



## Geopolitical Challenges and Opportunities for India in 2023

**For Prelims:** G-20 Summit, Ukraine-Russia, Tavang Clash, Sri Lanka Crisis, Nepal.

**For Mains:** Groupings & Agreements Involving India and/or Affecting India's Interests

### Why in News?

India is entering 2023 with challenges and opportunities staring at it on the diplomatic and military fronts with the [Russia-Ukraine](#) war and **China's belligerence** at India's doorstep.

- With a highly infectious **Covid-19 variant** spreading across China, a level of uncertainty has again gripped the world. And an economic downturn looms large on the horizon.
- As the [G20](#) Chair, India is looking forward to shaping conversations **on issues confronting the world**.
- As [UN Security Council](#)'s non-permanent member for 2 years, India sought to project its views and **contribute to the global conversations**.

### What were the Major Concerns in 2022?

- **Russia-Ukraine War:**
  - The Russian invasion of Ukraine has **upended the global order in place since World War II**, impacted the world's [food and energy security](#), and is pushing the global economy towards a [recession](#).
  - The nuclear rhetoric from Russian leaders has caused anxiety, while the strategic embrace of **Russia and China is another worry**.
- **China's Aggression:**
  - The Ukraine war has also made the world sit up and look at China's aggression in the Indo-Pacific.
  - India too is facing that aggression on its border, with a **skirmish in Arunachal Pradesh after the [2020 Galwan clashes](#)** that killed 20 Indian soldiers.
  - China's belligerence can be seen in its recent activities in the [South China Sea](#), where it has been observed to carry out construction on an island.
- **Taliban Engagement:**
  - Less than a year after Taliban's recapturing of Afghanistan, India reopened its **operations in the Indian embassy in Kabul** and began the **process of re-engaging by sending humanitarian aid** in the form of food grains, vaccines, and essential medicines.
  - While India has made its red lines clear on the **Menace of Extremism and Rights of Minorities** and women, **it has also signalled a long-term commitment to Afghanistan's future**.
    - **India** has made a commitment of USD 80 million — over and above its USD 3 billion commitment in the last two decades — for improving the lives of Afghans.
  - This means India is looking at the Taliban as a political actor, although it is **influenced and even controlled by Pakistan's military establishment**.
- **Neighborhood in Crisis:**
  - The **Lankan economic and political crisis** was a major challenge in the neighbourhood.

India provided **humanitarian aid, fuel, medicines, more than any other country** in such a short period of time.

- India is also helping Lanka negotiate an economic debt relief package from the **[International Monetary Fund \(IMF\)](#)**.
- With China as a rival in Sri Lanka, India wants a **government that understands India's security and strategic interests**.
- **Engagement with Myanmar** has continued in **low-key visits and assistance to the military junta regime**.
  - The key impact has been the **influx of refugees from Myanmar** to the north-eastern states through the porous borders and concern about non-state actors fomenting trouble in the north-east.

## What are the Challenges and Opportunities Ahead?

### ▪ Handling China:

- The recent **[Tawang Clash](#)** has shown that China is **challenging the status quo, not just in eastern Ladakh but in other sectors**.
- It is clear that China is the biggest adversary unlike in the past where some gave them the benefit of doubt.
- India's **strategic response has been guided** by a thinking that one has to stand up to the bully, but that has come at a cost, with **soldiers braving the harsh winter in eastern Ladakh** for the third year in a row.
- As China sees itself as a superpower and whose time has come, more clashes and competing interests with India are likely, which will have to be resolved through negotiations.

### ▪ Engaging with Russia:

- Russia has been a reliable supplier of defence equipment for the past seven decades, and despite diversification to the US, France and Israel among others, **it still dominates the field**.
- But it has been complicated by the Russia-Ukraine war, where the reliability of Russian equipment is **being questioned and the supply chain is under strain**.
- For India, China has been the biggest worry and what concerns India is that **Russia's ties with China influences some of its decisions**.
  - In the post **[Cold War-era](#)**, economic relations have formed the **"new strategic basis" for Sino-Russian relations**.
  - China is Russia's biggest trading partner and the **largest Asian investor in Russia**.
  - The West's approach towards Russia after the war has brought Moscow much closer to China. Delhi's effort will be to engage with both Russia and the West, and put its strategic defence and national security interests first.

### ▪ G20 as a Global Stage:

- The hosting of the **[G20 summit](#)** will be one of the biggest portrayals of India's rise at the global stage months ahead of the General Elections in 2024.
- India has already positioned itself as the **"voice of the Global South"**— a reference to the developing and the less-developed countries — and will seek to put its priorities on the global forum.
- In this context, India will also **seek to bring Russian and Western interlocutors and leaders together** and end the conflict in Europe.
- If India manages to do so, it will **claim a diplomatic win, which will go down well with its domestic constituency**.

### ▪ Ties with the West:

- With India buying cheap oil and not joining the West against Russia, India will have to work **to assuage the concerns of European and American partners**. In fact, the G20 preparations will give some opportunity to do that.

### ▪ Challenge in the Neighbourhood:

#### ◦ Sri Lanka and Maldives:

- While Sri Lanka will continue to demand India's humanitarian, financial and political attention in the new year, **India will also be part of political conversation in Maldives**.

- The Maldives is going to polls in September 2023, and an “India Out” campaign is likely to fire up the political debate. Delhi will be watching closely as political parties try to project India as the bully and a big brother.
- **Bangladesh:**
  - **Bangladesh** also goes into election mode in 2023, with polls scheduled for January 2024 after an iron-fisted reign of Sheikh Hasina.
  - India will be looking at her prospects **after a long and uninterrupted political journey that has brought security in India’s eastern states.**
- **Nepal:**
  - Nepal witnessed a dramatic turn of events, with rebel-turned-politician [Pushpa Kamal Dahal ‘Prachanda’ becoming the Prime Minister](#) and **former PM K P Oli** — a known India-baiter in recent years — holding the keys to the government.
  - This will pose a significant challenge for India, which has seen Beijing’s influence grow in Kathmandu in recent years.
- **Pakistan’s Crucial Year:**
  - Elections in Pakistan are scheduled for later in 2023. This will again be a contest to observe how the new civilian government and the Army chief will shape their attitude towards India.
  - In India, with Lok Sabha polls due in 2024, how the Pakistan puzzle is raked up and managed might hold the key to the next steps in the relationship.

## Way Forward

- India’s domestic efforts will need to be **bolstered by smart partnerships with others.**
- While building new friends, India needs to **keep old partners like Russia by its side**, engage all countries **including China, and resolve outstanding matters with smaller neighbours** which have hobbled foreign policy for decades.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

- Q1.** In respect of India-Sri Lanka relations, discuss how domestic factors influence foreign policy. **(2013)**
- Q2.** At the international level, bilateral relations between most nations are governed on the policy of promoting one’s own national interest without any regard for the interest of other nations. This leads to conflicts and tension between nations. How can ethical consideration help resolve such tensions? Discuss with specific examples. **(2015)**
- Q3.** ‘The long-sustained image of India as a leader of the oppressed and marginalised nations has disappeared on account of its new found role in the emerging global order.’ Elaborate. **(2019)**

[Source: IE](#)

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## Corporate Governance

**For Prelims:** Corporate Governance, Central Bureau of Investigation, Banking Regulation Act

**For Mains:** Corporate Governance and related issues

## Why in News?

Chanda Kochhar (Ex-ICICI Bank CEO) **serves as a cautionary tale of the dangers of greed** in the corporate world.

- The [Central Bureau of Investigation \(CBI\)](#) has alleged that ICICI Bank had sanctioned credit of Rs 3,250 crore to the companies of the Videocon Group promoted by Dhoot in violation of the [Banking Regulation Act](#), **RBI guidelines**, and credit policy of the bank.

## What is Corporate Governance?

- **About:**
  - Corporate governance, **which refers to the system of rules, practices, and processes** by which a company is directed and controlled, plays a crucial role in ensuring that businesses are run ethically and in the best interests of their stakeholders.
  - One of the key responsibilities of corporate governance is to **prevent corporate greed and ensure that businesses are operated in a responsible and transparent manner.**
  - By enforcing strong ethical standards and holding individuals accountable for their actions, corporate governance can **help to curb greed and protect the interests of shareholders, customers, and the broader community.**
- **Principles of Corporate Governance**
  - **Fairness:**
    - The board of directors **must treat shareholders, employees, vendors, and communities fairly** and with equal consideration.
  - **Transparency:**
    - The board **should provide timely, accurate, and clear information** about such things as financial performance, conflicts of interest, and risks to shareholders and other stakeholders.
  - **Risk Management:**
    - The board and management **must determine risks of all kinds and how best to control them.** They must act on those recommendations to manage them. They must inform all relevant parties about the existence and status of risks.
  - **Responsibility:**
    - The board is **responsible for the oversight of corporate matters** and management activities.
    - It must be aware of and support the successful, ongoing performance of the company. Part of its responsibility is to recruit and hire a CEO. It must act in the best interests of a company and its investors.
  - **Accountability:**
    - The board must **explain the purpose of a company's activities and the results of its conduct.** It and company leadership are accountable for the assessment of a company's capacity, potential, and performance. It must communicate issues of importance to shareholders.

## What are the Ethical Issues with Corporate Governance in India?

- **Conflict of Interest:**
  - The challenge of managers potentially enriching themselves at the cost of shareholders e.g., the recent case of former ICICI bank head Chanda Kochhar approved a loan to Videocon for a quid pro quo deal for her husband.
- **Weak Board:**
  - Lack of diversity of experience and background represents a major area of weakness for these boards. There have been questions about the board performing in the larger interests of the shareholders.
- **Separation of Ownership and Management:**
  - In case of family-run companies, the separation of ownership and management remains a key challenge in the majority of companies including some of India's top ones.

- **Independent Directors:**

- Independent directors are partisan and are not able to check promoters unethical practices.

## What are the Related Initiatives?

- The Ministry of Corporate Affairs (MCA) and [Securities and Exchange Board of India \(SEBI\)](#) is responsible for corporate governance initiatives in India. The corporate sector of India faced major changes in the 1990s after liberalization.
  - SEBI monitors and regulates corporate governance of listed companies in India through Clause 49.
- [The Companies Act, 2013](#) provides a formal structure for corporate governance by enhancing disclosures, reporting and transparency through enhanced as well as new compliance norms.

## How Corporate Governance in India can be Improved?

- **Diverse Boards are better Boards:**
  - In this context, 'diverse' is all-encompassing, including gender, ethnicity, skills and experience.
- **Robust Risk Management Policies:**
  - Adoption of effective and robust risk management policies for better decision making as it develops a deeper insight into the risk-reward trade-offs that all Corporations face.
- **Effective Governance Infrastructure:**
  - Since the board is ultimately responsible for all the actions and decisions of an organisation, it will need to have in place specific policies to guide organisational behaviour.
  - To ensure that the **line of responsibility between board and management is clearly delineated**, it is particularly important for the board to develop policies in relation to delegations.
- **Evaluation of the Board's Performance:**
  - Boards should improve their **governance processes by addressing weaknesses revealed in board evaluations.**
- **Communication:**
  - Facilitating shareholder communication with the board is key. There is a need to provide a contact person with whom shareholders may discuss any issue.

### UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q1.** In the light of the Satyam Scandal (2009), discuss the changes brought in corporate governance to ensure transparency and accountability. **(2015)**

**Q2.** What do you understand by the terms 'governance', 'good governance' and 'ethical governance'? **(2016)**

[Source: Livemint](#)

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## Year-End- Review of DST

**For Prelims:** ARTPARK, NIDHI Programme, SVAMITVA Scheme

**For Mains:** Achievements of DST, Achievements of Indians in Science & Technology

## Why in News?

Recently, the year-end-review of the [Department of Science & Technology \(DST\)](#) under the Ministry of Science & Technology was released.

## What are the Major Achievements of DST During 2022?

- **India's Ranking in Global S&T Indices:**
  - India is now **placed at 40<sup>th</sup> position among the top innovative economies** globally as per [Global Innovation Index \(GII\) 2022](#).
  - The country remains among the top 3 countries in scientific publications as per the [National Science Foundation \(NSF\) database](#) and also in terms of no of PhDs, in size of the Higher Education System, as well as in terms of number of Start-ups.
- **Creating a Robust Start-up & Innovation Ecosystem:**
  - DST has been a pioneer in establishing a network of Technology Business Incubators (TBI) and **Science & Technology Entrepreneur's Parks (STEP) across the country under the [National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations \(NIDHI\) program](#)**.
  - **New PRAYAS centres have been supported during 2022** along with support to other ongoing PRAYAS centres across the country that are **supporting young innovators to turn their ideas into prototypes**.
- **New Heights in Supercomputing Capacity:**
  - New **installations of [high-performance computers](#) at five institutes** (IIT Kharagpur, NIT Trichy, IIT Gandhinagar, IIT Guwahati, IIT Mandi).
- **Development in Cyberphysical Domains:**
  - The Union Cabinet approved the [National Mission on Interdisciplinary Cyber Physical Systems \(NM-ICPS\) in 2018](#) for a period of five years, to be implemented by the DST.
    - The Mission is being **implemented through 25 Technology Innovation Hubs (TIHs)** created at reputed academic institutes across the country.
  - **Some of the new innovations include:**
    - **XraySetu:** AI researchers at [ARTPARK](#) developed an AI-driven platform called XraySetu that helped Chest **X-ray** interpretation of images.
    - **RAKSHAK:** A team of scientists from IIT Bombay has developed a tapestry method for screening **Covid-19** under **Remedial Action, Knowledge Skimming, and Holistic Analysis of Covid-19 (RAKSHAK)**, an effort supported by the Technology Innovation Hub (TIH) at IIT Jodhpur.
- **India's Position on International S&T Engagement:**
  - India assumes the [G20 Presidency](#) recently and will convene the G20 Leaders' Summit **for the first time in the country in 2023**.
    - As part of the same, DST takes the responsibility of coordinating the **activities of Science-20 (S20) and Research Innovation Initiative Gathering (RIIG) Engagement Groups** during India's G20 Presidency in 2023.
  - **India joins hands with Finland to establish [Virtual Network Centre in Quantum Computing](#)** to jointly develop 20 qubits superconducting-based Quantum Computer in 1st phase and further **scale it up to 54 qubits in second phase**.
- **Geospatial Data, Infrastructure & Technology:**
  - Recently, the 2<sup>nd</sup> [United Nations World Geospatial Information Congress \(UNWGIC\)](#) on the theme "**Geo-Enabling the Global Village: No one should be left behind**" was held successfully in Hyderabad.
  - Survey of India (Sol) the [National Survey and Mapping Organisation](#) of the country **has successfully carried out drone surveys of rural abadi areas of 2,00,000+ villages as part of the [SVAMITVA](#)** (Survey of villages and mapping with improvised technology in village areas).

- [Online maps portal](#) provides various digital geospatial products (free as well as at fair & transparent price) to the users.
- **High-resolution mapping for [major river basins](#)** is also being carried out to provide the high resolution [GIS \(Geographic Information System\)](#) and [Digital Elevation Model \(DEM\)](#) for improved flood hazard mapping and other planning purposes.
- **Accessible Scientific Infrastructure for All Stakeholders:**
  - Four new Universities under '**Promotion of University Research and Scientific Excellence (PURSE)**' and 65 Departments in various academic organizations and universities were supported under the [Fund for Improvement of S&T Infrastructure \(FIST\)](#).
- **Solutions for Energy & Environment Challenges:**
  - A **first-of-its-kind Distributor System Operator (DSO) report has been prepared** that can help in transforming the operational and financial state of the Indian power sector and **boost private sector's confidence attracting much-needed investment and innovation in the industry.**
  - A real-time pollution monitoring photonic system, **Air Unique Quality Monitoring System (AUM)** has been developed which **is capable of real-time remote monitoring of all [air quality](#) parameters**, with high sensitivity and accuracy simultaneously, at a very high frequency of sampling.
  - The **first Indigenously Designed High Ash Coal Gasification Based [Methanol Production Plant](#)** has been opened in Hyderabad.
    - With this, Government owned engineering firm BHEL (Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited) has **successfully demonstrated a facility to create methanol from high ash Indian coal.**
- **Expansion to Newer Areas:**
  - The Department has been implementing **two National missions on Climate Change.** Four new **State Climate Change Cells (SCCCs)** have been established in the States of Goa, UT of Chandigarh and Jharkhand and Uttar Pradesh.
- **Career Opportunities for Women Scientists:**
  - DST is encouraging meritorious girls to pursue higher education and career in underrepresented [Science Technology Engineering and Mathematics \(STEM\)](#) areas, through its major initiative '[Vigyan Jyoti](#)'.
  - Women **scientists** under the **Women Scientists Scheme-A (WOS-A)** pursue research after **breaking into careers in 5 subject areas of Basic and Applied Sciences.**
  - The [SERB-POWER mobility grant](#) was introduced to provide an opportunity for **women scientists to visit leading institutions/universities** across the globe for a period of 1-3 months
- **Conserving the Heritages:**
  - Under the **Science and Heritage Research Initiative (SHRI)** programme of DST, **the soundproofing qualities of the Pattamadai mat**, a mat made by weaving or interlacing **korai grass with cotton threads**, has been explored for use in noise guarding classrooms as well as recording studios against external noise disturbances.
    - This can **increase the demand for this traditional art of Tirunelveli, Tamil Nadu.**
- **Research Capabilities in State Universities & Colleges:**
  - A dedicated scheme, **State University Research Excellence (SERB-SURE)** has been launched by Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) **to create a robust R&D ecosystem in state universities and colleges** including the private ones.
- **Good Laboratory Practice (GLP):**
  - DST is implementing the **National GLP Compliance Monitoring Programme** for certification of Indian Test Facilities/laboratories, conducting non-clinical health and environment safety studies in accordance with the [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\) Principles](#).
- **Policy Formulation in Key Areas**
  - Brought out two guidelines during the year and two major policies are in the process of finalisation.
    - [Scientific Research Infrastructure Sharing maintenance and Networks \(SRIMAN\) guidelines](#)
    - [Scientific Social Responsibility \(SSR\) Guidelines](#)

- [Science, Technology and Innovation \(STI\) Policy](#)
- [National Geospatial Policy](#)

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q.** How is science interwoven deeply with our lives? What are the striking changes in agriculture triggered off by science-based technologies? **(2020)**

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

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## Prohibition on the Sale of Single Cigarettes

**Prelims:** Cancer, Tobacco, Single Stick Cigarettes, Gutka, Health, WHO.

**Mains:** Prohibition on the Sale of Single Cigarettes and its Implications.

### Why in News?

Recently, the [Parliamentary Standing Committee](#) on Health and Family Welfare has recommended a ban on the sale of single sticks of cigarettes, in its report about Cancer **Management, Prevention and Diagnosis**.

### What is the Need for Imposing a Ban?

- **Cancerous:**
  - Oral [cancer](#) accounts for the highest proportion of cancer cases in the country.
  - Tobacco consumption accounts for nearly 50% of all cancers, collectively referred to as tobacco-related cancers.
- **Singles Stick are more Alluring:**
  - Single sticks are more economical to acquire than a full pack of cigarettes.
  - A ban on single-stick sales will compel a potential consumer to buy the entire pack which may not be particularly economical, thus curbing potential experimentation and the scope for regular intake.
  - Moreover, a potential ban will also mean that the consumer would have to carry around the packet.
- **Some Reports concern over Usage:**
  - The [World Health Organisation \(WHO\)](#) has observed that all forms of tobacco are harmful, and there is no safe level of exposure to tobacco.
    - It also states that **smoking cigarettes is the most common way of tobacco use worldwide.**
  - The medical journal, [Lancet](#) noted in June 2020, that by 2030, 7 million of annual deaths from smoking are expected to be from low and middle-income countries.
- **Highly Addictive:**
  - Nicotine in tobacco products is highly addictive, and without cessation support only 4% of users who attempt to quit tobacco consumption will succeed, according to the WHO.

### What are the Key Recommendations?



- **Containing the Sale of Tobacco:**
  - National Health Policy (2017) endeavors a **relative reduction in current tobacco use by 30% in 2025**, making it imperative that the **government take effective measures to contain the sale of tobacco** products.
  - To this effect, it recommends that the government prohibit the sale of single sticks of cigarettes and lay stringent penalties and fines on offenders.
- **Abolishment of Smoking Areas:**
  - The government should abolish all **designated smoking areas in airports, hotels and restaurants** in addition to encouraging a smoke-free policy in organizations.
- **Revive Tax Increases:**
  - India has the lowest prices for tobacco products and thus making them more accessible and it must be looked at to increase **taxes on them**.
  - The revenue acquired from additional taxation can be **used for cancer prevention and awareness**.
- **Prohibition on Gutka:**
  - Sought a ban on gutka and pan masala alongside a **prohibition on their direct and indirect advertisement**.
  - This is based on the observation that, in India, **more than 80% of tobacco consumption is in the form of chewing tobacco** with or without areca nut, aggressively marketed as a mouth freshener.

## How Efficacious Can a Ban Be?

- **Not Feasible Pan India Ban:**
  - It is not practical to enforce a pan-India ban on the sale of loose cigarettes. It's not feasible at all **because of the scale of such small shops and stalls that sell cigarettes and tobacco products**.
- **May Create Routes for Illegal Cigarettes:**
  - Only 8 % of the total tobacco is consumed as legal cigarettes. The remaining is consumed through **29 tax evasion-prone products such as bidis, chewing tobacco, khaini and illegal cigarettes**.
    - According to Euromonitor International, the volume of illegal cigarettes in India was **estimated to be at 26.8 billion sticks in 2021**. In fact, India is the **4<sup>th</sup> largest illicit cigarette market** in the world.
  - Banning things **only leads to taking the illegal route to acquiring them**. And some of the cigarettes in the illegal market may be of even inferior quality thereby **causing more damage to the well-being of an individual**.
- **Absence of vendor Licensing Regime:**
  - Nonetheless, the proposed move will reduce consumption and sales, but the ban will not be very effective if the vendor licensing regime is not instituted.
  - The government must also **consider instituting vendor licensing**.
  - Because cigarettes would not be available everywhere, **the potential for recurrence of the consumption would be reduced**.

## What are the Tobacco Control Measures in India?

- **International Convention:**
  - Governments adopt and implement the tobacco control provisions of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).
  - It is the first international treaty negotiated under the auspices of the WHO.
  - It was adopted by the World Health Assembly on 21 May 2003 and entered into force on 27 February 2005.
- **Cigarettes and Other Tobacco Products Act (COTPA), 2003:**
  - Replaced the Cigarettes Act of 1975 (largely limited to statutory warnings- 'Cigarette Smoking is Injurious to Health' to be displayed on cigarette packs and advertisements. It did not include non-cigarettes).
  - The 2003 Act also included cigars, bidis, cheroots, pipe tobacco, hookah, chewing tobacco, pan masala, and gutka.

- **National Tobacco Control Programme (NTCP), 2008:**
  - Objective: To control tobacco consumption and minimize tobacco consumption related deaths
  - Activities: Training and capacity building; information, education, and communication (IEC) activities; tobacco control laws; reporting survey and surveillance and tobacco cessation
- **Cigarettes and other Tobacco Products (Packaging and Labelling) Amendment Rules, 2020:**
  - It was mandated that the specified health warning shall cover at least 85% of the principal display area of the package.
  - Of this, 60% shall cover pictorial health warning and 25% shall cover textual health warning.
- **mCessation Programme:**
  - It is an initiative using mobile technology for tobacco cessation.
  - India launched mCessation using text messages in 2016 as part of the government's [Digital India initiative](#).
    - It uses two-way messaging between the individual seeking to quit tobacco use and programme specialists providing them dynamic support.
- **Prevention and Control of Pollution Act of 1981-** Recognized smoking as an air pollutant.
- **Cable Television Networks Amendment Act of 2000-** Prohibited the transmission of advertisements on tobacco and liquor in India.
- **The Government of India has issued regulations under the [Food Safety and Standards Act 2006](#)** which lay down that tobacco or nicotine cannot be used as ingredients in food products.
- 31<sup>st</sup> May is observed as '[World No Tobacco Day](#)' every year to spread awareness about the deadly effects of tobacco consumption.

## Way Forward

- There is a need for comprehensive tobacco control policy, accessible and affordable **cessation services strengthening the implementation of COTPA**, alternative opportunities for people engaged in tobacco cultivator, processing and manufacturing.
- The proportion of buying loose cigarettes decreased with increased levels of education and awareness. Enhancing public awareness through campaigns, educational programs in schools, strong and prominent graphic health warnings.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q. Which of the following are the reasons/factors for exposure to benzene pollution? (2020)**

1. Automobile exhaust
2. Tobacco smoke
3. Wood burning
4. Using varnished wooden furniture
5. Using products made of polyurethane

**Select the correct answer using the code given below:**

- (a) 1, 2 and 3 only  
(b) 2 and 4 only  
(c) 1, 3 and 4 only  
(d) 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5

**Ans: (a)**

**Exp:**

- Benzene (C<sub>6</sub>H<sub>6</sub>) is a colorless, flammable liquid with a sweet odor. It evaporates quickly when

exposed to air. Benzene is formed from natural processes, such as volcanoes and forest fires, but most of the exposure to benzene results from human activities.

- The main sources of benzene pollution in the environment include automobile exhaust, industrial sources, **Tobacco smoke, wood burning and fuel evaporation from gasoline filling stations. Hence, 1, 2 and 3 are correct.**
- Some industries use Benzene to make other chemicals that are used to make plastics, furniture etc., they are not the direct sources of Benzene pollution. **Hence, 4 and 5 are not correct.**
- **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

**Q2. Which one of the following groups of plants was domesticated in the 'New World' and introduced into the 'Old World'? (2019)**

- (a)** Tobacco, cocoa and rubber
- (b)** Tobacco, cotton and rubber
- (c)** Cotton, coffee and sugarcane
- (d)** Rubber, coffee and wheat

**Ans: (a)**

- New World refers to the Americas, which was discovered by Christopher Columbus during his voyage attempt to India. Old World continents during 15th century included Asia, Africa and Europe.
- **Tobacco is one of the most important cash crops in American farming** and is native to the North and South American continents. It first became known to the Old World when European explorers during the 15th and 16th centuries saw it being used as a medicine and as a hallucinogen by native Americans.
- Natural rubber trees originated in Southern America and from there it was introduced to the Old World. The cocoa tree is also native to the Amazon Basin, which was introduced to the Old World from New World.
- Cotton and Wheat were found in the Indus Valley Civilization. So both these crops were native of the Old World.
- **Therefore, option (a) is the correct answer.**

[Source: TH](#)

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## Marital Rape in India

**For Prelims:** Marital Rape, Section 375 of the IPC, Justice J. S. Verma Committee

**For Mains:** Criminalisation of Marital Rape, Section 375 of the IPC,. Justice J. S. Verma Committee, Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, Salient Features of Indian Society

### Why in News?

Out of 185 countries in the world, **77 have laws that clearly criminalise marital rape** while there are **34 countries that explicitly decriminalise marital rape**, or in essence, offer immunity to men who perpetrate rape against their wives.

- **India**, is one of the 34 countries that have **decriminalised marital rape**.

## What is Indian Law on Marital Rape?

- **Section 375 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC):**
  - Section 375 of the [IPC](#) defines the acts that constitute rape by a man.
  - The provision, however, lays down **two exceptions** as well.
    - Apart from decriminalising marital rape, it mentions that **medical procedures or interventions shall not constitute rape**.
    - **Exception 2 of Section 375** of the Indian Penal Code states that “sexual intercourse by a **man with his wife**, and if the wife **not being under fifteen years of age, is not rape**”.
- **Domestic Violence Act, 2005:**
  - It hints at marital rape by **any form of sexual abuse** in a live-in or marriage relationship.
  - However, it only provides for **civil remedies**. There is no way for marital rape victims in India to initiate **criminal proceedings** against their perpetrator.

## What is the History of the Marital Rape Law in India?

- **Judiciary:**
  - The Delhi [High Court](#) has been hearing arguments in the case since 2015.
  - In January 2022, two judges of the Delhi High Court started to hear petitions filed by individuals and civil society organisations challenging the exemption.
  - By May 2022, **they had arrived at a controversial split verdict**. One judge was in **favour of criminalising marital rape** as it violated a woman’s right to consent, while the **other was against it**, saying marriage “necessarily” implied consent.
  - The matter was pushed to the [Supreme Court](#).
  - **Supreme Court:**
    - In September 2022, a Supreme Court ruling on [women’s right to safe abortions](#) regardless of marital status held that for the purposes of the [Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act](#), the definition of rape should include marital rape.
  - **Law Commission of India:**
    - The need to remove the marital rape exception was rejected by the [Law Commission of India](#) in 2000, while considering several proposals to reform India's laws on sexual violence.
  - **Justice JS Verma Committee:**
    - In 2012, the **Justice JS Verma Committee** was tasked with proposing amendments to India's rape laws.
    - While some of its recommendations helped shape the [Criminal Law \(Amendment\) Act](#) passed in 2013, some suggestions, including that on marital rape, were not acted on.
  - **Delhi High Court:**
- **Parliament:**
  - The issue has been brought up in [Parliament](#) as well.
  - Upon being questioned in a Parliament session in 2015, the idea of criminalising marital rape was dismissed with the view that “marital rape cannot be applied in the country since marriage was treated as a sacrament or sacred in the Indian society”.
- **Government’s Stand:**
  - The Central Government **initially defended the rape exception** and later changed its stand and told the court that **it was reviewing the law**, and that “wider deliberations are required on the issue”.
  - The Delhi government **argued in favour of retaining the marital rape exception**.
    - The government’s arguments spanned from protecting men from possible misuse of the law by wives, to protecting the institution of marriage.

## What are the Issues with Marital Rape Exception?

- **Against Basic Rights of Women:**

- This exception clause violates the women's **fundamental right to equality, freedom of speech and expression**, and most of all the **right to life and personal liberty**.
  - It also denies the agency over their own bodies to women.
- **Dismal State of Judicial System:**
  - Some of the reasons for low rates of prosecution in the cases of marital rape in India include:
    - Low reporting of crimes due to **societal conditioning and low legal awareness**.
    - Inaccurate method of collection of **National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB)** data.
    - **Out of court settlements** due to the lengthy process of justice/lack of admissible proof.

## How did the Exception on Marital Rape find its way into the IPC?

- **British Colonial Rule:**
  - The IPC was implemented in India during **British colonial rule in 1860**.
    - Under the first version of the rules, the marital rape exception was applicable to **women over 10 years of age** which was raised to 15 in 1940.
- **1847 Draft of Lord Macaulay:**
  - In January 2022, it was argued by **amicus curiae** (friend of the court) that the IPC is based on the **1847 draft of Lord Macaulay**, the chairman of the **First Law Commission** established in colonial-era India.
    - The exception in the draft **decriminalised marital rape** without any age limit.
  - The provision is an age-old idea that implies consent by married women and protects the conjugal rights of the husband.
  - The idea of implied consent comes from the **Doctrine of Hale**, given by Matthew Hale, the then **British Chief Justice**, in 1736.
    - It states that a **husband cannot be guilty of rape**, since “by their mutual matrimonial consent and contract the **wife has given up herself in this kind to the husband**”.
- **Doctrine of Coverture:**
  - According to the Doctrine of Coverture, a woman has **no individual legal identity after marriage**.
  - Notably, the Doctrine of Coverture found a mention during the hearing when the **Supreme Court of India struck down adultery as a criminal offence** in 2018.
    - It was held that **Section 497**, that classified adultery as a crime, is based on the **Doctrine of Coverture**.
  - This doctrine, although not recognised by the Constitution, holds that a **woman loses her identity and legal rights with marriage**, is violative of her fundamental rights.

## How is Marital Rape Treated around the World?

- **About:**
  - The **United Nations** has urged countries to end marital rape by closing legal loopholes, saying that **“the home is one of the most dangerous places for women”**.
- **Countries that have Criminalised Marital Rape:**
  - **United States**- From 1993, Marital Rape was criminalised in all 50 states of the US but laws differ from state to state.
  - **United Kingdom**- Marital rape has also been criminalised in the UK and those found guilty could be sentenced to life imprisonment.
  - **South Africa**- Marital rape has been illegal since 1993 in South Africa.
  - **Canada**- Marital Rape is punishable in Canada.
- **Countries that have not Criminalised Marital Rape:**
  - Ghana, India, Indonesia, Jordan, Lesotho, Nigeria, Oman, Singapore, Sri Lanka and Tanzania haven't expressly criminalised marital rape of a woman or a girl by her husband.

## What should be the Approach Moving Forward?

- Indian law now **affords husbands and wives separate and independent legal identities**,

and much jurisprudence in the modern era is explicitly concerned with the protection of women.

- Therefore, it is high time that the **legislature should take cognisance of this legal infirmity** and bring marital rape within the purview of rape laws by **eliminating Section 375 (Exception 2) of IPC**.
- There is a need for laws that **clarify boundaries in how we relate to one another** and uphold constitutional ideas of **equality, dignity and bodily autonomy**, alongside the unpleasant social realities about their limited use in practice.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q.** We are witnessing increasing instances of sexual violence against women in the country. Despite existing legal provisions against it, the number of such incidences is on the rise. Suggest some innovative measures to tackle this menace. **(2014)**

[Source: IE](#)

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## National Tourism Policy

**For Prelims:** Tourism in India, Schemes Related to tourism, Draft National Tourism Policy.

**For Mains:** Government Policies & Interventions, Significance and Challenges related to Tourism in India.

### Why in News?

**Parliamentary committees have concluded that drafting a National Tourism Policy** will not lead to the development of the tourism industry in the country.

- The committee has **suggested fast-tracking the creation of a National Tourism Council on the lines of the [GST council](#)** to directly make recommendations to the Central and State governments on various issues of the tourism sector and its stakeholders.

### What are the Concerns raised by the Committee?

- **Inclusion in the Concurrent List:**
  - The committee also sought to know the steps taken by the Tourism Ministry regarding its earlier recommendation of including tourism in the **[concurrent list](#)**.
    - The committee is of the view that **inclusion of tourism in the concurrent list will help in simplifying the issues of the pandemic-hit Indian tourism sector** since tourism is a multi-sectoral activity.
- **Industry Status to Hospitality Projects:**
  - It also **sought to know why some 20 States were yet to accord industry status to hospitality projects** and asked the Ministry whether anything in this regard has been conveyed by these States to the Centre.
    - As of now eight States (**Maharashtra, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Punjab, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand**) have accorded industry status to hospitality projects.

#### ▪ **Regarding Sanctioned Projects:**

- It expressed concern that in **projects sanctioned five years ago or before 2017-18, the progress rates achieved have been less than expected.**
  - **Projects Sanctioned:** 'Development at Hazratbal' in Jammu and Kashmir and 'Infrastructure Development at Puri, [Shree Jagannath Dham - Ramachandi-Prachi River front at Deuli under Mega Circuit](#)' in Odisha.
  - The committee is of the view that **projects taking longer than five years may incur high cost and schedule or time overruns**, which will put extra financial burden and resource crunch on the Ministry and implementing agencies involved.

### **What are the Highlights of the Draft National Tourism Policy?**

#### ▪ **Industry Status to Sector:**

- It mentions **granting industry status to the tourism sector**, as well as granting infrastructure status to hotels, in an effort to attract investment.

#### ▪ **Five Key Areas:**

- Five key areas **would be given significant focus in the next 10 years** — green tourism, digital tourism, destination management, skilling the hospitality sector and supporting tourism-related to [Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises \(MSMEs\)](#).

#### ▪ **Advocacy for Appropriate Taxation and Subsidy Policies:**

- The Mission will advocate appropriate taxation and subsidy policies to encourage investment in sustainable tourism activities and discourage unsustainable tourism.

#### ▪ **Offers Framework Conditions:**

- The draft policy doesn't deal with specific operational issues, but offers framework conditions to help the sector, especially in the wake of the pandemic.
- The overall mission and vision are being laid out to improve the experience of tourists, foreign as well as local.

### **What is the Status of the Tourism Sector in India?**

#### ▪ **About:**

- India ranks **6<sup>th</sup> according to [World Travel and Tourism Council](#)** in terms of Travel & Tourism total contribution to **GDP** in 2021.
- India is currently **ranked 54<sup>th</sup> in World Economic Forum's Travel & Tourism Development Index (2021)**.
- India has 40 sites listed on the [UNESCO World Heritage List](#) (32 cultural, 7 natural, and 1 mixed) as of 2021.
  - [Dholavira](#) and [Ramappa Temple](#) are the latest ones.
- A total of 39 million jobs were created in the tourism sector in FY20, which represented 8% of the country's employment. By 2029, it will account for 53 million jobs.

#### ▪ **Recent Initiatives:**

- [Swadesh Darshan Scheme](#)
- [Dekho Apna Desh Initiative](#)
- National Green Tourism Mission
- [PRASAD scheme](#)
- [Buddhist Conclave](#)

### **What are the Challenges Related to the Tourism Sector in India?**

#### ▪ **Lacking in Infrastructure:**

- Tourists in India still face many infrastructure related problems like inadequate roads, water, sewer, hotels and telecommunications etc.

#### ▪ **Safety and security:**

- Safety and security of tourists, especially of the foreign tourists, is a major hurdle to tourism development. Attacks on foreign nationals raise questions about India's ability to welcome tourists from far away countries.

#### ▪ **Lack of skilled manpower:**

- Lack of skilled manpower is another challenge to the Tourism Industry in India.
- **Absence of basic amenities:**
  - Absence of basic amenities like drinking water, well maintained toilets, first aid, cafeteria etc. at tourist places.
- **Seasonality:**
  - Seasonality in Tourism, with the busy season being limited to six months from October to March and heavy rush in November and December.

## Way Forward

- Considering India's rich heritage and culture, an unmatched variety of cuisine tourism can be a vehicle for enhancing [India's soft power](#) and attracting foreign revenue.
  - India's philosophy of 'Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam' sees the world as one family. It gives India an unwavering belief in multilateralism.
- There is a **need to focus on inclusive growth of tourism** by creating opportunities for marginalised sections of society including people living in remote areas.
- An **extensive market research and evaluation exercise can be undertaken** in order to identify desired tourist destinations across the country and major markets and segments.

## UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Question (PYQ)

**Q.1** How can the mountain ecosystem be restored from the negative impact of development initiatives and tourism? **(2019)**

**Q.2** The states of Jammu and Kashmir, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand are reaching the limits of their ecological carrying capacity due to tourism. Critically evaluate. **(2015)**

[Source: TH](#)

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## City Finance Rankings 2022

### Why in News?

Recently, the **Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs** has launched guidelines for a new **City Finance Rankings 2022**.

- A '**City Beauty Competition**' initiative was also **launched to encourage and recognise the transformational efforts** made by cities and wards in India towards creating **beautiful, innovative and inclusive public spaces**.

### What is City Finance Rankings 2022?

- **About:**
  - All the Participating cities will be evaluated on **15 indicators across three key municipal finance assessment parameters, namely:**
    - Resource Mobilization
    - Expenditure Performance
    - Fiscal Governance.
  - The cities will be ranked at the national level based on their scores under any one of the following four population categories:



- Above 4 million
- Between 1-4 million
- 100,000 to 1 million
- Less than 100,000
- The top 3 cities in each population category **will be recognized and rewarded at the national level as well as within each state/state cluster.**
- **Significance:**
  - It will help **identify** areas in the financial performance of the cities **where they can make further improvements.**
  - It will motivate city/state officials and decision-makers, to implement municipal finance reforms.
  - It will enable them to **deliver quality infrastructure and services, and hence a good quality of life to citizens.**
  - At a state- and national level, the rankings will **highlight the outcomes achieved by municipalities and provide critical insights** to key policymakers into the state of finances of urban local bodies.

[Source: TH](#)

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## PRASHAD Scheme

### Why in News?

Recently, the President of India laid the foundation stone for the project **'Development of Pilgrimage Facilities at Bhadrachalam Group of Temples'** in Telangana.

- Another project named **'Development of Pilgrimage and Heritage Infrastructure at Rudreshwara (Ramappa) Temple'** was also laid later on.
- Both these projects have been approved **under the PRASHAD Scheme** of the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India.

### What are the Key Features of the Temples?

- **Bhadrachalam Group of Temples:**
  - The temple at Bhadrachalam is said to be more than 350 years old and is **closely associated with the epic of Ramayana.**
  - It is believed that **Lord Rama with his wife Goddess Sita and brother Lakshmana spent some part of their 14 years of exile at a village called Parnasala,** a part of Dandakaranya forest near Bhadrachalam Temple.
  - These group of temples are situated on the left bank of the Godavari River.
- **Ramappa Temple:**
  - The **Ramappa temple of Lord Shiva, a perfect example of architectural brilliance,** was built **in 1213 AD by the Kakatiya rulers** and has been inscribed on **UNESCO's World Heritage list.**
  - This heritage temple attracts over 10 Lakh visitors every year and has a high visibility amongst the tourist circuit.

## What is PRASHAD Scheme?

### ▪ About:

- The 'National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Augmentation Drive' (PRASAD) was **launched by the Ministry of Tourism in the year 2014-15** with the objective of holistic development of identified pilgrimage destinations.
- The name of the scheme was **changed from PRASAD to "National Mission on Pilgrimage Rejuvenation and Spiritual Heritage Augmentation Drive (PRASHAD)"** in October 2017.
  - After the discontinuation of the HRIDAY scheme of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development, the development of Heritage destinations was included in the PRASAD Scheme, changing it to PRASHAD.
- Under the PRASHAD Scheme, **several religious cities/sites in have been identified for development such as Amaravati and Srisailem** (Andhra Pradesh), Kamakhya (Assam), Parasuram Kund (Lohit District, Arunachal Pradesh), Patna and Gaya (Bihar), etc.

### ▪ Implementation Agency:

- The projects **identified under this scheme shall be implemented through the identified agencies** by the respective State/ Union Territory Government.

### ▪ Funding Mechanism:

- The Central Government provides 100% funding for the project components undertaken for public funding.
  - This scheme seeks to leverage the voluntary funding available for [Corporate Social Responsibility \(CSR\)](#) and the [Public-Private Partnership \(PPP\)](#) for improved sustainability of the projects under this scheme.

[Source: PIB](#)

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## Rapid Fire Current Affairs

### India's Youngest Grandmaster

With 8 wins in a row at the **Chess Olympiad 2022, Dommaraju Gukesh (or Gukesh D)** became the new poster boy for Indian chess. In 2019, he became the **youngest Indian and then-second-youngest Grandmaster ever** (youngest - Abhimanyu Mishra). Recently, (at the age of 16) he won gold at the Chess Olympiad. Gukesh **won the Under-9 category of the Asian School Chess Championships** in 2015 and won **5 gold medals** at the **2018 Asian Youth Chess Championships (Under-12)**.

**Read More - [Chess Olympiad 2022](#)**

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### India's WAPCOS Ranked Amongst Top Consulting Services

The **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** released two reports - one on **Annual Procurement (AP)** and another - **Members' Fact Sheet (MFS) 2022** on which **WAPCOS was ranked top (AP) and among top 3 (MFS)**.

In AP, WAPCOS was ranked amongst Consulting Services Firm in Water and other Infrastructure Sectors with the **highest sanctioned financed amount**.

In MFS, WAPCOS was in **India's top 3 Consulting Services involved in Contracts under ADB Loan, Grant & Technical Assistance Projects** (in Energy, Transport and Water & other Urban Infrastructure Sectors).

**WAPCOS Limited is a “MINI RATNA” Public Sector Enterprise under the Ministry of Jal Shakti.** Apart from India, it has **projects completed/on-going in 51+ Countries** (covering Asia, Africa, Pacific Islands and South America).

**Read More - [Asian Development Bank \(ADB\)](#)**

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## **Brain-Eating Amoeba**

Recently, S Korea reported its **first case of infection and death from *Naegleria fowleri*** or “brain-eating amoeba”.

Naegleria is an amoeba, a **single-celled organism**, and only **one of its species - *Naegleria fowleri*, can infect humans**. It was **first discovered in Australia (1965)** and is commonly **found in warm freshwater bodies** (hot springs, rivers and lakes). It enters the human body through the nose and then travels up to the brain.

The infection caused by this amoeba is **PAM (Primary Amebic Meningoencephalitis)** which **destroys brain tissues**. It has a **very high mortality rate**. Currently, **no vaccine** is available, but PAM can be treated with proper drug combinations.

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## **Ethylene Glycol in Cough Syrups**

The Health Ministry of **Uzbekistan has reported the death of 18 children** (with acute respiratory disease) from **taking excessive doses of a cough syrup - Doc-1 Max manufactured** by an Indian firm.

The **cough syrups contained ethylene glycol**, a substance that ought not to be present in cough syrup. Earlier, **Gambia also reported “unacceptable levels” of diethylene glycol (DEG) and ethylene glycol (EG)** in India manufactured cough syrups.

DEG and EG are **highly toxic colourless and viscous liquids** which have a **sweetish taste**. They are **often found as contaminants in glycerin**, which is used as a sweetener in formulations of many pharmaceutical syrups ingested orally. **Acute poisoning from EG** may result in **Ataxia, Slurred speech, Restlessness, Disorientation, Myoclonic jerks, Convulsions, Coma and Death**.

**Read More - [Cough Syrup Deaths in Gambia.](#)**

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