Age to Metal Age is now in the Digital age** with the most promising tool-social media. It mirrors the real world.

Public opinion is the currency of **democracy**. Social media platforms are increasingly becoming the **primary ground for public discourse** and **mobilisation of public opinion**, a tool where people are able to talk about the issues of day to day life and also of national importance.

Social media today is no longer just an innocent space to connect with friends and family. Instead, it has metamorphosed into becoming an **influential space for political activity** and creating a new **political dialogue**.

### **How does Social Media Benefit Indian Politics?**

- **Bringing Awareness to the Masses:** Historically, the **people were never as aware as they are now about government policies**.
  - **Government outreach** is increasing through the effective use of social media through different **social media campaigns** spreading awareness among the people.
    - As an example, social media was highly effective in promoting **precautionary awareness and mobilising leads for medicines** during the **Covid pandemic**.
- **Bridging the Gap:** Social Media has been instrumental in bringing people and their representatives close.
  - The **communication barriers** that did not allow people to interact with the leaders have **reduced significantly because of social media**.
  - **Politicians are reaching out to their supporters on social media**.
    - They are making sure to **keep the public in the loop through their engagements** and posts on social media.
    - It has increased the ability for ordinary citizens to take part in the political process.
  - Besides this, social media has been actively used for **influencing diplomatic relations between India and its friendly countries**.
- **Reducing Barriers:** These platforms present a cheap and low-barrier channel of people-politician communication, by potentially **intensifying political democracy by allowing many to enter into political races**.
- **Improved Analytical System:** As compared to traditional methods of public opinion measurement, **social media allows time and cost effective data collection and analysis** with less human effort.
  - **Data analytics** has evolved itself to become the **brain of every election campaign**. It helps the election campaign committee understand the voters better and **align their policies to their needs**.

### **What are the Negative Impact of Politicisation of Social Media?**

- **Political Polarisation:** One of the most common criticisms of social media is that it **creates echo chambers where people only see viewpoints they agree with**.
  - The **campaigns sometimes spark religious and social tensions** in different parts of the country.
  - Social media has enabled a style of **populist politics**, which on the negative side allows **hate speech and extreme speech** to thrive in digital spaces that are unregulated, **particularly in regional languages**.
- **Propaganda Setting:** According to **Google Transparency Report**, **political parties** mostly in the last two years **have spent around 800 million dollars (Rs 5,900 crore) on election ads**.
  - Micro-targeting can enable dishonest campaigns to spread toxic discourse without much consequence.
- **Unequal Participation:** Social media also **distorts policymakers' perception of public opinion**.
  - This is because it is believed that social media platforms tend to represent every walk of life, but **not everyone's voice is heard equally**.
- **Political Tactics:** The Political parties with the help of social media are able to get information regarding **voters likes and dislikes** and **further manipulate them, especially the Swing Voters, whose views can be changed by manipulating information**.
  - Social media gives people more voice and can sometimes be used, by anyone, to spread hoaxes and **misinformation**.
    - Social media has made people better informed but also easier to manipulate.

#### **Misinformation v/s Disinformation v/s**

##### **Mal-information:**

- Most of the time Fake news conflates three different notions: misinformation, disinformation, and mal-information.
- Misinformations are false information, but when a person conveys it, believes that it is true and shares.
- Disinformation is those which are shared intentionally by a person after knowing that it is not true; false information which is intended to mislead.
- Information that is based on reality but imposes harm on a person, organisation, or country is termed as mal-information.

### What Should be the Approach Moving Forward?

- **Law to Facilitate Transparency:** A meaningful framework to **combat disinformation** at scale must be built on the understanding that it is a political problem.
  - **Transparency and Regulations** need to be brought to bring governance of speech **within the ambit of the democratic process** and to control the **weaponization of social media**.
  - It should also include **safeguards for user privacy** since **platforms are a repository of the private information of citizens**.
- **Structural Reforms in Platforms:** Blanket immunity for platforms as intermediaries no longer makes sense since platforms are far more interventionist with user content.
  - Therefore, platform accountability should be linked to their distribution model.
  - Furthermore, Platforms can make it possible for the **users to make an informed choice regarding which feed to subscribe or opt-out of**.
- **Checks on Use of Personal data:** Regulations should be maintained to ensure checks on use of personal data in the context of electoral campaigns complies with national laws.
- **Maintaining a Level Playing Field: Democracy**, in its true spirit, **demands equal opportunities** for all parties, and **free & fair elections give all parties equal opportunities**.
  - Strict norms for use of social media for political purposes is the need of the hour so that **minority political campaigns are given equal attention**.
  - The **Election Commission of India** and its **Model Code of Conduct** go to great lengths to make sure that one party doesn't have an undue advantage over another just because it is in power.



## Heat Waves in India

*This editorial is based on "A Robust Plan to Tackle Heightened Heat Stress" which was published in Hindustan Times on 20/07/2022. It talks about the heatwaves in India and related challenges.*

**Tags:** Biodiversity & Environment, GS Paper - 1, Important Geophysical Phenomena, GS Paper - 2, Government Policies & Interventions, GS Paper - 3, Climate Change, Environmental Pollution & Degradation

The advent of **heat waves** has adversely affected the whole world and India is no outlier in this context.

According to a report by Lancet, **India's vulnerability to extreme heat increased 15%** from 1990 to 2019. The **five warmest years** ever recorded in India have **all been in the last decade**.

In May 2022, the **European Space Agency** recorded land surface temperatures nearing 55°C over many parts of northwest India, crossing 60°C in some pockets. The **five warmest years ever recorded in India have all been in the last decade**.

Moreover, humidity, scant rain, and high temperatures have pushed up discomfort levels, making the lives of those without cooling facilities even tougher. **Heat stress should no longer come as a surprise. It demands a comprehensive response.**

### What is a Heatwave?

- **A heatwave is a period of abnormally high temperatures**, a common phenomenon in India during the months of **May-June** and in some rare cases even extends till July.
- **India Meteorological Department (IMD)** classifies heat waves according to regions and their temperature ranges. As per **IMD**, the number of heatwave days in India has increased from 413 over 1981-1990 to 600 over 2011-2020.
  - This **sharp rise in the number of heatwave days** has resulted **due to the increasing impact of climate change**.

### What is the Criteria for Declaring a Heatwave?

- The Heatwave is considered when the maximum temperature of a station reaches at least **40°C for Plains** and at least **30°C for Hilly regions**.
- If the **normal maximum temperature of a station is less than or equal to 40°C**, then an **increase of 5°C to 6°C** from the normal temperature is **considered to be heat wave condition**.
  - Further, an **increase of 7°C or more from the normal temperature** is considered a **severe heat wave condition**.
- If the **normal maximum temperature of a station is more than 40°C**, then an **increase of 4°C to 5°C** from the normal temperature is considered to be heat wave condition. Further, an increase of 6°C or more is **considered a severe heat wave condition**.
  - Additionally, if the **actual maximum temperature remains 45°C or more irrespective of normal maximum temperature**, a **heat wave is declared**.
- In 2016, the **National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA)** issued comprehensive guidelines to prepare national level key strategies for mitigating the impact of heatwaves.

### What are the Impacts of Heat Waves In India?

- **Economic Impacts:** The frequent occurrence of heat waves also adversely affects different sectors of the economy.
  - For instance, **the livelihood of poor and marginal farmers is negatively impacted due to the loss of working days.**
  - Heatwaves also have an adverse impact on daily wage workers' productivity, impacting the economy.
- **Impact on Agriculture Sector:** **Crop yields suffer when temperatures exceed the ideal range.**
  - Farmers in **Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh** have **reported losses in their wheat crop** in the past rabi season. Across India, **wheat production could be down 6-7% due to heat waves.**
  - **Livestock is also vulnerable to heatwaves.**
    - Researchers at Cornell University estimate that, **by 2100, milk yields in India could drop by 25%** (against 2005 levels) in **arid and semi-arid dairy farming** due to increased heat stress.
- **Impact on Electricity Usage:** Naturally, heatwaves impact power load.
  - In the **North India**, the **average daily peak demand in April was 13% higher than 2021 and 30% higher in May.**
- **Human Mortality:** **Mortality** due to heat waves occurs because of rising temperature, **lack of public awareness programmes**, and **inadequate long-term mitigation measures.**
  - According to a 2019 report of the Tata Centre for Development and the University of Chicago, by 2100, **annually, more than 1.5 million people will be likely to die due to extreme heat caused by climate change.**
  - The increased heat will lead to an increase in diseases like **diabetes, circulatory and respiratory conditions**, as well as **mental health challenges.**
- **Food Insecurity:** **The concurrence of heat and drought events are causing crop production losses and tree mortality.**
  - **The risks to health and food production** will be made more severe from the sudden food production losses exacerbated by heat-induced labour productivity losses.
    - **These interacting impacts will increase food prices**, reduce household incomes, and lead to malnutrition and climate-related deaths, especially in tropical regions.

- **Impact on Workers:** Workers in sectors like **agriculture and construction** will be severely impacted in 2030 because **India's large population depends on these sectors** for their livelihoods.
- **Weaker Sections to be Specifically Affected:** The climate science community has reported overwhelming evidence that extreme events such as heatwaves are likely to become more intense, more frequent and of longer duration in future unless **emissions of greenhouse gases and aerosols** are significantly cut globally.
  - It is important to remember that heatwaves in India, such as the current event, have the **potential to influence thousands of vulnerable and poor people who contributed very little to the climate crisis.**

### What Long-Term Strategies does India need to Adopt to Mitigate the Impacts of Heat Waves?

- **A Heat Waves Action Plan:** The adverse impacts of heat waves indicate that **effective disaster adaptation strategies and more robust disaster management policies are required in heatwave zones** to lessen the impact of heatwaves.
  - As **deaths due to heatwaves are preventable**, the **government must prioritise preparing a long-term action plan to safeguard human lives, livestock, and wildlife.**
  - Effective implementation of the **Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-30** with the State playing a leading role and sharing responsibility with other stakeholders is now the need of the hour.
- **Public Awareness and Early Warning Systems:** Disseminating **public awareness through print, electronic and social media**, providing **heat-proof shelter facilities in heatwave prone areas** during summer, easing access to public drinking water, and **afforestation programmes in urban and rural areas** would help mitigate heat wave fatalities.
  - Death from heat waves can be prevented by installing **improved early warning systems** that communicate heatwave threats, recommend different preventative measures, and constrain disaster impacts.
- **Implementing Climate Action Plans:** **National Action Plan for Climate Change (NAPCC)** should be implemented in true spirit for inclusive growth and **ecological sustainability.**
  - **Nature-based solutions** should be taken into account, **not just for tackling climate change** but also doing it in a way that is **ethical** and promoting **intergenerational justice.**

- **Recognition of Heat Waves as a Natural Disaster:** Recognising heat waves as a major disaster is long due. India still has a long way to go in building public awareness, particularly on how individuals and local communities can take care of themselves.
  - Declaring heat waves as a natural disaster would help the state and district administration prepare a **heatwave action plan at the regional level**.
  - Also, there needs to be **clear guidelines regarding when to shut schools or how long one should stay outdoors if that's unavoidable**.
- **Sustainable Cooling: Passive cooling technology**, a widely-used strategy to create **naturally ventilated buildings**, can be a **vital alternative to address the urban heat island** for residential and commercial buildings.
  - The **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** in the third part of its AR6 stated that ancient **Indian building designs** that have used this technology, can be **adapted to modern facilities in the context of global warming**.
- **Replacing Dark Roofs:** A big reason that **cities are hotter than rural areas** is that **they are covered by dark roofs**, roads and parking lots that absorb and retain heat.
  - One of the long term solutions can be **replacing the dark surfaces with lighter and more reflective materials**; it will result in a comparatively cooler environment.
- **Climate-Resilient Crops:** A dynamic understanding of risks is needed to evaluate whether the crops we have relied on so far will also be the ones to provide food and nutrition security in future.
  - Provisions will have to be made for **insurance against crop loss** and **mixed cropping** should be promoted.



## Tribes in India

*This editorial is based on "Madam President: On Droupadi Murmu's election as India's 15th President" which was published in The Hindu on 22/07/2022. It talks about the election of Droupadi Murmu as India's 15th President and rights of tribes in India.*

**Tags:** Social Justice, GS Paper – 2, Issues Related to SCs & STs, Government Policies & Interventions

The election of **Droupadi Murmu** as **India's 15th President** is rich in symbolism. She will be the **first person from a tribal background** to take the office.

Ms. Murmu's election is a **milestone in the journey of tribal empowerment**. Her election to the highest office of the country comes 101 years after two tribespeople were elected to legislative bodies in colonial India.

Although, the founding figures of the Republic of India were acutely cognisant of the disadvantageous position of the tribespeople and made special provisions such as the **Fifth and Sixth Schedules of the Constitution**, there have been growing concerns among tribal activists about a **systematic erosion of protections accorded to tribals**, harassment and **suppression by the police**, and a general **intolerance towards tribal autonomy by the state**.

### What are the Essential Characteristics for a Community to be Identified as Scheduled Tribe?

- According to **Lokur Committee (1965)**, the essential characteristics are:
  - Indication of Primitive Traits
  - Distinctive Culture
  - Shyness of Contact with the Community at Large
  - Geographical Isolation
  - Backwardness

### What are the Basic Safeguards Provided by Indian Constitution for Scheduled Tribes?

- The **Constitution of India** does not endeavor to define the term 'tribe', however, **the term Scheduled Tribe' was inserted in the Constitution through Article 342 (i)**.
  - It lays down that **'the President may, by public notification, specify the tribes or tribal communities or parts of or groups within the tribes or tribal communities or parts which shall, for the purposes of this Constitution, be deemed to be Scheduled Tribes**.
  - The **Fifth Schedule of the Constitution** provides for the setting up a **Tribes' Advisory Council in each of the States having Scheduled Areas**.
- **Educational & Cultural Safeguards:**
  - **Article 15(4):** Special provisions for advancement of other backward classes (it includes STs)
  - **Article 29:** Protection of Interests of Minorities (it includes STs)
  - **Article 46:** The State shall promote, with special care, the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled Castes, and the Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.
  - **Article 350:** Right to conserve distinct **Language, Script or Culture;**

- **Political Safeguards:**
  - **Article 330:** Reservation of seats for STs in **Lok Sabha**;
  - **Article 337:** Reservation of seats for STs in **State Legislatures**
  - **Article 243:** Reservation of seats in **Panchayats**.
- **Administrative Safeguard:**
  - **Article 275:** It provides for the **grant of special funds by the Union Government to the State Government** for promoting the welfare of Scheduled Tribes and providing them with a **better administration**.

#### What are the Recent Government Initiatives For Scheduled Tribes?

- **TRIFED**
- **Digital Transformation of Tribal Schools**
- **Development of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups**
- **Pradhan Mantri Van Dhan Yojana**
- **Eklavya Model Residential Schools**

#### What are the Problems Faced By Tribes in India?

- **Loss of Control over Natural Resources:** As India industrialized and natural resources were discovered in tribal inhabited areas, tribal rights were undermined and state control replaced tribal control over natural resources.
  - With the concepts of **protected forests** and **national forests gaining currency**, the tribals felt themselves **uprooted from their cultural moorings** and with **no secure means of livelihood**.
- **Lack of Education:** In tribal areas, most schools **lack basic infrastructure**, including **minimal learning materials** and **even minimal sanitary provisions**.
  - Due to the **lack of immediate economic return from education**, tribal parents prefer their **children to be engaged in remunerative employment**.
  - Most **tribal education programs are designed in official/regional languages**, which are alien to tribal students.
- **Displacement and Rehabilitation:** Acquisition of tribal land by the government for the development process of core sectors like **huge steel plants, power projects and large dams** led to **large scale displacement of the tribal population**.
  - The tribal pockets of **Chotanagpur region, Orissa, West Bengal and Madhya Pradesh** suffered the most.

- The **migration** of these tribals to the urban areas **causes psychological problems** for them as they are not able to adjust well to the urban lifestyle and values.
- **Problems of Health and Nutrition:** Due to **economic backwardness and insecure livelihood**, the tribals face health problems, such as the prevalence of disease, like **malaria, cholera, diarrhea and jaundice**.
  - Problems associated with malnutrition like iron deficiency and **anemia, high infant mortality rates**, etc. also prevail.
- **Gender Issues:** The degradation of the natural environment, particularly through the destruction of forests and a rapidly shrinking resource base, has its **impact on the status of women**.
  - The opening of the tribal belts to mining, industries and commercialization has **exposed tribal men and women to the ruthless operations of the market economy, giving rise to consumerism and to commoditization of women**.
- **Erosion of Identity:** Increasingly, the **traditional institutions and laws of tribals are coming into conflict with modern institutions** which create apprehensions among the tribals about preserving their identity.
  - **Extinction of tribal dialects and languages is another cause of concern** as it indicates an erosion of tribal identity.

#### What Should be done to Empower Tribes in India?

- **Improvement in Healthcare Facilities:** Mobile medical camps to improve outreach in remote tribal populations would play a major role.
  - Provision of **emergency transportation for pregnant tribal women** to health facilities for obstetric care is one of the major necessities of the tribal women.
  - Health workers from tribal communities may become **the link between the healthcare facilities and tribal communities to guide patients, explain doctors' prescriptions**, help patients take advantage of welfare schemes, and **counsel them on preventive and promotive health behaviors**.
- **Improvement in Food and Nutrition Facility:** Large scale opening of **Mini-Anganwadis with much relaxed norms** and **expansion of Village Grain Banks** to tribal areas are some of the strategies that can be adopted to **'Reach the Unreached'** in the tribal areas.
- **Employment and Income Generation:** Employment and income generation opportunities should be ensured for tribal areas, **either through wage or**



**self-employment** to raise their economic status and thus **liberate them from the shackles of poverty and indebtedness**.

- Efforts should also be made to **extend micro-credit for self-employment ventures** and implementation of **mirror schemes of MNREGA** when no work opportunities are available.
- Collection of **minor forest produce** and their marketing also needs to be encouraged.
- **Management of Water Resources:** There should be a more effective operationalization of the **National Water Policy in tribal areas**, so as to cover extension of irrigation facilities and provision of drinking water with a special thrust on:
  - **Watershed management, rain water harvesting** and water saving practices
  - **Mass education and public awareness** amongst the rural and tribal population for **effective water resource management** and protecting the water resources from pollution.
- **Empowering Tribal Women:** Effective measures should be taken to improve the lot of tribal women through:
  - Promoting **leadership role in Joint Forest Management and Panchayati Raj Institutions**
  - **Legal and administrative measures to check the practice of victimizing women suspected of witchcraft**, along with a massive campaign for **social awareness and rehabilitation** of victimized women, preferably through women's organizations.
- **Inclusion of Tribal Population:**
  - **Cultivation of Medicinal Plants: India tops in the world in exporting generic medicines.** The tribe should be encouraged to collaborate with the government for identifying and collecting medicinal plants from the wild and also cultivate suitable species for their self-consumption as well as for sale.
    - The **Government of India** has decided to take advantage of this trade and has set up a **National Medicinal Plant Board**.
  - **Infrastructure Development:** The government can collaborate with tribal groups for infrastructure development in their local areas.
    - **Meghalaya is known as a living root bridge.** They are **grown by trained Khasi and Jaintia tribes** who have mastered the art of growing root bridges across raised banks of streams running through the dense woods of Meghalaya.
  - **Social Inclusion:** **Social exclusion** experienced by the tribal people are largely due to discrimination

at social and institutional level, it has led to their isolation, shame and humiliation and in turn to **self-exclusion among tribes**.

- There is a strong **need for awareness among the non-tribal population of India to recognize the ability and dignity of tribes** so as to ensure the **unity and integrity of the country and spirit of brotherhood**.



## Role of Rajya Sabha in Indian Democracy

*This editorial is based on "Why the Rajya Sabha Matters" which was published in The Indian Express on 23/07/2022. It talks about the role of Rajya Sabha in Indian Democracy.*

**Tags:** Indian Polity, GS Paper – 2, Parliament, Indian Constitution

The **Rajya Sabha**, constitutionally the **Council of States**, is the **upper house of the bicameral Parliament of India**. The genesis of the Rajya Sabha can be traced to the **Montague-Chelmsford report of 1918** and, consequently, the **Government of India Act, 1919**, which provided for a **second federal chamber** of Parliament.

Asserting the federal nature of the Indian polity, Rajya Sabha **ensures healthy bicameralism not only as a House for second thought but is also a guardian of a State's rights as a House of correction**.

Given the prevailing political scenario in the country, a careful appraisal of the functions of the **Rajya Sabha in strengthening the fundamentals of our parliamentary democracy** becomes even more necessary.

### *How is the Rajya Sabha Relevant in Indian Democracy?*

- **Permanent Body:** Unlike the Lok Sabha, the **Rajya Sabha is not subject to dissolution but one-third of its members retire after every second year**.
  - This **ensures continuity** and also brings about a **fusion of new and old in the House**.
    - This type of arrangement is designed to **secure the representation of past as well as current opinion** and help in maintaining **continuity in public policy**.
- **Review and Revaluation Role:** Rajya Sabha helps in a deeper review of laws, as it **complements the first chamber in securing greater executive accountability**.
  - It checks **hasty, defective and ill-considered legislation** made by the Lok Sabha by making **provision of revision and thought**.

- It also provides a platform to the small and regional parties to present their views.
- **House of Checks and Balances:** Since the 'Lok Sabha' decisions may go in favor of the populist sentiment and force the members to go contrary to the best judgment, the Rajya Sabha keeps a check and balance on it.
  - Unlike the **House of Lords in Britain**, the **Rajya Sabha members do not hold the hereditary membership rights.**
- **Voice of the States:** The process of **indirect elections** also makes its way to the Indian parliamentary system as the members of the Rajya Sabha are **elected by the members of the state legislative assemblies based on proportional representation by means of the single transferable vote.**
  - It acts as a **conduit between the states, people, and Parliament**, furthering the **principles of decentralization by lending an independent voice to the states.**
  - The **Fourth Schedule of the Constitution** deals with the **allocation of seats in the Rajya Sabha** to the states and union territories.
- **Promotes Participatory Democracy:** Twelve members are nominated to the Rajya Sabha by the President of India for 6 years term for their contributions towards **arts, literature, sciences, and social services.**
  - This feature of the Rajya Sabha makes it even more **democratic and participatory** as eminent people making significant contributions to society, **make their way to the highest echelons of Indian Politics.**

### **What are the Special Powers of Rajya Sabha?**

- **Legislation on Matters of the State List:** Article 249 allows the Parliament to legislate on matters enumerated in the **State List** if the **Rajya Sabha passes a resolution by two-thirds majority.**
- **Creation of All India Services:** Article 312, the Parliament is allowed to **create an All India Services** common to the Union and the States, **if the Rajya Sabha passes a requisite resolution.**
- **Proclamation of the President's Rule:** Usually, such proclamations need approval of both the Houses of Parliament.
  - But if the **Lok Sabha is dissolved when the proclamation comes to Parliament**, then the **Rajya Sabha alone can approve the imposition of President's Rule. (Articles 352, 356 and 360)**
    - In **1977**, it was specially convened to extend the President's Rule in **Tamil Nadu and Nagaland** and in **1991**, to impose President's Rule in **Haryana.**

- **Removal of Vice President:** **Rajya Sabha alone can initiate a move for the removal of the Vice President.**
  - It means, **resolution for the removal of the Vice-president** can be introduced only in the **Rajya Sabha and not in the Lok Sabha (Article 67).**

### **What are the Concerns Related to Rajya Sabha ?**

- **Subverting the Federal Character of the Rajya Sabha:** By way of the **Representation of People (Amendment) Act, 2003**, parliament has removed the word '**domicile**' from **Section 3 of Representation of People Act, 1951.**
  - The problem has been exacerbated by the **Kuldip Nayar Judgment** which **removed the requirement of domicile.**
  - Following the amendment, **A person who is neither a resident nor a domicile of a state can contest the Rajya Sabha elections** from that state.
    - The ruling parties on many occasions have **used the Rajya Sabha seats to elect their defeated candidate in Lok Sabha.**
- **Limited Powers Related to Money Bills:** **A Money Bill can be introduced only in the Lok Sabha and not in the Rajya Sabha.** Rajya Sabha cannot amend or reject a Money Bill.
  - It **should return the bill to the Lok Sabha within 14 days**, either with recommendations or without recommendations.
  - The **Lok Sabha can either accept or reject all or any of the recommendations** of the Rajya Sabha.
  - **In both the cases, the money bill is deemed to have been passed** by the two Houses.
- **Bypassing the Rajya Sabha:**
  - In some cases, **ordinary bills are being passed in the form of a Money Bill, circumventing the Rajya Sabha** and giving rise to the question about the very efficacy of the upper house of Parliament.
- **Issues with the Provision of Joint Sitting:** The President can summon both the Houses to meet in a joint sitting in case of deadlock. In such a case, the sitting is **governed by the Rules of Procedure of Lok Sabha and not of Rajya Sabha.**
  - Since the **Lok Sabha has a larger membership in a joint sitting** generally the will of the Lok Sabha prevails over Rajya Sabha.
- **Other Limitations:** A **no-confidence motion** cannot be introduced in the Rajya Sabha.
  - In addition, it exercises a **limited role in the functioning of the Public Accounts Committee** and has **no part in the Estimates Committee.**

### What are the Conditions for Deadlock?

- A deadlock between the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha calls for a joint sitting of the Parliament, if:
  - If the **bill is rejected by the other House**;
  - If the **Houses have finally disagreed as to the amendments to be made in the bill**;
  - **If more than six months have elapsed from the date of the receipt of the bill** by the other House without the bill being passed by it.
- The **Speaker of Lok Sabha** presides over a joint sitting of the two Houses.
- The provision of joint sitting is applicable to ordinary bills or financial bills only and not to money bills or Constitutional amendment bills.

### What Should be the Way Ahead?

- There has to be a mechanism to ensure **federalism in its true essence with equal representation for each state represented in the Rajya Sabha**.
  - So that large states do not dominate the proceedings in the House and for the smooth functioning of our democracy and be the spokespersons for the marginalized.
- There is a need for a **better procedure of nomination to improve the quality of discussion in the Upper House**.
- It is also important that **more voices pointing out state-specific concerns are raised**. The same shall be responded positively from the government's side.
- Additionally, **more time needs to be spent on debates and discussions and less on disruptions** to ensure that all the legislation goes through proper and productive parliamentary scrutiny.

### Conclusion

- The Rajya Sabha has seen a memorable journey through lively debates, informed discussions and its ability to handle complex issues in the interest of the nation.
  - Indeed, it has also seen frictions and a rise in disruptions which is certainly a matter of concern for all stakeholders.
- But even through the ups and downs of Indian politics, the **Rajya Sabha has remained a vanguard for political and social values, a melting pot of culture and diversity** and over all, a **relentless flag-bearer of sovereign, socialist, secular, democratic republic called India**.



## E- Governance in India

*This editorial is based on "Adding digital layers of indignity" which was published in The Hindu on 25/07/2022. It talks about the digitalization of governance in India and related issues.*

**Tags:** Governance, GS Paper – 2, E-Governance, Government Policies and Interventions

**Democratic governance** mechanisms are becoming more receptive to the potentials of **Information Communication Technologies (ICT)** to achieve good governance in its implementation. This application of ICTs for governance is covered under the umbrella term of **E-governance**.

**India**, being the one of the largest countries **democratically, demographically and geographically** faces a huge **challenge in the application of e-governance** to empower its citizens and for overall economic development, **more specifically in the rural areas**.

### What are the Advantages of E-Governance in India?

- **Data Driven Governance:** Technology facilitates **communication**. The Internet and smartphones have enabled instant transmission of high volumes of data that acts as a fodder for **effective governance**.
- **Costs Saving:** A lot of Government expenditure goes towards the cost of buying stationery for official purposes.
  - **Letters and written records consume a lot of stationery**. However, replacing them with smartphones and the internet can save crores of money in expenses every year.
- **Transparency:** The use of e-governance helps make all functions of the business transparent. **All official information can be uploaded onto the internet**.
  - The citizens specifically access whichever information they want, whenever they want it, at their convenience.
- **Accountability:** Transparency directly links to accountability. Once the functions and information of the governance is available to the citizens, the **government is more accountable to its actions**.
- **Land Record Monitoring:** A vast developing country like India, with its diverse land tenure system requires effective **land monitoring**.
  - In order to **ensure that transactions related to properties are not fraudulent**, along with physical transactions, **online record maintenance** is a key feature of e-governance in India.

### **What are the Challenges Associated with E-Governance in India?**

- **Challenges in Interoperability:** It is one of the critical challenges of e-governance. **Interoperation among ministries and departments is difficult**, and it becomes a hurdle for processing and sharing data.
  - Most of the **e-governance services** being offered by state or central governments are **not integrated**.
- **Linguistic Barriers:** A challenge due to the diversity of the country. In India the most of the languages spoken by people are their native languages.
  - The majority of the rural population cannot use the project led by the government because they use English or Hindi as their primary language. This enforces the need to do governance in the **local language**.
- **Digital Illiteracy:** Literacy rate in rural areas is approximately 67% with rural male literacy rate 77% and rural female literacy rate 60%.
  - In India, many of the schemes launched by the government like **NREGA include rural people as end users**.
    - Due to **lack of technical awareness** and related knowledge **most of them are incapable of using the facilities provided** by the government.
- **Lack of Digital Infrastructure:** **Lack of connectivity** in rural areas through the internet and maintaining the continuous supply of electricity is a great **challenge for effective e-governance**.
  - **Authentication:** It is very important to know the right user of the services or it may be misused by private competitors.
    - Meanwhile, the **digital signature plays a major role in providing authenticity**. However, it is **expensive and requires frequent maintenance**.
- **Privacy Issues:** **Online transactions and privacy issues** are becoming increasingly prominent. **Insurance, banking, utility bill payments**, all these services are provided by e-Government.
  - Citizens are still dissatisfied with the level of security offered by the government.
- **Lack of Effective Grievance Redressal Mechanism:** There are serious challenges in the **absence of a timely and effective grievance redressal mechanism**.
  - In particular, **biometric recognition errors**, errors in online e-governance applications like **National Mobile Monitoring Software** that records attendance of **MGNREGA** workers at work sites.
    - Authorities often make the rights-holder feel responsible for technical glitches.

### **What are the Recent Government Initiatives to Promote E-Governance in India?**

- **MyGov Initiative**
- **National Scholarships Portal (NSP)**
- **Darpan Portal**
- **DigiLocker**
- **National Center of Geo-informatics**
- **National e-Governance Plan**

### **What Should be the Way Forward?**

- **Deployment of Intermediaries:** For **ensuring strategic coherence among planners and beneficiaries**. E-Governance is expected to maximize citizen satisfaction by not just improving responsiveness of public service delivery mechanisms but also by **augmenting citizens' participation in governance mechanisms**.
  - For instance, **inclusion of locals in policy implementation**, that will bridge the communication gap between the government and people.
    - Incentivizing implementers for local initiatives.
- **Demand Driven Services:** With **bottom-up approach of planning through separate urban-rural level socio-economic databases**, there is a need for a holistic and Integrated approach from government ministries that includes **identifying, evaluating, formulating, implementing and redressing data driven policies** to meet the needs of the population at the earliest.
- **Focus on Local E-governance:** **E-Governance needs to transform all levels of Government** but the **focus should be on local governments** since local governments are the **closest to citizens**, and constitute for many, the **main interface with government**.
- **Better Digital Infrastructure and Connectivity:** Special attention should be given to **improve digital infrastructure** especially in rural areas along with **better internet connectivity**.
  - **E-Governance through regional languages** is appreciable for nations like India where people from several linguistic backgrounds are the participants.
- **Understanding the E-readiness:** Different States in India are at different levels of e-readiness; while implementing e-Governance reforms in different parts of the country, this aspect has to be kept in mind.
  - Today, there are a number of successful projects running in the country. but there are very few which are on a nation-wide basis. There is a need to **replicate and upscale successful models evenly throughout the country**.



## Cheetah Reintroduction Plan

This editorial is based on “*Ecotani / Despite concerns, the Cheetah project is worth pursuing*” which was published in Hindustan Times on 25/07/2022. It talks about India’s plan to reintroduce Cheetah and related concerns.

**Tags:** Biodiversity & Environment, GS Paper - 3, Conservation, Government Policies & Interventions

The fastest land animal in the world, **Cheetah**, declared extinct in India in 1952, will find a new home in the **Kuno-Palpur National Park (KNP)**. African cheetahs are being brought under an **intercontinental translocation project** between India and Africa (mainly from South Africa and Namibia).

The plan to bring cheetahs to India initially from Iran and now from the African continent has been decades in the making, and **fraught with controversy**. Conservationists in India are skeptical of the plan’s success and **fear it will detract attention from the conservation of other endangered species** in need of translocation, like the **Asiatic lion**.

Let us understand India’s rationale behind reintroduction and related challenges.

### What is India’s Rationale behind Reintroduction of Cheetah?

- **Biological Objectives:** To re-establish the ecosystem function role of the cheetah in representative areas of its former range and contribute to the global effort towards the conservation of the cheetah as a species.
  - Bringing the Cheetah back will make India the only country with five species of big cats: tiger, lion, leopard, snow leopard and cheetah.
- **Enhancing Livelihood Options:** Cheetah reintroduction will boost and enhance living conditions of the local communities in and around the landscapes where the cheetah is likely to be introduced through increased revenues from **ecotourism** and associated activities.
- **Keeping the Food Chain Intact:** Top predators regulate all levels in a food chain and are considered as umbrella species for the food chain.
  - Cheetah can be a **charismatic flagship** and **umbrella species** to garner resources for **restoring open forest ecosystems** and **bringing back the balance in the food web**.
- **Climate Change Mitigation:** It will enhance India’s capacity to sequester carbon through ecosystem restoration activities in cheetah conservation areas and thereby contribute towards the global **climate change** mitigation goals.

### What Caused the Extinction of Cheetahs in India?

- The cheetah in India has been recorded in history from before the **Common Era**. Records of cheetahs being captured go back to the **1550s**.
- **Reduced levels of genetic heterogeneity** due to a historical genetic bottleneck resulting in **high infant mortality in the wild** and its **reduced ability to breed in captivity** were some of the major factors for extinction.
- **Sport hunting:** The consistent and widespread capture of cheetahs from the wild (both male and female) over centuries.
  - **From the 16th century onwards**, detailed accounts of its interaction with human beings are available as it was recorded by the **Mughals** and other kingdoms in the **Deccan**.
- **Bounty killings:** The **British** added to the woes of the species by **declaring a bounty for killing it in 1871**.
  - The final phase of its extinction coincided with British colonial rule.
- It is recorded that the **last cheetahs were shot in India in 1947**, and officially **declared extinct in 1952**.

### What are Challenges Associated with the Translocation of Cheetah in India?

- **Transition from Enclosure to Wild:** A pivotal issue is whether a cheetah living in an enclosure and being fed with a prey will be able to hunt in the wild on its own.
  - For instance, **Sundari**, the **tigress which returned from Satkosia in Odisha** after a failed relocation attempt, was finally **kept captive for life in Bhopal Zoo**.
- **Adaptability:** Reintroduced species experience **increased vulnerability** to influences of **drift, selection, and gene flow evolutionary processes** due to their **small sizes**, and **climatic and ecological differences between source and native habitats**.
  - African Cheetahs need long open spaces to run. **Indian parks tend to be much smaller than those in Africa**, offering less chance for such free movement.
    - Studies in Africa have shown that **female cheetahs are solitary and roam vast distances** whereas **male defend smaller territories** and mate when females pass through, **creating breeding issues**.
- **Coexistence of large predators:** It has never occurred anywhere else, so there is no real life experience to draw upon to suggest the **coexistence of cheetahs, lions, tigers, and leopards** could be comfortable.

- Studies have shown that in Africa, the **leopards have hunted down cheetahs as prey**, and **similar fears are being expressed for Kuno, which has about 50 leopards** in and around the core area, where cheetahs will be housed.
- **Rehabilitation Concerns:** For Cheetah's habitat to be adequately protected, many villages will have to be relocated, which will certainly impact the locals and cause disturbance and **migration**.

### What are the Other Reintroduction Programmes Across the Globe?

- **Bisalpur Rewilding Project in 2018:** The project brought back over **150 of the endangered Indian antelope**, apart from several other species of fauna and flora in and around the **Jodhpur area**.
- **Gaur (Indian Bison) :** An African-based safari company was at the forefront of the **translocation of 19 gaur at Bandhavgarh National Park in Madhya Pradesh**.
  - Over a decade, the gaur herd numbered **more than 70**.
- **American Bison:** Due to excessive hunting and slaughter for the fur trade, the **American Bison population** came down to as few as 750 animals in the 1890s.
  - Through conservation initiatives, re-introduction and population management the **population has rebounded to around 350,000**.
- **Gray Wolves:** Reintroduction of **gray wolves at Yellowstone** over 21 years ago, helped successfully reverse the degraded ecosystem at the American national park.

#### What are the Other Recent Initiatives for Wildlife Conservation in India?

- **Legal Framework:**
  - **Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972**
  - **Environment Protection Act, 1986**
  - **The Biological Diversity Act, 2002**
- **India's Collaboration With Global Wildlife Conservation Efforts:**
  - **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)**
  - **Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS)**
  - **Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**
  - **Global Tiger Forum (GTF)**

### What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Post-Release Monitoring:** There needs to be a proper strategy of monitoring with veterinary supervision and scientific evaluation of extent of adaptation.

- **Tracking teams must be organized** to keep an eye on the cheetahs and other carnivores released into the wild.
- **Awareness Campaign:** To spread awareness among local people and sensitize the youth, various outreach & awareness programs should be conducted to familiarize the locals with the reintroduction plan.
  - **Chintu Cheetah**, the **official mascot to spread awareness for the Cheetah introduction program** is a progressive step in this direction.
- **Priority List Management:** There should be a **proper mechanism to formulate the priority list** for evaluation and implementation of policies for **conserving different wildlife animals**.
  - The **Cheetah Introduction plan is missing in our National Wildlife Action Plan including the current plan for the period 2017-2031**, while the translocation of lions has been a national priority since the 1950s.
  - Equal attention should be given to safeguard native species and their habitat.
- **Proper Rehabilitation Mechanism:** There is need to devise proper rehabilitation policy including a **proper communication between administrative officers and locals to ensure their safety and satisfaction**.



## Metaverse

*This editorial is based on "Metaverse has potential to revolutionize e-commerce" which was published in Livemint on 25/07/2022. It talks about the Metaverse and its applications.*

**Tags:** Science & Technology, GS Paper - 3, Scientific Innovations & Discoveries, Indigenization of Technology, Technology Missions

The **metaverse** is an extension of our real world into the digital realm providing an immersive **multi-user experience** for anyone accessing it around the globe.

Accessing this virtual world requires the Internet and digital devices. The technology behind this is called **Augmented Reality (AR)** and **Virtual Reality (VR)**.

The growth of **Digital India** is accelerated by India's large young population which is deeply acquainted with **digital interactions and recreations**. While the technical, demographic and policy foundations for the metaverse appear to be present in India, there **remains the operational challenge of building the metaverse**.

### What are the Applications of Metaverse?

- **E-Commerce:** The metaverse can **bridge the gap between the physical and virtual world**, hence **merging online and offline commerce into one**. This means that users will be able to experience the physical world via the metaverse, digitally, making online shopping **more convenient**.
  - Companies would benefit hugely from the metaverse, as it not only **widens their consumer base** but also has the **potential to get reviews on new products**, thus pointing them in the right direction for the future.
  - **Brands can interact with the global audience through Metaverse** in the ecommerce business framework despite the geological barriers.
- **Skill Enhancement:** Metaverse can play a key role in skill enhancement in a remote manner due to its scope of developing new **experiential learning scenarios**.
- **Virtual Tourism:** With the **360° virtual tour**, the **viewers can not only watch the location recorded but also be present digitally in the desired location** with realistic effects.
  - For instance, **Virtual Reality Holiday “Try before you Fly”** helps the potential tourists to visit their desired destinations virtually.
- **Education and Learning:** VR combined with the effects of Metaverse has brought the **learning experience to a qualitative new level**. Students can now watch **live experiments with more intensive and high quality knowledge resources**.
  - Another Metaverse example is **Mesh** created by **Microsoft** which is a **mixed reality platform where faculty, staff and students can interact using their 3D avatars**.
- **Healthcare:** **Telemedicine** and **Telehealth** is a concept fueled by the Metaverse post pandemic where patients and doctors can interact in virtual 3D clinics.

### What are the Challenges Associated with Metaverse in India?

- **Privacy and Security:** Online risks may be exacerbated in the metaverse, where unwanted contact could become more intrusive and pervasive.
  - There exists a **possibility of the citizens’ data being collected and sold to third-party** aggregators.
  - If the metaverse suffers from weak security procedures, it may also be vulnerable to **cyber-attacks, identity theft, fraud** and a **safe haven for the harassers, criminals and fringe groups**.

- The increase in virtual interactions and the growth of concepts like digital avatars will make **tracking and intercepting illegal content and cybercriminals more difficult**.
- **Tradition v/s Technology:** Technology with its vast positiveness, does have a great negativeness for the tradition.
  - **There are both benefits and drawbacks to social networking sites**. The rise of social media has introduced **pseudo social behaviour** that has slightly delineated traditional social values of **collectivism and brotherhood**.
- **Legality of Metaverse:** The questions of **legislations and jurisdictions that will be applicable in this boundless digital world** is also a prominent concern requiring consideration by lawmakers.
  - The protection of **intellectual property (IP) and ownership** is another legal issue that is likely to emerge.
  - Protecting the IPR (IP Rights) of content creators will also be a challenge considering the **difficulty in tracking copyright infringements in the virtual space**.
- **Insufficient Infrastructure and Connectivity:** Building a **pragmatic, robust and accessible meta-governance infrastructure** is wrought with difficulties.
  - At the very least, **it will require a 5G connection to provide a safe and reliable experience**. Most rural communities are still struggling with acquiring and maintaining a secure **4G connection**.
    - Additionally, the amount of energy currently available is inadequate compared to the energy warranted by the metaverse.
- **Digital Divide:** As per ITU’s **World Telecommunication/ ICT Indicators Database 2020**, only **43% of the population in India uses the internet**.
  - This has **widened the gap between demographics and regions that have access to modern information and communications technology (ICT)**, and those that **don’t or have restricted access**.

### What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Reducing the Digital Divide:** Governance mechanisms for virtual worlds would need to be supported with **strengthening and scaling efforts to promote digital literacy, safety and wellbeing** so that participants can engage meaningfully in online communities while consciously navigating harmful content and behaviors.
- **Policy Backing:** It is the **right time for the government to create the right policy background for its operation** and leverage the metaverse for public services.

- The government **needs to focus on information accessibility, information utilization and information receptiveness.**
- **Safe and Secure Metaverse Ecosystem:** There is a strong need to develop and regulate effective ecosystems to address the distinct elements of safety, privacy, and security within the DNA of this technology.
- Building a **citizen-friendly meta-governance infrastructure** will need a **collaboration by experts from various disciplines, including designers, business model experts and lawyers**, to mitigate any potential legal hurdles. **Private sector intervention** may be required as well.
- **Meta Help Desk:** Ine-governance, essential information is released to a targeted audience through ICT. Meta-help desks or meta-divisions in a particular ministry/ other government agencies can help in providing the critical data required.
- **Transparent and Consent-based Applications:** **Technology companies** will need to be more responsible and **transparent in their data processing** and safety practices.
  - Fostering an **informed consent-based model while collecting personal data and abiding by the principles of data minimization** and purpose limitation will be critical to prevent unchecked data processing and collection for commercial gains.
- **Global Cooperation:** As the metaverse continues to develop, we are seeing a glimpse of a more **digitally advanced borderless world** that is full of promise.
  - While this new world continues to expand, we have to be aware of the set of challenges it brings with every new development and to look forward towards uniform regulations across the globe.



## Sports Governance in India

*This editorial is based on "India at Commonwealth Games: Sports governance needs to change" which was published in The Indian Express on 28/07/2022. It talks about the upcoming Commonwealth Games and sports governance in India.*

**Tags:** Polity and Governance, GS Paper- 2, Government Policies & Interventions

The **21<sup>st</sup> edition of the Commonwealth Games** kicks off with the opening ceremony in the host city of **Birmingham, United Kingdom**. India is leading the way as a strong contingent.

Given **India's economy** and the country's **young demographics**, the narrative of **Sports in India is undergoing a transformation**. But sport's booming interest in India has **not necessarily translated into better performance in the overall sports sector**, barring a few sports like **cricket and shooting**.

There is a **high level of complexity in the Indian sport sector** as **diverse organizations** (e.g., **governing bodies, private companies, not-for-profit foundations**, etc.) are responsible for delivering and managing sport in India. Ultimately, the **size and complexity of the sector** is a significant contributor to a series of **specific governance challenges for sport in India**.

### What is the History of Sports Governance in India?

- In the **early 1950s**, the **Federal Government** created the **All India Council of Sports (AICS)** to apprehend the declining standards of sports in the country.
- In **1982**, after Asian games, the department of sports was transformed into the **Department of Youth Affairs and Sports**.
- In **1984**, National Sports Policy was initiated.
- In **2000**, the department was converted into a **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS)**.
- In **2011**, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports notified the **National Sports Development Code of India 2011**.
- In **2022**, Ministry of Civil Aviation launched **National Air Sport Policy 2022** (NASP 2022) for **Aerobatics, Aero modeling, Ballooning, Drones, Hang gliding and powered hang gliding, Parachuting** etc.

### What is the Current Model of Sports Governance in India?

- The model in India has stakeholders such as the **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS), Indian Olympic Association (IOA), State Olympic Association (SOA), National Sports Federation (NSF), Sports Authority of India (SAI)**, etc.
- A broad level graphical representation of the arrangements amongst them is as follows:

### What are the Issues Associated with Sports Governance in India?

- **Unclear Demarcation of Rights and Responsibility:** Sport is delivered by many different parties. Currently, there is very little distinction between management and governance within Indian sport. In many Indian



sporting organizations, the executive committee — the body ostensibly responsible for governance — usually finds itself doing the management work.

- **Lack of Checks and Balances:** In the pretext of autonomy, they have been allowed to function in any manner without checks and balances.
- **Lack of Transparency and Accountability:** The current sports model faces accountability issues such as that of having **unlimited discretionary powers** and also there is **no transparency in the decision-making with irregularity in revenue management**.
  - For instance, in July 2010, the **Central Vigilance Commission** released a report which showed that there were **irregularities in 14 projects of Commonwealth Games** held in India.
  - The **2013 Indian Premier League spot-fixing** and betting case arose when the Delhi Police arrested three cricketers, on the charges of alleged spot-fixing.
    - Subsequently, the **Lodha Committee** was **appointed by the Supreme Court of India** to analyze and recommend implementable actions for improving the **Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI)**.
- **Inadequate Professionalization:** Many Indian sport organizations, particularly the governing bodies, have not made structural adaptations to meet the associated challenges of a commercialized and professional sector.
  - These organizations continue to rely on volunteers to manage the operations of the organization rather than hiring skilled professionals to handle the increased workload.
- **Sports as a Hobby vs Profession:** In India, sports is **primarily viewed as a hobby** due to its **low success rate, academic pressures** and **job-seeker mentality**, making it difficult for youth to pursue sports as a profession.
- **Lack of Sufficient Infrastructure:** Status of sports infrastructure in India is yet to reach the desired level. This creates an obstacle in developing a culture of sports in the country.
  - According to the **Constitution of India**, **sport is a State subject** consequently there is **no comprehensive approach for the development of sports infrastructure uniformly** throughout the country.
- **Performance Enhancing Drugs:** Use of performance enhancing drugs is still a major problem in the sports sector. This problem still needs to be addressed effectively, despite the creation of the **National Anti Doping Agency** in the country.

### What are the Recent Government Initiatives to Promote Sports Culture?

- **Fit India Movement**
- **Khelo India**
- **SAI Training Centers Scheme**
- **Sports Talent Search Portal**
- **National Sports Awards Scheme**
- **Target Olympic Podium**

### What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Adequate Infrastructure Investment:** To become a leading sports nation, India will have to invest heavily in **building a modern infrastructure with** international best practices in **sports training, sport medicine, research and analysis** across the sport institutions with **adequate attention to all major sports**.
  - The **quality of infrastructure can be scaled up to the village level** and **regional centers** should be made available for those who are serious at taking their sport professionally.
- **Effective Legislative Backing:** In the absence of strong legislation, there will be no efficacy in the functions of the sports authorities. Also, there might be **absolute political intervention**, which can be easily checked with a **well-drafted legislation reducing anomalies**.
- **Restructuring Governance and Management:** **There should be a proper** demarcating of roles and responsibilities among different bodies involved in the Indian sport sector to **maximize the use of resources** and **ensure** there are **no gaps in meeting the needs of sport**.
  - However, this needs to be done in **conjunction with the sectors in stake** and **cannot be dictatorial along with inclusion of professionals in the strategic and management spot**.
  - Formation of the separate '**Corporate Functions**' group for **management of sponsorships, media rights** and **government funding** will help fix the responsibility of **revenue management**.
- **Creating Sports Awareness:** By incorporating sports into children's daily lives, it will not only boost their confidence, self-image and personality, but also open the gateway to a possible career in sports.
  - **Towards Bottom-Up Approach:** The change has to begin from the primary education level to build a **sporting culture in the country**.
    - The **education system** should be revamped to give sports an equal importance in the holistic upbringing of a child.

- **Developing as a Potential Training Hub:** India has an immense coaching talent with vast experience in different sports that can act as a catalyst for the development of India as a training hub for sports like Kabaddi and Cricket at an international sphere.
  - **Example: Iten, Kenya.**
    - There is a small town called Iten in Kenya. It has produced more than 10 world champions in athletics in the last couple of decades.
    - Almost every middle-distance runner in the world has been to Iten for training at least once in their lifetime.



## Prevention of Money Laundering Act

This editorial is based on “*Narrow view: On the Supreme Court’s PMLA verdict*” which was published in The Hindu on 29/07/2022. It discusses about the apprehensions on the amendments made recently to the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002.

**Tags:** Polity and Governance, GS Paper-2, Government Policies & Interventions, Statutory Bodies, GS Paper -3, Money Laundering

**Money Laundering** is a heinous crime which not only affects the social and economic fabric of the country but also tends to promote other serious offences like **terrorism** and **drug trafficking** which India has been witnessing a lot lately. It’s a growing problem that needs to be addressed.

The **Prevention Of Money Laundering Act (PMLA)** formulated in the year **2002** has undergone various critical changes from time to time in order to give itself more strength to deal with the offence of money laundering.

Several petitions have been filed across the country that question the almost blanket powers assigned to the **Enforcement Directorate** under PMLA for searching, seizing, investigating, and attaching assets considered to be proceeds of crimes.

### What is the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002?

- **Money Laundering** refers to the conversion or misrepresentation of money which has been illegally obtained by unlawful sources and methods.
  - It is a criminal offence in India and charges in this instance refer to statutory provisions of the **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.**

- The PMLA was enacted in response to India’s global commitment (**Vienna Convention**) to combat the menace of money laundering. These include:
  - **United Nations Convention Against Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances 1988**
  - **Basle Statement of Principles, 1989**
  - **Forty Recommendations of the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering, 1990**
  - **Political Declaration and Global Program of Action adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1990**
- The PMLA is applicable to all persons which include individuals, companies, firms, partnership firms, associations of persons or incorporations and any agency, office or branch owned or controlled by any of the above-mentioned persons.

### What are the Recent Amendments in PMLA?

- **Clarification about the Position of Proceeds of Crime:** Proceeds of the Crime not only includes the property derived from scheduled offence but would also include any other property derived or obtained indulging into any criminal activity relate-able or similar to the scheduled offence.
- **Money Laundering Redefined: Money Laundering was not an independent crime** rather depended on another crime, known as the **predicate offence** or **scheduled offence**.
  - The amendment seeks to treat money laundering as a stand-alone crime.
  - Under **Section 3 of PMLA**, the person shall be accused of money laundering if in any manner that person is **directly or indirectly involved** in the proceeds of the crime.
    - **Concealment**
    - **Possession**
    - **Acquisition**
    - **Use or projecting as untainted property**
    - **Claiming as untainted property**
- **Continuing Nature of Offence:** This amendment further mentioned that the person will be considered to be **involved in the offence of money laundering till the time that person is getting the fruits of activities** related to money laundering as this offence is of a continuing nature.

### What are the Concerns Raised About the Amendments in PMLA?

- **Possible Misuse of Powers:** There is a strong possibility that PMLA can be invoked against a political rival

or a dissenter, because the “process is itself the punishment”.

- **Issues with ECIR:** **ECIR** (Enforcement Case Information Report), an equivalent of the **FIR**, is **considered an “internal document” and not given to the accused.**
  - Throughout the procedure, the **accused does not even know facts of the allegation against him**, as the only document which contains the allegation is the ECIR, **which is not supplied to the accused persons.**
- **Contrast to General Criminal Law:** PMLA is different from the **General Criminal Law.**
  - In General Criminal Law, **every accused is innocent until proven guilty.**
  - However, in PMLA, this burden has been shifted to the accused persons; **they will have to prove their innocence.**
- **Accused-Bound to be a Witness:** **Section 63 of PMLA** states that information must be given by the accused, **false information or no information will constitute another offence.**
  - **Compelling the accused to be a witness against themselves** is violative of the **right against self-incrimination.**
- **Inefficiency of ED:** The **conviction rate of Enforcement Directorate under this law is very low**, despite thousands of cases registered, people arrested, and lives turned upside down.
  - According to the data quoted by the **government in Parliament of India**, there were **zero convictions between 2005 and 2013-14.** By **2014-15 to 2021-22**, out of **888 cases under ED**, only **23 cases were under conviction.**

#### What is the Enforcement Directorate?

- Directorate of Enforcement is a **specialized financial investigation agency** under the **Department of Revenue, Ministry of Finance.**
- In 1956, an ‘**Enforcement Unit**’ was formed, in the Department of Economic Affairs, for handling Exchange Control Laws violations under,
- In 1957, this Unit was renamed as ‘**Enforcement Directorate**’.
- ED enforces the following laws:
  - **Foreign Exchange Management Act, 1999 (FEMA)**
  - **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA)**

#### What is the Current Stand of the Supreme Court Regarding the Amendments in PMLA?

- Recently, a **three-judges-bench of the Supreme Court** has upheld the constitutional validity of the provisions of the PMLA, calling it a “**unique and special legislation**” underlining the powers of the ED to hold inquiries, arrest people and attach property.
- SC ruled that **no comparison can be drawn between PMLA and Criminal Procedure Code (1973).**
  - Including the mechanism regarding prevention, investigation or trial in connection with the scheduled offence.
- **The SC has also held that the ECIR cannot be equated with FIR.**
  - ECIR is an internal document of the ED. Supply of ECIR to the accused is not mandatory and only disclosure of reasons during arrest is enough **but can merely be informed about the grounds for arrest.**

#### What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Internal Checks and Balances:** It is true that law has given stringent powers to the ED in dealing with the accused that can increase the possibility of political misuse.
  - But there must be a **consensus between the adjudicating authority and the officers of ED** to abide by the constitutionality of provision under PMLA, making the investigation more lucid.
- **The Process Itself Should not Become Punishment:** The ED’s expanded powers **should be welcomed with a greater commitment to expeditiously resolve the cases**, so both the judiciary and enforcement agencies can move forward with **speedy trials and convictions.**
- **Operational Vigilance:** There must be a constant scrutiny over the operations of the Enforcement Directorate and current disposition whether this clarification will improve the conviction rate (which is right now less than half a percent).
  - And if there will be any lacunas in the operative part, **change is the law of nature**, these **gaps can be filled** either through **suitable legislation, executive action or revised order of the apex court.**



## India and South Asia

This editorial is based on “*S Asia is in a flux. India must show leadership*” which was published in Hindustan Times on 29/07/2022. It discusses the challenges related to regional cooperation in South Asia and role of India.

**Tags:** International Relations, GS Paper- 2, India and its Neighbourhood, Groupings & Agreements Involving India and/ or Affecting India's Interests

**South Asia** is the southern region of Asia, which is defined in both geographical and ethno-cultural terms. The region consists of the countries of **Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka.**

**India's vision of regional economic integration in South Asia** is based on enhanced intra-regional trade, investment flows and regional transport and communication links in South Asia. **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)** and **India's Neighbourhood First Policy** are the two vehicles in this process.

Although there are common cultural roots, there are a number of **cross-sub regional challenges** like **political and economic instability (Sri Lankan Crisis and Afghanistan Crisis), high inflation, depleting foreign exchange reserves, and domestic unrest** that continue to simmer in the South Asian region, which hosts around a quarter of the world's population.

### What is India's Neighbourhood First Policy?

- **India's Neighbourhood First policy** embodies India's vision of building a **Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam** (the world as one family).
- **Development Assistance:** The Indian government has **allocated INR 62,920 million in its budget for 2022-23 for development assistance** to countries in **India's neighbourhood and Africa and Latin America.**
- **Vaccine Diplomacy:** As part of India's neighbourhood First policy, India, through its vaccine diplomacy (**Vaccine Maitri**), extended help to many countries of the world **especially neighbouring countries** during the **Covid-19 pandemic.**

### What are the Challenges regarding Regional Cooperation in South Asia?

- **Low Inter-Regional Trade:** South Asia's intra-regional trade is the **lowest globally, constituting only 5% of the region's total trade.** The current economic integration is just one-third of its potential with an annual estimated gap of 23 billion dollars.

- **External Influence in South Asia:** Smaller neighboring countries are quite predictable in seeking to **balance India's influence through closer relations with external powers**, in the past this was the US at the moment it is **China.**
  - **Recent Chinese actions and policies in South Asia** as well as its maritime neighbours, including **Indian Ocean island nations**, have made it necessary for India to take its neighbours very seriously.
- **Territorial Issues:** Territorial disputes in South Asia remain a **challenge to the peace, stability, and prosperity of the region.**
  - Of all interstate disputes, those over territory tend to be more likely to lead to **armed conflict.**
- **Inefficient Management of Global Supply Chain:** South Asia's international **trade integration is lower than the global average**, and it is way less integrated into global value chains **compared to East Asia.**
  - The countries have abysmally low exports due to the low productivity of many countries in this region.

### What Role India can Play For the Development of South Asia?

- **Boosting Regional Trade:** India can leverage regional trade, connectivity and investment, and strengthen the **South Asian Free Trade Agreement** as a game-changer for the region.
  - **Galvanizing economic energies**, which would **lower barriers** to intra-regional food trade and **encourage regional supply chains.**
- **Providing Ecological Blueprint:** South Asian countries can benefit from India's eco-blueprint by focusing on the **protection of biodiversity** and responding to the climate crisis. The linkage between **effective governance and sustainable development** also needs to be acknowledged in South Asian countries.
- **Highlight the Need of Food Security:** Regional food security is another area that India could take a major initiative in with an eye to the future and can be an integral facilitator and component to this economic bloc for food security.
  - **Increasing the capacity of the SAARC Food Bank** that currently stands at less than 500,000 MT.
- **Promoting Sub-Regional Initiatives:** India can increase the **convening capacity** of sub-regional initiatives such as the **Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation.**

- The border regions can be effective partners in shaping India's regional engagement by steering sectoral regional dialogues on **cross-border trade, transport and health**.
- By extending necessary assistance, **India can strengthen its position in the region and achieve both economic and strategic depth vis-à-vis China**.
- **Voice of South Asia in International Forums:** To promote the interests of South Asian nations as a group, **India can be the voice of South Asia** in international forums. A secure regional environment will also help India reach its ambitious development goals.

### ***What Should be the Way Forward?***

- **Strengthening Existing Associations:** Existing associations like **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)** haven't been able to significantly advance regional cooperation here.

- **Delinking domestic sentiments from the economic rationale, engaging in diplomacy to allay concerns** should be the way forward for South Asian countries which do have qualms about the integration.
- **Towards Self-Reliant South Asia:** Self-reliance of South Asia range from offers of **freer transit trade through the region, the development of supply and logistic chains, digital data interchange, single-window and digitized clearance systems**, risk assessment and minimisation measures, **wider use of trade lines of credit (presently abysmally low)**, denser connectivity, **smoother cross-border inspections**.
- **People-to-people Connect:** Priority should be given to people-to-people connections and deep cultural affinities for sustained cordiality and stability. Further, focus should be given to prompt delivery of multilateral commitments for the overall development of the region.



## Drishti Mains Questions

1. Green bonds hold the key to India's climate resilience. Comment.
2. Assam's unique topography, climate and socio-economic conditions make it more vulnerable to disasters like floods. Comment.
3. Custodial deaths are common despite enormous efforts from training police personnel to embrace scientific methods of investigation. Comment.
4. Plastic has become one of the most pressing environmental issues that we are facing today. Give an account of the current status and the targets to be achieved pertaining to plastic waste management in the country.
5. Critically examine the role of Online Dispute Resolution Mechanism in the Indian Judicial system and highlight the key challenges associated with its implementation. (150 words)
6. Growth in the Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) Sector in India is being fuelled by improving scenarios in both demand as well as supply side. Discuss the driving factors responsible for its growth.
7. Government's recent takedown orders of accounts and posts on social media flags issues of free speech. Comment.
8. The urban poor is largely the overflow of the rural poor who migrate to urban areas, Discuss the solutions to improve standard of living of Urban poor.
9. India's 'Neighbourhood First policy' can walk an extra mile to help Sri Lanka out of the current crisis. Substantiate your view.
10. Critically examine the aims and objectives of I2U2. What importance does it hold for India?
11. Despite the constitutional mandate on democratic decentralisation in India, the growth of urban local bodies has been uneven and slow. Comment.
12. How far do you think that demand for state autonomy has shaped the nature of federalism in India? Cite some examples to validate your answer.
13. How far do you think that the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act will facilitate inclusivity and empowerment of persons with disabilities in India? Discuss.
14. "India's Demographic Dividend has opened the window of opportunity in terms of growth and development of the country that needs to be seized before the window closes". Comment.
15. "Startups are the engine of exponential growth, manifesting the power of innovation". Critically analyse in context of Startup Ecosystem in India.
16. Social media has greatly influenced the political dynamics in India. Comment.
17. Explain why heat waves are confined to North-Western and South Central parts of India. Discuss the strategies that India needs to adopt to mitigate the impacts of heat waves.
18. Throw light upon the status of tribal population in India. Present some solutions for their empowerment.
19. Assess the importance of bicameralism in India with respect to the role of Rajya Sabha in securing greater executive accountability ?
20. Discuss the challenges in the application of e-governance in India and propose the solutions.
21. Discuss the causes of the extinction of cheetahs in India. What are the ecological challenges associated with reintroduction of Cheetah in India?
22. "While the technical, demographic and policy foundations for the metaverse appear to be present in India, there remains the operational challenge of building the metaverse." Explain.
23. "Complexity of the current model of sports governance is a significant contributor to a series of

## Drishti Mains Questions

challenges for development of sports culture in India.” Comment.

24. “The Enforcement Directorate is assigned almost-blanket powers under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act 2002 and the following amendments to the Act”. Comment.
25. Evaluate the economic and strategic dimensions of India’s Neighbourhood Policy in the context of recent political unrest in South Asia.

