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- DR. Alexander Jacob IPS

LIVE AS IF YOU WERE TO DIE TOMORROW. LEARN AS IF YOU WERE TO LIVE FOREVER -
MAHATMA GANDHI

- DR. Babu Sebastian

BE YOURSELF; EVERYONE ELSE IS ALREADY TAKEN. - OSCAR WILDE

-DR. G. Prasanna Kumar

DON'T LIMIT A CHILD TO YOUR OWN LEARNING, FOR SHE WAS BORN IN ANOTHER TIME. —
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THE BEST OF MANKIND IS A FARMER; THE BEST FOOD IS FRUIT. – ETHIOPIA

- Mr.Solomon John



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A collection of historical artifacts is arranged on a surface covered with an old, detailed map. On the left, a large, dark brown leather-bound book stands upright. In the center, a rolled-up scroll of parchment or leather lies horizontally. In the foreground, a metal ring with a square opening and a key with a circular head are visible. The background is a textured, brownish-gold surface with faint, dark patterns, possibly another map or parchment. The overall lighting is warm and focused, highlighting the textures of the leather and metal.

HISTORY- ARTS AND CULTURE



**INTEGRATION OF KASHMIR TO THE INDIAN
UNION**

MADAN LAL DHINGRA

**MATANGINI HAZRA AND KANAKLATA
BARUA**

INDIA'S 77TH INDEPENDENCE DAY



INTEGRATION OF KASHMIR TO THE INDIAN UNION

CONTEXT: The Supreme Court is currently reviewing a series of petitions challenging the abrogation of Article 370 of the Constitution, which had conferred special status upon the state of Jammu and Kashmir within the Union of India.

BACKGROUND: HOW THE PRINCELY STATE OF KASHMIR ASCENDED THE INDIAN UNION

- Partition of India (1947): Kashmir's accession to India was a result of the partition of India in 1947, which led to the creation of India and Pakistan as independent nations.
- Maharaja Hari Singh's Dilemma: The Maharaja of Kashmir, Hari Singh, was faced with a difficult decision as the predominantly Muslim state of Jammu and Kashmir was located in a predominantly Hindu India. He was hesitant to join either India or Pakistan.
- Invasion by Tribal Militants: In October 1947, tribal militias supported by Pakistan invaded Kashmir, prompting Maharaja Hari Singh to seek military assistance from India to repel the invasion.
- Instrument of Accession: On October 26, 1947, Maharaja Hari Singh signed the Instrument of Accession, officially merging Kashmir into the Dominion of India. This was in accordance with the terms laid out by the Indian Independence Act of 1947.
- Indian Military Intervention: In response to the accession, India sent military forces to Kashmir to counter the tribal invasion. This marked the beginning of the first Indo-Pakistani War.
- United Nations Involvement: The United Nations brokered a ceasefire in 1948, and the dispute over Kashmir's sovereignty remains unresolved to this day, with both India and Pakistan administering parts of the region.
- Special Status: Article 370 of the Indian Constitution granted Jammu and Kashmir special autonomous status within the Indian Union until it was abrogated in August 2019, leading to significant political changes in the region.
- Ongoing Conflict: The issue of Kashmir continues to be a source of tension and conflict between India and Pakistan, with both countries claiming the region in its entirety and frequent border skirmishes occurring along the Line of Control.



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MADAN LAL DHINGRA

CONTEXT: On his 114th death anniversary, a massive memorial of Madan Lal Dhingra is being inaugurated in Amritsar.

- **Birth and Early Life:** Madan Lal Dhingra was born on February 18, 1883, in Amritsar, Punjab, which was then part of British India.
- **Education in England:** He went to England to pursue higher education and enrolled at University College London. During his time in England, he became deeply influenced by the Indian freedom struggle.



- **Association with Indian Nationalists:** In London, Dhingra joined the network of Indian nationalists and activists who were working towards India's independence from British rule. He became associated with prominent leaders like Vinayak Damodar Savarkar.
- **Assassination of Curzon Wylie:** On July 1, 1909, Dhingra assassinated Curzon Wylie, a former British official, at a public event at Caxton Hall in London. Dhingra's act was seen as a protest against British oppression in India.
- **Arrest and Trial:** Following the assassination, Dhingra was arrested and put on trial. During his trial, he boldly defended his actions, stating that he was avenging the injustices committed by the British in India.
- **Execution:** Madan Lal Dhingra was found guilty of murder and was sentenced to death. On August 17, 1909, he was executed by hanging in London. His execution stirred emotions both in India and among Indian communities abroad.
- **Legacy:** Madan Lal Dhingra is remembered as a brave patriot and martyr in the Indian independence movement. His actions inspired others to continue the struggle for freedom from British colonial rule.
- **Remembered in India:** Dhingra's sacrifice is commemorated in India, with various institutions, streets, and memorials named in his honor.
- **Symbol of Resistance:** He is considered a symbol of the unyielding spirit and dedication of Indian freedom fighters who were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for the cause of independence.

MATANGINI HAZRA AND KANAKLATA BARUA

CONTEXT: During her address to the nation on the eve of Independence Day, President Droupadi Murmu paid tributes to women freedom fighters.

BACKGROUND

Matangini Hazra

- **Early Life and Background:** Matangini Hazra, also known as "Gandhi Buri" (Old Lady Gandhi), was born on October 19, 1870, in the Tamluk region of Bengal, India, during British colonial rule.
- **Participation in the Freedom Movement:** Matangini Hazra became an active participant in India's freedom struggle, inspired by the ideals of Mahatma Gandhi. She joined the Indian National Congress and dedicated herself to the cause of independence.
- **Role in the Non-Cooperation Movement:** Matangini Hazra played a significant role in the Non-Cooperation Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in the 1920s. She organized and led protests, rallies, and processions against British rule and participated in the boycott of foreign goods and institutions.
- **Salt March:** Hazra was actively involved in the Salt Satyagraha, a pivotal event in India's struggle for independence. She marched alongside other freedom fighters to defy the British monopoly on salt production and distribution.
- **Arrests and Imprisonment:** Matangini Hazra was arrested multiple times by the British authorities for her involvement in the freedom movement. She fearlessly faced arrests and imprisonment but continued her activism upon release.



- **The Incident at Tamluk:** One of the most notable incidents in Hazra's life occurred on September 29, 1942, during a protest march in Tamluk. She was leading a procession of unarmed protesters when British police ordered them to disperse. Hazra, holding the Indian flag, defiantly walked forward and was shot by the police. Even while injured, she continued to chant "Vande Mataram" (Hail Motherland) until she succumbed to her wounds.
- **Martyrdom:** Matangini Hazra's unwavering courage and sacrifice for the cause of Indian independence made her a revered figure. She died on September 29, 1942, and her death became a symbol of the sacrifices made

by countless Indians in their struggle for freedom.

- **Legacy:** Matangini Hazra's legacy continues to inspire generations of Indians. Her life story exemplifies the resilience and determination of women in the freedom movement and serves as a reminder of the sacrifices made by ordinary individuals in the fight against colonial oppression.
- **Honors and Recognition:** Matangini Hazra is remembered and honored through various memorials, postage stamps, and cultural commemorations in India, recognizing her as a symbol of the indomitable spirit of the Indian freedom struggle.

Kanaklata Barua

- **Early Life and Background:** Kanaklata Barua was born on December 22, 1924, in Gohpur, Assam, India, during British colonial rule.
- **Participation in the Freedom Movement:** Kanaklata Barua actively participated in India's struggle for independence from British rule. She joined the Quit India Movement, a mass protest against British colonialism, launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1942.
- **Role in the Tezpur Quit India Movement:** Kanaklata Barua played a significant role in the Tezpur Quit India Movement, which was part of the larger Quit India Movement. She was a member of the Vanavasi Sangh, an organization that supported the movement, and actively encouraged local women to join the protest.
- **The Incident on September 20, 1942:** On September 20, 1942, Kanaklata Barua, along with a group of fellow protesters, attempted to hoist the national flag in front of the local police station in Tezpur. The British colonial authorities had banned the hoisting of the tricolor as a part of their suppressive measures against the Quit India Movement.
- **Tragic End:** As Kanaklata Barua and her companions approached the police station with the flag, they were met with a hail of bullets from the police. Tragically, Kanaklata Barua was shot and killed while clutching the national flag.



- **Martyrdom:** Kanaklata Barua's sacrifice for the cause of India's independence made her a revered figure in the freedom struggle. Her death symbolized the courage and determination of ordinary Indians who were willing to make the ultimate sacrifice for the nation.

Legacy: Kanaklata Barua's legacy continues to inspire generations of Indians, particularly women. She is remembered as a symbol of courage and sacrifice in the fight against colonial oppression.

Honors and Recognition: Kanaklata Barua is honored through various memorials, cultural commemorations, and awards in Assam and other parts of India, recognizing her as a brave and dedicated freedom fighter.



INDIA'S 77TH INDEPENDENCE DAY

CONTEXT: On August 15th, India commemorated its 77th Independence Day, a significant occasion in the nation's history. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in keeping with tradition, raised the tricolour and delivered a national address from Delhi's Red Fort early in the morning. It's worth noting that this practice was initiated by Jawaharlal Nehru back in 1947.

WHY RED FORT?

During the Delhi Sultanate era (1206-1506), Delhi emerged as a prominent capital city, governing a significant portion of northern India. Babur (1483-1530), the founder of the Mughal dynasty, was the first to designate Delhi as the 'capital of all Hindustan' in the 16th century. Although the Mughals, led by Akbar (1542-1605), temporarily relocated their capital to Agra, they retained their status as the rulers of Delhi. Eventually, under Shah Jahan (1592-1666), Delhi was reinstated as the Mughal capital with the establishment of Shahjahanabad in 1648, which is now recognized as Old Delhi. The Mughals continued to govern from the fortified stronghold of Shahjahanabad, more commonly known as the Red Fort, until 1857.

Following the suppression of the rebels during the 1857 revolt, the British initially considered demolishing the entire city of Shahjahanabad (Delhi). However, their plans took a different turn when, in 1911, they opted to relocate their capital from Calcutta to Delhi. They embarked on the

construction of a magnificent new city, which was ultimately completed in 1930.

In 1943, Subhas Chandra Bose led the Indian National Army, advanced from the Burmese border. Despite their determined efforts, this endeavor ultimately met with Japan surrendering in the 2nd World War. Between 1945 and 1946, senior officers of the Indian National Army were tried for treason, and the trials took place at the Red Fort.

These trials had a profound impact, eliciting sympathy for the Indian National Army and igniting nationalist sentiments against the British. Consequently, the Red Fort firmly established itself as a symbol of power and resistance in the hearts and minds of the Indian populace.

With the advent of Independence, it became imperative to symbolically reclaim the Red Fort site, which the British colonial government had previously used to assert its dominance and authority over India



"Be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and others have greatness thrust upon them."

- WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE





A NECESSARY BRAKE

**CYCLONE FREQUENCY MAY RISE
OVER INDIAN COAST**

CLOUDBURSTS



A NECESSARY BRAKE

CONTEXT: Even though it was El- Nino year, the rain in north so heavy that it creates massive damages to humans.

DISASTER: July saw record rainfall in many parts of Himachal Pradesh, Punjab and Uttarakhand. At least 150 were killed and losses worth ₹10,000 Cr were reported by Himachal Pradesh alone. At least 60 lives were lost in Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand since Sunday. The floods saw the rare sight of the Yamuna nearly spilling into the Red Fort in Delhi. A series of landslides has crumbled buildings and blocked highways.

WESTERN DISTURBANCES

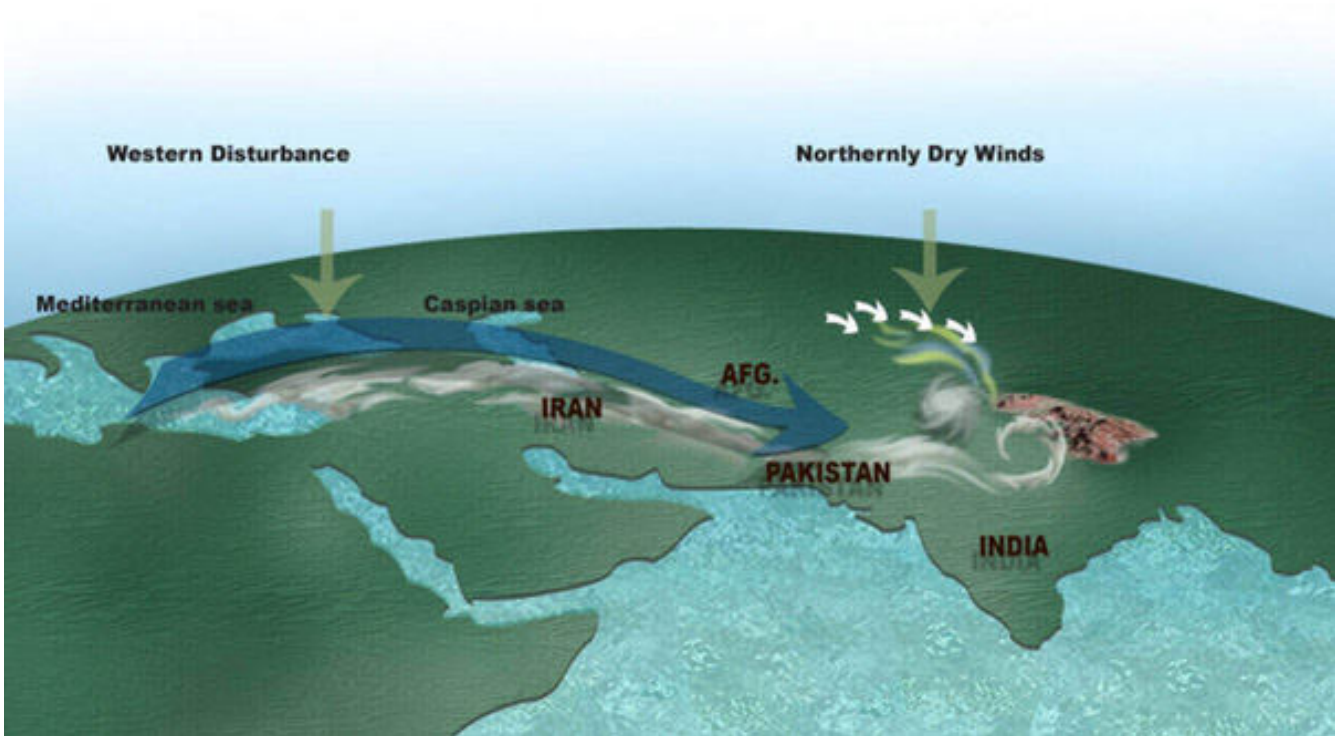


FIGURE: Schematic representation of the Western Disturbances.

Western Disturbances: The immediate explanation for the landslides is the unexpectedly copious rainfall that these States have received due to Western Disturbances (WD). India normally experiences 4 to 5 spells of winter precipitation during months from October to May. The extreme depression over the Tibetan plateau bifurcates the subtropical westerlies. The southern branch of sub-tropical westerlies presents at upper tropospheric levels guide shallow temperate cyclonic depressions developed over the east Mediterranean Sea towards the north-western parts of India across West Asia, Iran, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The moisture-laden temperate cyclones cause precipitation, popularly known as 'Western Disturbances' over Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and western Uttar Pradesh. The precipitation decreases from west to east in the plains and from north to south in the mountains.

Essential for good Rabi crop yields in the Punjab and Uttar Pradesh.

Precipitation in the form of snowfall in the lower Himalayas sustains the flow of water in the Himalayan Rivers during the summer months.

CYCLONE FREQUENCY MAY RISE OVER INDIAN COAST

CONTEXT: Cyclones are rapid inward air circulation around a low-pressure area. The air circulates in an anticlockwise direction in the Northern hemisphere and clockwise in the Southern hemisphere. Cyclones are usually accompanied by violent storms and bad weather. The word Cyclone is derived from the Greek word Cyclones meaning the coils of a snake. It was coined by Henry Peddington because the tropical storms in the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea appear like coiled serpents of the sea.

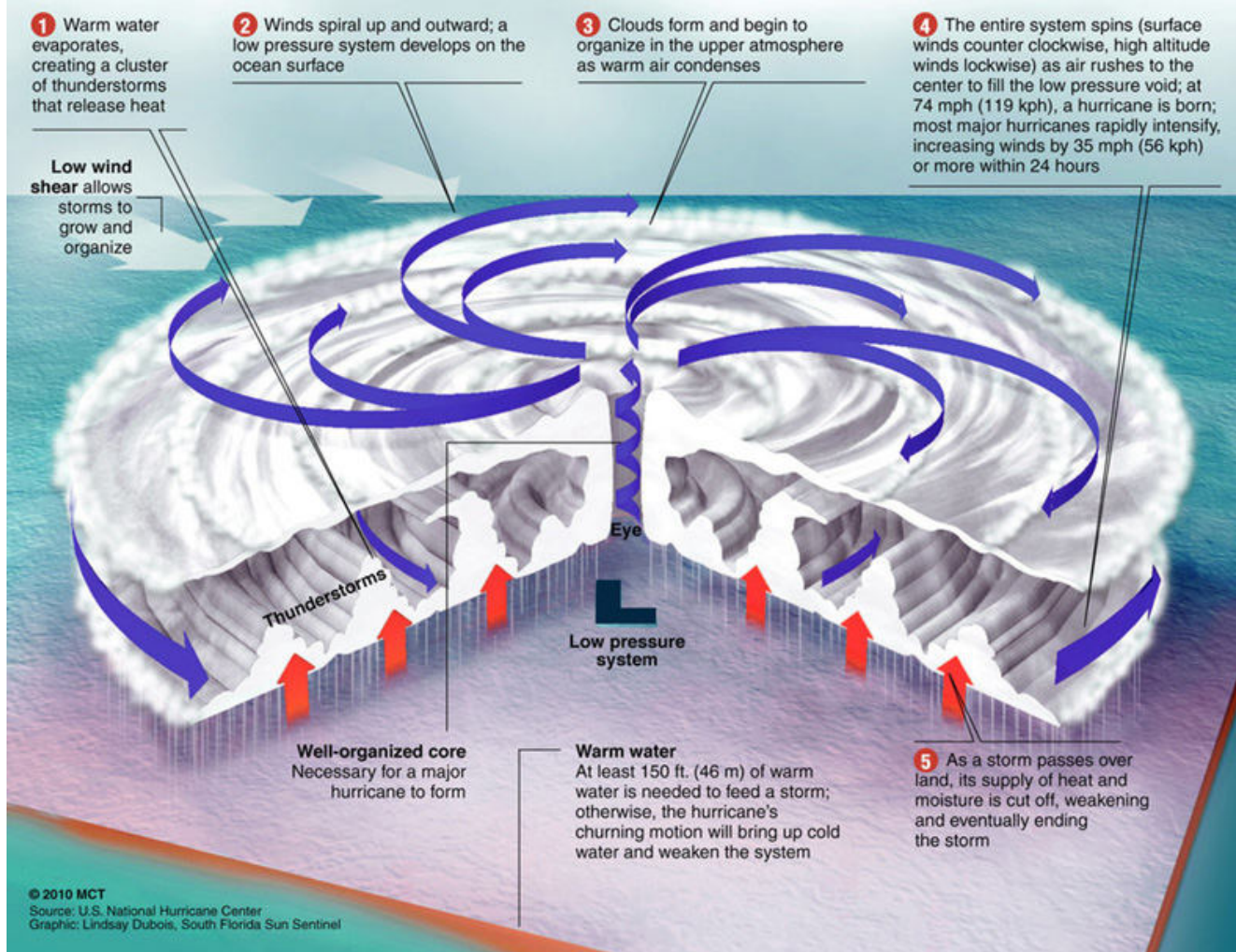
There are two types of cyclones:

“Tropical Low-Pressure counter-clockwise and clockwise wind vortex system in northern and southern hemispheres respectively predominantly over warm equatorial ocean waters within 50 latitudes away from the equator during summers and nearly non-existent during winters in either hemisphere.”

- Tropical cyclones



Hurricanes act as massive release valves for warm, humid air. Deep water of at least 80 F (27 C) is needed to fuel the storms. If conditions are favorable, storms could rapidly intensify into major hurricanes.



EXTRA TROPICAL CYCLONES:

FORMATION OF BOMB CYCLONES

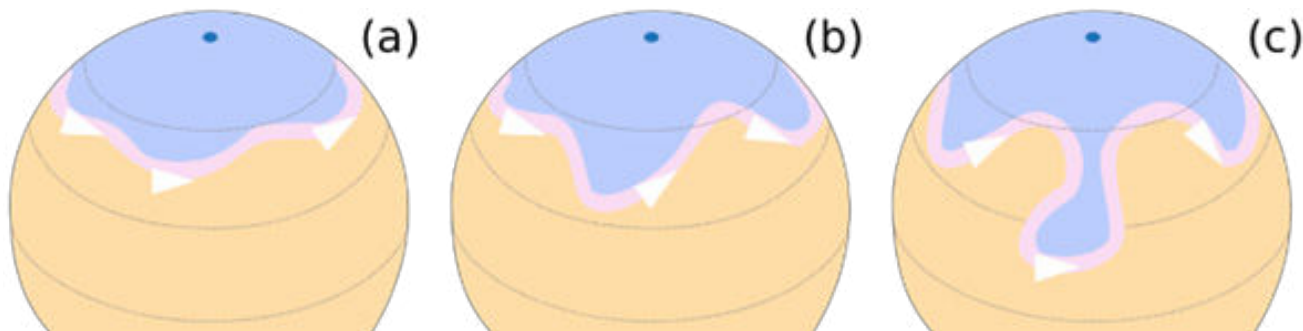
1. The stable cold polar vortex system weakens with warm moist air mass developed over the warm ocean waters colliding with cold air mass.
2. The warm moist air mass uplifted during the front interactions, cause the release of heat and air to condense triggering a sudden drop in barometric pressure – at least 24 millibars within 24 hours.
3. The sudden pressure gradient, between the two air masses intensifies the wind that leads to the severe drop in temperature, including blizzards

“Temperate Low-Pressure counter-clockwise wind vortex system present predominantly in the northern hemisphere under the influence of Nor’easters predominantly developed over warm temperate ocean waters, namely Northwest Pacific, the North Atlantic, the Southwest Pacific, and the South Atlantic during winters and nearly non-existent during summers in either hemisphere.”

- BOMB CYCLONES



ROSBY WAVES



Meanders of the Northern Hemisphere's jet stream developing around the northern polar vortex (a, b) and finally detaching a "drop" of cold air (c). Orange: warmer masses of air; pink: jet stream; blue: colder masses of air.

CLOUDBURSTS

CONTEXT: A "highly-localised rains" in Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, caused flash flooding and led to the deaths and injuring many.

"unexpected precipitation exceeding 100mm per hour over a geographical region of approximately 20 km² - 30 km²"

- INDIA METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT (IMD)

WHERE DO THEY OCCUR?

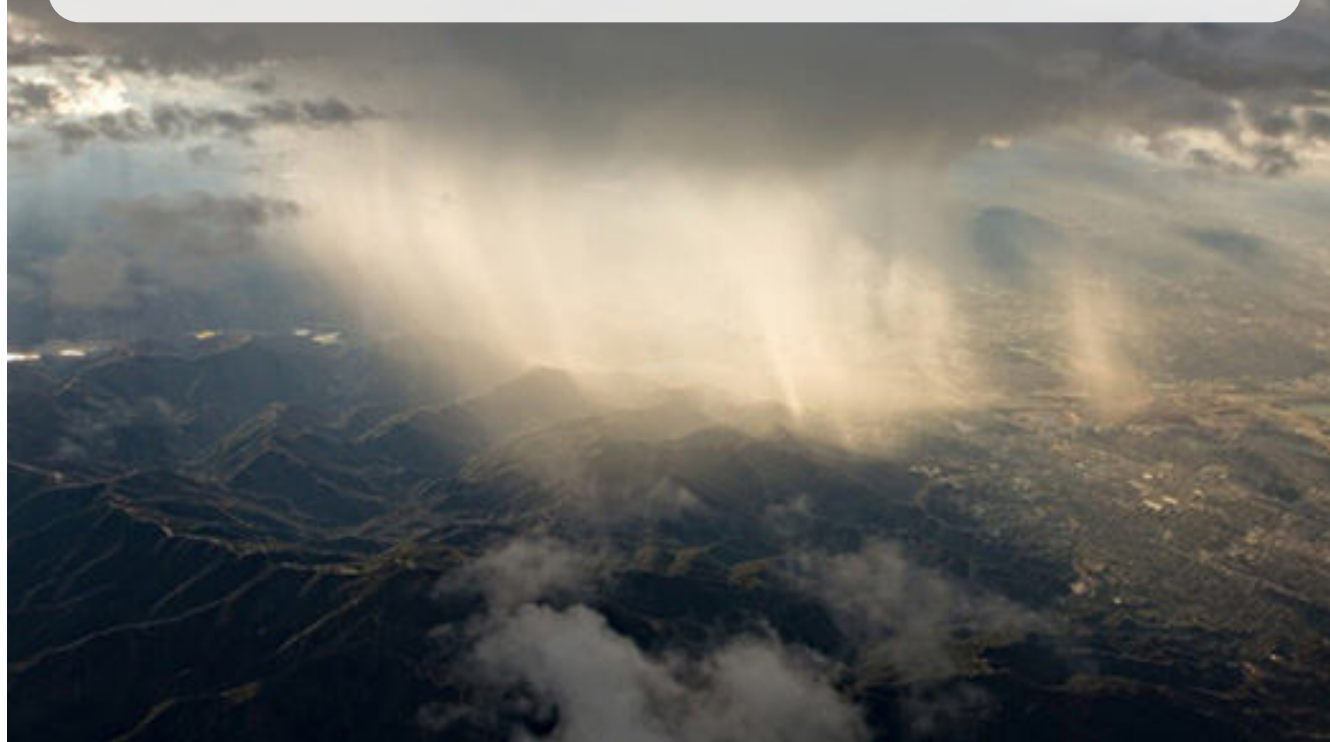
More likely to occur in mountainous zones mainly because of terrain and elevation - at elevations between 1,000-2,500 metres above sea level.

WHEN DO THEY OCCUR?

'Orographic lift' causes the moisture-laden air to move up a hilly terrain, forming a 'cumulonimbus' clouds - vertical column of clouds.

HOW DO THEY OCCUR?

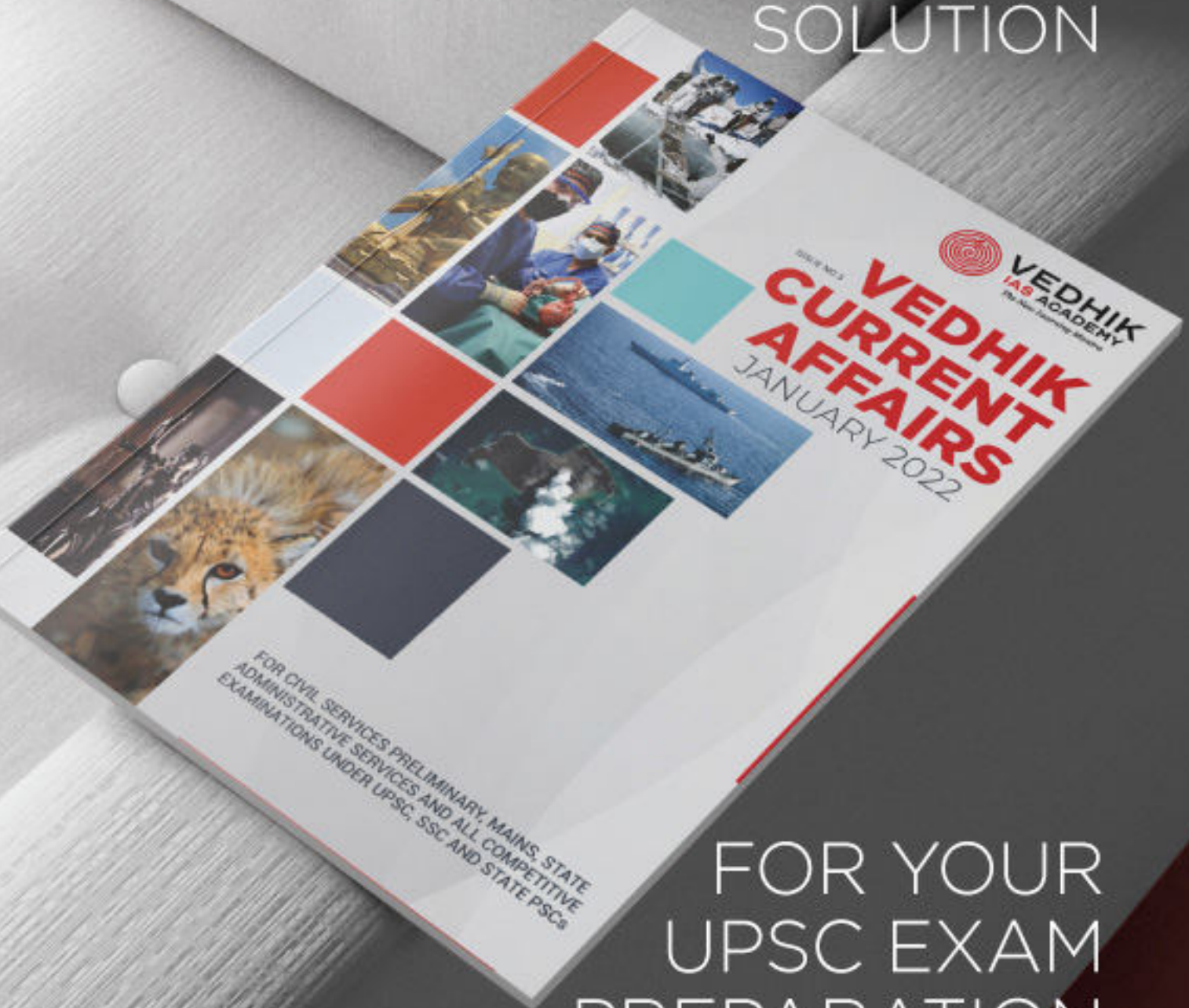
Unstable clouds cause an intense rainstorm, usually accompanied by thunder and lightning over a small area after becoming heavy enough and locked in the ridges and valleys between the hills.





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DOWN GRADED ON PEN'S MIGHT: BIFURCATION OF FORMER J&K STATE

CONTEXT: Granting special status to certain states within the Indian Constitution is not an uncommon occurrence. Within India, numerous states possess distinct rights and privileges in their interactions with the Union, as prescribed by the constitution. These differential rights stem from the states' specific cultural, ethnic, and geopolitical compositions, reflecting a purposeful constitutional design.

A Constitution Bench of Supreme Court is reviewing challenges to Article 370's dilution on daily basis.

BACK GROUND: The Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, 2019 brought about significant changes in the administrative and legislative framework of the Indian-administered region of Jammu and Kashmir. The act resulted in the reconstitution of this region into two distinct Indian-administered union territories, namely Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. This transformation officially took effect on October 31, 2019.

Under this reorganisation, the union territory of Jammu and Kashmir maintains a legislative assembly, allowing for local law-making on various matters. On the other hand, Ladakh, the other union territory, is administered solely by a lieutenant governor. The geographical scope of Ladakh comprises the districts of Leh and Kargil, while the remaining districts are integrated into the Jammu and Kashmir union territory.

Of the original six Lok Sabha seats assigned to the former state, one seat is now allocated to Ladakh, with the remaining five allocated to the Jammu and Kashmir union territory. Notably, the High Court of Jammu and Kashmir serves as the shared High Court for both of these newly formed union territories.

The legislative assembly holds the authority to enact laws on subjects enumerated in the state list, excluding matters related to "public order" and "police," which fall within the jurisdiction of the central government. A council of ministers, led by a chief minister, is appointed by the lieutenant governor from among the legislative assembly members. Their primary role involves advising the lieutenant governor in areas within the legislative assembly's domain. In other spheres, the lieutenant governor exercises independent decision-making power, including the ability to promulgate ordinances that hold equivalent legal force as acts passed by the legislature.

The Jammu and Kashmir administration is now governed in accordance with Article 239A of the Indian constitution. Originally devised for the union territory of Puducherry, Article 239A's provisions are extended to apply to Jammu and Kashmir as well. Additionally, the act eliminates the Legislative Council that was previously operative in the state of Jammu and Kashmir.

CONSTITUTIONAL QUESTIONS REGARDING J & K

Unveiling Complex Constitutional Contemplations

The decision by the Indian government to revoke the special status conferred upon Jammu and Kashmir (J&K) has ignited a labyrinth of intricate constitutional inquiries. Within this multifaceted landscape of questions, a pivotal query emerges, revolving around the boundaries of the President's authority. This query pertains to the extent to which the President can extend the entire gamut of India's Constitution to the state of J&K.

Equally momentous is the examination of whether the Indian government rightfully possessed the authorisation to execute such a transformative step. This evaluation becomes particularly critical in light of the pre-existing commitments towards J&K outlined in Article

370 of the Constitution. Pausing momentarily on these inquiries, another imperative concern materializes: Did the Indian Parliament wield genuine and lawful empowerment to effectuate the division of J&K into two separate Union Territories (UTs)?

Navigating Territorial Transformations: Constitutional Aspects

Unlike many federal Constitutions, the Indian Constitution does not explicitly shield the territorial integrity of its states. This distinct attribute empowers the Parliament to orchestrate alterations to a state's boundaries, its nomenclature, or even the formation of an entirely new state by amalgamating territories from existing states or union territories.

However, a paramount question surfaces: Can the Parliament lawfully convert an established state into more than one Union territory? This quandary assumes heightened significance due to the profound repercussions inherent in metamorphosing a state, once governed by an elected legislative body, into one or multiple UTs. Such a transformation fundamentally reshapes the dynamics experienced by a populace that had previously relished the privileges of unrestricted democratic engagement.

Shift in Governance Dynamics: Transition to Union Territories

In the case of J&K, this transformation endows the newly appointed administrator, known as the Lieutenant Governor, with an expansive range of decision-making authority. This stands in contrast to the conventional role of a State Governor, who typically operates in alignment with the counsel and direction provided by the State's Council of Ministers.

Altering Legislative Landscape: Impacts on Elected Representatives

The legislative assembly of the newly minted Union Territory of J&K, designed to mirror the structure of Puducherry, retains the ability to legislate on matters delineated within the State List and the Concurrent List of the Constitution. However, the overarching authority to enact laws that supplant those established by the legislative assembly rests with the Parliament. Consequently, the realm within which elected representatives can exercise their decision-making prerogatives is markedly diminished.

Reshaping Power Dynamics: Impacts on Democratic Processes

This transformation precipitates a significant realignment of power, thereby profoundly influencing the democratic mechanisms that had hitherto been intrinsic to the region. Consequently, a comprehensive exploration encompassing legal, constitutional, and democratic dimensions becomes imperative to comprehensively comprehend the far-reaching consequences inherent in this decision. Such an inquiry is essential to obtain a holistic understanding of the intricate tapestry of ramifications woven by this transformative step.



COMPARING DELHI AND JAMMU & KASHMIR: A CONSTITUTIONAL EXPLORATION

1) Unprecedented Transition, Historic Reflections

- The transformation of a well-established state into two Union Territories is a first in India's constitutional history.
- Delhi's journey serves as a parallel case with similarities to this transformation.
- Delhi's Constitutional Evolution: From Part C State to Union Territory

2) Shifting Dynamics in Delhi's Governance

- Delhi began as a 'Part C' State, overseen by the President through a Chief Commissioner or Lieutenant Governor.
- From 1952 to 1956, Delhi had a Legislative Assembly with power over State List subjects, except for certain domains.
- In 1956, Delhi and other Part C States lost legislative powers and became Union Territories under Presidential administration.
- Later, certain Union Territories like Himachal Pradesh, Manipur, Tripura, and Goa attained full statehood, but Delhi faced obstacles due to its capital status.

Delhi's Partial Statehood and its Democratic Complexities

3) Balancing Power in the Capital

- In 1992, Delhi gained partial statehood, obtaining legislative authority over State List subjects except public order, police, and land.
- Despite this progress, the Lieutenant Governor's influence limited the elected government's powers.
- The Supreme Court's 2018 verdict sought to maintain a democratic form of governance in Delhi, with the Lieutenant Governor's intervention reserved for exceptional circumstances.

Jammu & Kashmir's Complex Path to Change

4) Distinct Historical Trajectory

- A contrasting trajectory is seen in Jammu & Kashmir's transition.
- While Delhi was always part of India, Jammu & Kashmir was a sovereign Princely State that acceded in 1947.
- Article 370 granted special status to Jammu & Kashmir

based on the terms of accession.

- Notably, this status did not assert sovereignty, as clarified in Section 3 of the State's 1956 Constitution.

From Autonomy to Transformation: Jammu & Kashmir's Paradigm Shift

5) Autonomy and Transformation

- Jammu & Kashmir's special status allowed unique application of Indian Constitution provisions, granting higher autonomy.
- This unique arrangement granted exclusive powers to Parliament for non-State and Concurrent List subjects.
- However, reorganizing Jammu & Kashmir into Union Territories diminished democratic privileges more than Delhi's 1956 transformation.
- Unlike Delhi's process involving constitutional amendments, Jammu & Kashmir's change relied on standard parliamentary legislation, with easier amendment possibilities.

Federal Dynamics and State Diversity

6) Constitutional Foundations of Differential Treatment

- Indian Constitution accommodates state diversity through tailored provisions, recognizing cultural, ethnic, and geopolitical contexts.
- States like Tripura, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, and Nagaland have distinct provisions based on stronger intra-group bonds.
- This federal arrangement aligns with B.R. Ambedkar's vision to unify diverse states while respecting their individual traits.
- The alteration of Jammu & Kashmir's democratic role raises concerns about potentially replicating such changes in other states, affecting their unique contexts and democratic vibrancy.
- Ensuring Indian federalism's essence and safeguarding state uniqueness become vital considerations.

CONCLUSION: In a democratic fabric woven with diverse threads, the transformation of Jammu and Kashmir raises a thought-provoking question: Can the essence of Indian federalism withstand the erosion of unique contexts, potentially turning states into mere Union Territories? Federalism is a basic structure of Indian Constitution as identified by the Supreme Court. The implications of this transformation ripple beyond, inviting us to contemplate the delicate balance between central authority and regional autonomy.

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NEEDED, A WELL- CRAFTED SOCIAL SECURITY NET FOR ALL

CONTEXT: India needs to aspire to provide social security to all of its workforce, in a manner that is fiscally and administratively feasible.

Around 53% of all salaried employees in India do not have any social security benefits in India according to the Periodic Labour force survey Annual Report 2021-22. These employees have no access to provident fund, pension, health care and disability insurance.

STATISTICS TO PONDER

Just 1.9% of the poorest 20% quintile of India's workforce has access to any benefits.
gig workers, or approximately 1.3% of India's active labour force, have access to social security
India's social security system is also ranked poorly; Mercer CFS ranked it at 40 out of 43 countries in 2021.
In FY11, the National Social Security Fund was set up for unorganised sector workers, with an initial allocation of just ₹1,000 crore to support schemes for weavers, rickshaw pullers and bidi workers.
The amount was too small when compared to a requirement of over ₹22,841 crore – as estimated by the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability.
A Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) audit on the scheme in FY17 identified ₹1,927 crore (the entire amount accumulated since inception) had just not been utilised.
National Social Assistance Programme that was set up in the 1990s, with a focus on old-age poor individuals with no able-bodied earners in their household, who were eligible to earn a monthly pension of ₹75.
Contribution by the Centre to old-age pension schemes has stagnated at ₹200 a month since 2006, i.e., below the minimum wage per day.
In July 2022, the CAG identified that the cess collected for the provision of social security to construction workers in Delhi was poorly utilised – approximately 94% of the money was not utilised.
In Haryana, the CAG noted that the direct benefit scheme of the State's Social Justice and Empowerment Department had seen the transfer of ₹ 98.96 crore to the accounts of deceased beneficiaries.
Approximately 91% (or around 475 million) of India's workforce works in the informal sector. They lack access to social security net.

In two decades, India will become an aging society with no significant social protection along with limited savings. The Code on Social Security (2020) merged existing social security legislation. But it dealt fundamentally with formal enterprises and did not cover informal ones.

SCHEMES OVERSEAS

In Brazil the scheme is contribution based, substituting income loss for a worker (and his family), whether in partial or full.

This includes situations arising from workplace

accidents, disabilities preventing work, death, illness requiring time off, family responsibilities, or potential unemployment (ILO, 2013). Even income loss during worker imprisonment is protected for low-income insured individuals (ILO, 2013). Unemployment benefits are provided from worker support funds, while healthcare is managed by the Unified Health System.

As per the Brazilian Constitution, if funds are insufficient, the National Treasury will intervene (ILO, 2013). Social security benefits are easily accessible through a phone call or bank visit, avoiding the need for excessive



paperwork, as emphasized in Brazilian Good Practices in Social Security.

SUGGESTION FOR INDIA

Comprehensive Social Security Goal: India's objective should encompass extending social security coverage to all workers, considering fiscal and administrative viability.

EPFO Expansion for Formal Workers: Enlarging contributions from both employers and employees within the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) system is crucial for formal sector employees.

Inclusion of Informal Workers: Informal sector workers earning substantial income, whether self-employed or in informal businesses, should make partial contributions. Encouraging informal enterprises to formalize and enhance contributions is essential.

Government Support for Vulnerable Groups: The government should intervene for unemployed individuals, those who have halted job searches, or those with insufficient earnings.

Targeting the Poorest 20%: Allocating social protection to the bottom 20% of the workforce, which includes the elderly, pregnant women, and disabled individuals, is estimated to cost ₹1.37 trillion. This amounts to about 0.69% of GDP in FY20.

Balancing Registration Responsibility: The current approach of e-Shram places the onus of registration on informal workers, necessitating self-declaration and Aadhaar card submission. There's a lack of accountability or incentives for employers, even temporary ones, to facilitate this registration. Involving employers could have formalized employee-employer relationships and enhanced registration rates.

Enhancing Mandatory Social Security: There's a need to go further in mandating social security for the majority of India's labour force, expanding beyond gig and construction workers. The introduction of a nationwide labour force card and extending successful schemes like the Building and Other Construction Workers Schemes to other worker categories is vital. To achieve this, flexibility is required in benefit portability, having of the 90-day cooling period, and simplification of registration processes.

Empowering Domestic and Migrant Workers: Specific attention is essential for domestic workers, often female, who face job insecurity. Migrant workers encounter biases and suspicion, warranting expanded coverage of services such as child care. Empowering domestic workers requires nationwide organization efforts across cities.

By taking these steps, India can move closer to comprehensive and inclusive social security coverage for all its workers.

Empowering Domestic Workers: Domestic workers, mainly female, confront uncertainty regarding potential job termination.

Initiatives should address their unique vulnerabilities and concerns.

Support for Migrant Workers: Migrant workers frequently

encounter discrimination and suspicion from local authorities. Expanding coverage of social services like child care can mitigate their challenges.

City-Wide Organization for Domestic Workers: Domestic workers need to unite and organize across various cities in India. Collective efforts can amplify their voice and advocate for their rights effectively.

INVIGORATING EXISTING SCHEMES

Strengthening Existing Schemes:

- Enhance budgetary support for schemes like EPF, ESI, and NSAP.
- Expand coverage to reach a larger portion of the workforce.

Simplifying Administrative Framework:

- Streamline the complex social security structure for unorganized workers.
- Clarify distinctions among platform workers, unorganized workers, and the self-employed.

Raising Awareness and Information:

- Launch extensive awareness campaigns to educate workers about available social security benefits.
- Fund organizations like Self-Employed Women's Association to lead campaigns, especially for women.

Universal Social Security:

- Unify and consolidate existing schemes and ad hoc measures.
- Aim for comprehensive social security coverage across India's labour force.

Addressing Job Insecurity:

- With evolving job dynamics, focus on providing security amid on-demand employment and hire/fire practices.

Equitable Growth and Social Security:

- Shift from supply-side approaches to policies promoting balanced growth and widespread social security.
- Ensure economic progress benefits all while fostering a sense of security among workers.

CONCLUSION: India stands at a crucial juncture where the imperative of providing comprehensive social security to its entire workforce is undeniable. The current gaps in coverage, the disparities among different worker categories, and the low ranking on global social security indices underscore the urgency for reform. While positive steps have been taken through recent policies and initiatives, the journey towards universal social security demands a more concerted effort. By addressing administrative complexities, incentivizing employer involvement, expanding existing schemes, and raising awareness, India can embark on a path of equitable growth and enhanced job security. Only by fostering a robust safety net can the nation truly ensure that the dividends of progress are shared by all.



BATTLING THE MENACE OF RAGGING: A CLOSER LOOK AT INDIA'S STRUGGLE

CONTEXT: An 18-year-old undergraduate student allegedly died after falling from the second floor of his hostel on the Jadavpur University campus in Kolkata on 19th Aug. The deceased was a first-year student of Bengali Honours and was a resident of Nadia district, they added. His family has alleged that he was being ragged.



INTRODUCTION

Ragging, a disgraceful practice that has marred the educational landscape in India, has long been a subject of concern. The act of subjecting new students to humiliation, harassment, and even physical harm under the guise of initiation rituals has raised alarm bells across the nation. Recognizing its gravity, the Indian government, educational institutions, and the legal system have taken significant steps to curb this harmful practice.

DEFINING RAGGING

Ragging encompasses a wide array of acts that violate a student's dignity and self-respect. These acts can range from verbal taunts to physical abuse, affecting the psyche and confidence of the victims. It includes any behavior that inflicts shame, discomfort, or emotional distress, and disrupts the academic pursuits of students. Ragging often takes the form of a power play, where senior students assert dominance over newcomers.

GOVERNMENT AND INSTITUTIONAL INTERVENTION

Recognizing the urgency of addressing ragging, the Indian government and educational institutions have introduced a series of measures to combat this issue.

Supreme Court's Ban: In a landmark move in 2001, the Supreme Court of India imposed a nationwide ban on ragging. This decisive step aimed to eradicate ragging from the roots. In 2001, the Supreme Court banned ragging across India. Setting up proctoral committees to prevent ragging and internally address complaints against ragging. Ragging if it becomes unmanageable or amounts to a cognizable offence the same may be reported to the police.

R K Raghavan committee : It was appointed by Supreme Court in 2006 to suggest means and methods to prevent ragging. Possible action that can be taken against persons/institutions that indulge/ fail to curb ragging. Its recommendations were subsequently formalised by the UGC.

GUIDELINES AND COMMITTEES: The University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued guidelines to establish committees within institutions responsible for preventing ragging and addressing complaints. These committees include faculty members, wardens, advisors, and senior students.

UNNY COMMITTEE: The University Grants Commission (UGC) created a committee called the Unny Committee. This group was formed to study and give a report on ragging. They proposed a plan to prohibit, prevent, and punish ragging. The committee recommended that both central and state governments should make laws specifically against ragging. This would make ragging a punishable offense by law. The Unny Committee suggested different punishments for ragging, ranging from fines to even imprisonment for up to 3 years. This strong punishment was proposed to discourage people from engaging in ragging. To raise awareness about the negative effects of ragging, the committee recommended sensitization programs. These programs would educate students about the harm caused by ragging and help create a more respectful environment. The committee proposed rewarding and encouraging students and wardens who actively prevent ragging and promote positive behavior among students.

LAWS AND PENALTIES: The Prohibition of Ragging Act, passed in 1997, defined ragging as a criminal offense. Punishments vary from fines to imprisonment, emphasizing the gravity of the offense. In 1997, Tamil Nadu was the first state to ban ragging completely. The Prohibition of Ragging Act 1997 defines ragging as any disorderly behavior that teases, treats, or handles freshers or other students rudely, either through words or actions.

Sections 339 and 340 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC) make it a crime. Section 339 criminalizes wrongful restraint, which is when someone stops another person from going where they have a right to go. Section 340 criminalizes wrongful confinement, which is restraining someone in a way that they can't go beyond certain limits.

Additionally, organizations like the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and the Medical Council of India have their own regulations to prevent ragging under their respective acts. These measures collectively aim to put a stop to ragging and create a safer environment in educational institutions.

HELPLINES AND WEBSITES: The introduction of anti-ragging helplines and websites has given students a platform to report incidents anonymously and seek help.

AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS: Educational institutions observe an anti-ragging week to raise awareness about the harmful effects of ragging, encouraging a safer and more inclusive campus environment.



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- UGC adopted guidelines in 2009 under “The Regulations on Curbing the Menace of Ragging in Higher Educational Institutions”.
- Definition- It includes 9 explanations of what could constitute ragging.
- Institutional level- UGC requires universities to take measures for prevention of ragging.
- Universities must require students to sign an undertaking that they will not engage in ragging activities.
- The institution shall set up appropriate committees, including the course-incharge, student advisor, wardens and some senior students as its members.
- If found guilty by the anti-ragging committee, then any member of the committee may proceed to file a First Information Report (FIR) within 24 hours of receipt of such information.
- Helpline- Anti Ragging helpline is available in 12 languages for helping victims of ragging.
- Anti-Ragging Website - <https://www.antiragging.in/> portal contains the record of registered complaints received and the status of the action taken thereon.
- Awareness- All the educational institutions in the country observe August 12-18 as anti-ragging week.

THE TOLL OF RAGGING

Ragging's impact is profound and far-reaching. It leaves emotional scars, erodes self-esteem, and has even led to tragic consequences such as suicides and serious injuries. A 2017 survey highlighted that around 40% of Indian students faced some form of ragging during their academic journey, with medical and engineering colleges witnessing higher rates.

RELATED LAWS IN INDIA

Prohibition of Ragging Act 1997- Ragging is defined as “any disorderly conduct whether by words spoken or written or by an act which has the effect of teasing, treating or handling with rudeness a fresher or any other student”.

Section 339 of IPC- It criminalises the offence as wrongful restraint.

Wrongful restraint is an offence when a person is prevented from proceeding in any direction in which that person has a right to proceed.

Section 340 of IPC- It criminalises wrongful confinement which is defined as wrongfully restraining any person in such a manner as to prevent that person from proceedings beyond certain circumscribing limits.

Separate regulations - All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) and the Medical Council of India have made their own regulations under their respective acts.

CHALLENGES AND WAY FORWARD

While measures have been implemented,

challenges remain. Peer pressure, reluctance to report, and lack of stringent implementation hinder the eradication of ragging. To overcome these challenges, a multi-faceted approach is necessary:

Strengthening Awareness: Educational institutions should intensify awareness campaigns, emphasizing the psychological, emotional, and legal consequences of ragging.

Counseling Support: Providing counseling services to victims can aid in their recovery and build a support system against ragging.

Strict Enforcement: Stricter implementation of the Prohibition of Ragging Act, along with swift and severe penalties for offenders, will act as a deterrent.

Promoting Inclusivity: Fostering a sense of belonging and camaraderie among students can discourage senior students from engaging in ragging.

SUMMARY

Ragging remains a deeply concerning issue that jeopardizes the holistic development of students and tarnishes the reputation of educational institutions. The steps taken by the government, courts, and educational bodies have shown a commitment to eradicating this practice. However, the collective effort of students, faculty, parents, and society at large is required to create an environment where every student can learn and grow without fear or distress. Through continued vigilance, awareness, and strict enforcement, India can ensure that its educational institutions are safe havens for nurturing intellect, character, and camaraderie.

"Be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and others have greatness thrust upon them."

- WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE





CRIMINAL LAW REFORM WITH NEW INDIAN NAME

THE NEWS: Government has unveiled three new bills that will have significant transformation in the criminal justice system

WHY NOW?

According to the government, over the last four years, the Ministry of Home Affairs has put in significant efforts in preparation and consultation. The reforms were discussed with Governors, Lieutenant-Governors and Chief Ministers in 2019; in 2020, the opinions of the Chief Justice of India, Chief Justices of all High Courts, Bar Councils, and law universities were brought in, and letters were sent to Members of Parliament and IPS officers in 2021.

The three bills are named

1. Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (to replace the Indian Penal Code),
2. Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita (to replace the Code of Criminal Procedure)
3. Bharatiya Sakshya Bill (to replace the Indian Evidence Act).

WHAT IS THE NEED FOR REFORMS?

- **Updation-** Since, Indian penal code was launched in 1860 during British colonial rule, it is outdated to the present context.

- **Technology usage-** Code of criminal procedure launched in 1861 didn't have much emphasis for technology usage.
- **Address the delays-** Indian Evidence Act, 1872 also needs reforms to the present day requirements, as it hampers speedy justice.
- Slow police investigations often result in catastrophic miscarriages of justice.
 - According to Supreme Court, "Speedy trial is one of the facets of the fundamental right to life and liberty enshrined in Article 21 of the Constitution.
- **Promote transparency** - The rich and the resourceful get better access to justice than the marginalised and the vulnerable.
- **Speedy justice-** Jails overflow with under trials and the slow moving courts are clogged with some 50 million cases.
 - According to a 2017 survey, nearly 60,000 cases are pending in the Supreme Court.
 - *Equity deferred is denied equity*

WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF THE CRIMINAL JUSTICE SYSTEM?

- The codification of criminal laws in India was done during British rule, which more or less remains the same even in the 21st century.
- Lord Thomas Babington Macaulay is said to be the chief architect of codifications of criminal laws in India.
- Criminal law in India is governed by Indian Penal Code, 1860, *Code of Criminal Procedure*, 1973, and Indian Evidence Act, 1872, etc.
- Criminal law is considered to be the most apparent expression of the relationship between a state and its citizens.

COMMITTEES FOR REFORM OF CRIMINAL LAWS

- **Malimath committee-** It was formed in 2003 to bring reforms in the criminal justice system.
- The Committee recommended that the victim should be allowed to participate in cases involving serious crimes and also be given adequate compensation.
- **Justice Verma panel-** It was formed to ensure quicker trial and enhanced punishment for criminals accused of committing sexual assault against women. It submitted its report in 2013.
- **Ranbir Singh committee-** It was formed in 2020 to review three codes of criminal law
 - Indian Penal Code (IPC), 1860
 - Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973 and
 - Indian Evidence Act, 1872.



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THE BHARATIYA NYAYA SANHITA, 2023

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 was introduced in Lok Sabha on August 11, 2023. The Bill repeals the Indian Penal Code, 1860 (IPC). IPC is the principal law on criminal offences. Categories of offences covered under it include those affecting:

- (i) human body such as assault and murder,
- (ii) property such as extortion and theft,
- (iii) public order such as unlawful assembly and rioting,
- (iv) public health, safety, decency, morality, and religion,

KEY CHANGES PROPOSED IN THE BILL INCLUDE:

Sedition: IPC defines sedition as bringing or attempting to bring hatred or contempt, or exciting disaffection towards the government. It is punishable with imprisonment term between three years and life imprisonment, and/or a fine. The Bill removes this offence. It instead penalises the following:

- (i) exciting or attempting to excite secession, armed rebellion, or subversive activities,
- (ii) encouraging feelings of separatist activities, or
- (iii) endangering sovereignty or unity and integrity of India.

These offences may involve exchange of words or signs, electronic communication, or use of financial means. These will be punishable with imprisonment of up to seven years or life imprisonment, and a fine.

Terrorism: The Bill defines terrorism as an act that intends to threaten the unity, integrity, and security of the country, to intimidate the general public or disturb

public order.

Terrorist acts include:

- (i) using firearms, bombs, or hazardous substances (biological or chemical) to cause death, danger to life, or spread a message of fear,
- (ii) destroying property or disrupting essential services, and
- (iii) activities included in the treaties listed in the Second Schedule of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 such as unlawful seizure of aircraft or taking of hostages.

Punishment for attempting or committing terrorism includes:

- (i) death or life imprisonment, where the offence has resulted in death of any person,
- (ii) imprisonment term between five years and life in other cases. An offender will also be liable to a fine of at least five lakh rupees.

The Bill also penalises conspiring, organising, or assisting in preparation of any terrorist act with an imprisonment term between five years and life imprisonment, and a fine of at least five lakh rupees.

Organised crime: The Bill defines organised crime as:

- (i) a continuing unlawful activity such as kidnapping,

(iv) defamation, and

(v) offences against the state.

The Bill retains several parts of the IPC. Changes include introduction of offences of organised crime and terrorism, enhancement in penalties for certain existing offences, and introduction of community service as a punishment for certain petty offences. Certain offences under the IPC that have been struck down or read down by courts have been omitted. These include offences of adultery and same-sex intercourse (Section 377).

extortion, contract killing, land grabbing, financial scams, and cybercrime,

(ii) carried out by use of violence, intimidation, or other unlawful means,

(iii) to obtain material or financial benefit, and

(iv) carried out by individuals acting singly or jointly, as members of or on behalf of a crime syndicate.

Attempting or committing organised crime will be punishable with:

(i) death or life imprisonment, where the offence results in death of any person, and (ii) imprisonment term between five years and life, in other cases. The offender will also be liable to pay a fine.

Petty organised crime: The Bill makes attempting or committing petty organised crime punishable with imprisonment between one and seven years, and a fine.

Petty organised crimes are those which cause general feelings of insecurity among citizens, and are committed by organised criminal groups/gangs.

These include organised pick pocketing, snatching, and theft.

- **Murder by a group of persons on grounds of caste or race:** The Bill specifies separate penalty for murder committed by five or more people on specified grounds. These include race, caste, sex, place of birth, language, or personal belief. Each offender will be punishable with imprisonment between seven years and life, or death. It will also attract a fine.
- **Death penalty for gang rape of minor:** IPC allows death penalty for gang rape of women below 12 years of age. The Bill allows death penalty for gang rape of women below 18 years of age.
- **Sexual intercourse by deceitful means:** The Bill penalises the act of sexual intercourse with a woman (not amounting to rape) through deceitful means or a promise of marriage without intending to fulfil it. It will be punishable with simple or rigorous imprisonment up to 10 years, and a fine.
- **Extending applicability of certain offences to boys:** Under the IPC, importing girls under the age of 21 years for illicit intercourse with another person is an offence. The Bill specifies that importing boys under the age of 18 years for illicit intercourse with another person will also be an offence.



The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023

The Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 was introduced in Lok Sabha on August 11, 2023. It repeals the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973. The Code provides for the procedure for arrest, prosecution, and bail for offences under various Acts including the Indian Penal Code, 1860. The Bill retains most of the provisions of the Code.

Key changes proposed under the Bill include:

- **Detention of undertrials:** Under the Code, if an accused has spent under detention half of the maximum period of imprisonment for an offence, during investigation or trial, he must be released on his personal bond. This does not apply to offences which are punishable by death.

The Bill adds that this provision will also not apply to:

(i) offences punishable by life imprisonment, and

(ii) persons against whom proceedings are pending in more than one offence. It further adds that firsttime offenders will be released on bail if they have completed detention for one-third of the maximum imprisonment which can be imposed for the offence. The superintendent of the jail where the accused is detained must make the application seeking the release of such undertrials on bail.

- **Trials in electronic mode:** The Bill provides that all trials, inquiries, and proceedings may be held in electronic mode. It also provides for the production of electronic communication devices, likely to contain digital evidence, for investigation, inquiry, or trial. Electronic communication includes communication through devices such as mobiles, computers, or telephone.

Medical examination of accused: The Code allows conducting a medical examination of the accused in certain cases, including cases of rape.

Such examination is carried out by a registered medical practitioner on the request of at least a sub-inspector level police officer. The Bill provides that any police officer can request for such an examination.

- **Forensic investigation:** The Bill mandates forensic investigation for offences punishable with at least seven years of imprisonment. In such cases, forensic experts will visit crime scenes to collect forensic evidence and record the process on mobile phone or any other electronic device. If a state does not have forensics facility, it shall utilise such facility in another state.
- **Power to prohibit carrying arms:** The Code empowers the District Magistrate to prohibit the carrying of arms in any procession, mass drills, or mass training with arms in public places. This may be done to preserve public peace, public safety, or maintain public order. Such prohibitions may be in place for up to six months. However, the provision was not notified under the Code.

The Bill omits this provision.

- **Signatures and finger impressions:** The Code empowers a Metropolitan/Judicial Magistrate to order any person to provide specimen signatures or handwriting. Such an order can be given for any

investigation or proceeding under the Code. However, such specimen cannot be collected from a person who has not been arrested under the investigation.

The Bill expands this to include finger impressions and voice samples.

These samples may also be taken from a person who has not been arrested.

- **Timelines for procedures:** The Bill prescribes timelines for various procedures. For instance, it requires medical practitioners who examine rape victims to submit their reports to the investigating officer within seven days.

Other specified timelines include:

(i) giving judgement within 30 days of completion of arguments (extendable up

to 60 days),

(ii) informing the victim of progress of investigation within 90 days, and

(iii) framing of charges by a sessions court within 60 days from the first hearing on such charges.

- **Trial in absence of offender:** The Bill provides for conduct of trial and pronouncement of judgement in the absence of a proclaimed offender. This shall be done when such a person has absconded to evade trial and there is no immediate prospect of arresting him.

Proclaimed offender refers to a person who:

(i) is accused of an offence punishable with imprisonment of at least 10 years or death and

(ii) fails to appear at a specified time and place as specified by a Court.

- **Metropolitan magistrates:** The Code empowers the state governments to notify any city or town with a population of more than one million as a metropolitan area. Such areas have Metropolitan Magistrates. The Bill omits this provision

The Bhartiya Sakshya Bill, 2023

The Bhartiya Sakshya Bill, 2023 was introduced in Lok Sabha on August 11, 2023. It repeals the Indian Evidence Act, 1872. The Act provides rules for the admissibility of evidence in legal proceedings. The Bill retains several parts of the Act. It removes certain colonial references from the Act, widens the ambit of electronic records admissible as evidence, and removes provisions related to telegraphic messages. Key changes proposed in the Bill include:

Admissibility of electronic or digital records as evidence: The Act provides for two kinds of evidence – documentary and oral evidence. Documentary evidence includes information in electronic records that have been printed or stored in optical or magnetic media produced by a computer. Such information may have been stored or processed by a combination of computers or different computers. The Bill provides that electronic or digital records will have the same legal effect as paper records. It expands electronic records to include information stored in semiconductor memory or any communication devices (smartphones, laptops). This will also include records



on emails, server logs, smartphones, locational evidence and voice mails. As per the Bill, the information may have been created on, stored in, or processed by one or more computers or communication devices: (i) which may be standalone systems or on a computer network, or (ii) through an intermediary.

Oral evidence: Under the Act, oral evidence includes statements made before Courts by witnesses in relation to a fact under inquiry. The Bill adds any information given electronically to be considered as oral evidence.

Secondary evidence: Under the Act, documentary evidence includes primary and secondary evidence. Primary evidence includes the original document and its parts, such as electronic records and video recordings. Secondary evidence contains documents that can prove the contents of the original. Secondary evidence includes certain copies of the original documents and oral accounts of the document's content.

The Bill expands secondary evidence to include:

- (i) oral and written admissions, and
- (ii) the testimony of a person who has examined the document and is skilled in the examination of documents.

Under the Act, secondary evidence may be required under various conditions, such as when the original:

- (i) is in the possession of the person against whom the document is sought to be proved, or
- (ii) has been destroyed.

The Bill adds that secondary evidence may be required if the genuineness of the document itself is in question.

Production of documents: The Act provides for the production of documents. If a witness is summoned to produce a document and has it in their possession or power, they must bring it to Court regardless of any objection to its production or admissibility. The Court will determine the validity of such a document. The Bill adds that no Court will require any privileged communication between the Ministers and the President to be produced before it.

Joint trials: A joint trial refers to the trial of more than one person for the same offence. The Act states that in a joint trial, if a confession made by one of the accused which also affects other accused is proven, it will be treated as a confession against both. The Bill adds an explanation to this provision. It states that a trial of multiple persons, where an accused has absconded or has not responded to an arrest warrant, will be treated as a joint trial.

WHAT ARE THE ADVANTAGES OF THE BILLS?

- **Expansion-** It brings offences like terrorism, corruption, mob lynching and organised crime under penal laws.
- **Zero FIR-** It allows people to register a police complaint in any police station, regardless of the location where the crime took place.
- **ICT applications-** They propose video recording of search and seizure operations and increased the use of electronic evidence and forensics during investigation.
- **Community service-** It is introduced as a new form of punishment.

- **Sedition-** The offence has been judiciously tempered to prevent misuse, facilitated by introducing a test for criminal intent.
- **Speedy justice-** They advocate video trials, and holding trials in absence of the accused.
- **In line with Supreme Court ruling-** It has excluded attempted suicide and adultery in the bills which aligns with the Supreme Court rulings.
- **Undertrials -** The Police Superintendent has to ensure that an application is made to the court to release under trials who have completed 1/2 or 1/3rd of their maximum possible sentence.

WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES ASSOCIATED WITH THE BILL?

- **New definition of sedition-** The new bill punishes acts endangering sovereignty, unity and integrity of India.
- It gives the police unchecked powers of arrest.
- **Vague-** The manner in which the offences are drafted continue to perpetuate the problem of vague criminal law provisions that worsen the risk of arbitrary arrests.
- The bills should have revisited the offences relating to religion and blasphemy.
- **Borrowed legislations-** Some of the new offences are borrowed from existing legislations on organised crime and the UAPA without clarifying the reasons for such borrowing.
- **Criminalise speech-** Offences including sedition and obscenity require reconsideration.
- **Marital rape -** It has not been criminalised despite India having tough laws to prevent sexual violence against women.
- **Modesty-** The terminology of "modesty" employed in the code for the offence of "outraging the modesty of a woman" should be taken out.
- **Bail adjudication-** The new Bills do very little to resolve the manner in which bail is adjudicated and accessed.
- **Torture in investigation-** Without appropriate changes in the evidence legislation on recovery evidence based on statements to the police, the institutional reality of torture will continue.
- **Death penalty to mob lynching-** Sentencing a mob to death doesn't seem like appropriate punishment.
- **Retains outdated laws-** The bills removed the reference to thugs and punishment for it as it is based on the Victorian morality, but have retained more than 80% of 160 year old IPC.
- **Institutional challenge-** The bills propose that every crime scene must undergo forensic investigation.
- Collection and analysis of forensic evidence along with the manner in which they are used in courts remain unaddressed.
- **Issue with the committee -** A committee was constituted in 2020 to undertake public consultations and recommendations.



- It was a male dominated committee with lack of adequate representation.
- The real information on the methodology adopted to process and analyse the submissions that were received is unavailable.
- The Committee's recommendations are not in the public domain.
- **Strategic power asset-** The political executive has consistently sought to wield criminal law as a pre-emptive tool. The proliferation of this approach to criminal law raises legitimate concerns.
- **Police custody-** The period during which an arrested person can be sent to police custody has been expanded from 15 days to over 60 or 90 day period depending on the offence.
- **International practices-** Countries like Singapore, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and Bhutan are still using the colonial penal code.
- Singapore recently made amendments to update it and introduce present-day requirements.

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

- The criminal reform change must strike a delicate equilibrium between state security imperatives and individual freedom.
- The principle of equality and equitability is essential to check on criminal law reform and to ensure public trust.
- The effectiveness of the reforms will be tested on the basis of its impact on the vulnerable, the victims and the poor. There is a disjunct between the manner in which these Bills are being presented and their actual content. They are far from being an overhaul that will be the panacea for issues that plague India's criminal justice system. Large parts of these three Bills simply reproduce existing provisions of the Indian Penal Code, the Criminal Procedure Code and the Indian Evidence Act. That is not to say that there aren't changes – but it is difficult to see how these changes will have any real impact on the deep crisis within India's criminal justice system. Further, some of the changes reflected in these Bills present serious concerns.

CAUVERY WATER SHARING ISSUE

CONTEXT: The Tamil Nadu government has sought the Supreme Court's intervention to make Karnataka immediately release 24,000 cubic feet per second (cusecs) from its reservoirs.

BACKGROUND: The Cauvery River water sharing issue is a long-standing and complex dispute between the Indian states of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu, as well as other neighboring states. The dispute revolves around the allocation of water from the Cauvery River, which originates in Karnataka and flows through Tamil Nadu before entering the Bay of Bengal.

Key points regarding the Cauvery water sharing issue include:

Historical Background: The origins of the dispute can be traced back to pre-independence agreements and accords on water sharing between the Madras Presidency (now Tamil Nadu) and the princely state of Mysore (now Karnataka).

- Pre-independence period- There were two agreements entered in 1892 and 1924 with respect to sharing of river water between the states of erstwhile Madras Presidency and the kingdom of Mysore.
- 1924 agreement- Karnataka and Tamil Nadu signed an agreement effective for 50 years.
- The percentage of water sharing is
- 75% - Tamil Nadu and Puducherry
- 23% - Karnataka
- 2% - Kerala

Agreements and Tribunal: The Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (CWDT) was set up in 1990 by the Indian government to adjudicate the water-sharing dispute between Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and Puducherry. The tribunal was tasked with determining the equitable allocation of water among the states.

Tribunal's Award: In 2007, the CWDT issued its final award, which prescribed the annual water allocations to be shared

among the states. According to the award, Karnataka was allocated a certain percentage of water, while Tamil Nadu received a larger share due to its historical needs.

Protests and Legal Challenges: The implementation of the tribunal's award has led to protests and disagreements between Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Karnataka has often expressed concerns about water scarcity and the impact on its agricultural and economic activities.

Environmental Concerns: Apart from inter-state disputes, there are also environmental concerns related to the over-extraction of water from the Cauvery River, affecting its ecosystem and overall health.

POST INDEPENDENCE

- On completing 50 years, the accord lapsed in 1974.
- Subsequently, Karnataka claimed that the agreement restricted its ability to develop farming activities along the Cauvery basin.
- It attempted to expand farming activities in the Cauvery basin by building reservoirs that has become a major water sharing dispute among **Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Puducherry and Kerala.**
- **Tribunal** - By Tamil Nadu's demand, the Union government formed the *Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal* (CWDT) in 1990 that adjudicated the dispute in 2007.
- **New Bodies-** The following bodies were created in 2018, as per Supreme Court guidelines.
 - *Cauvery Water Management Authority-* Ministry of Jal Shakti
 - *Cauvery Water Regulation Committee*



HISTORY OF THE LEGAL DISPUTE

1892 | Madras and Mysore states mutually entered into an agreement for equitable share of water. The 1924 agreement allowed construction of Krishnarajasagar dam by Mysore and the Mettur by Madras

1958 | Karnataka (Mysore) constructed Harangi, Kabini and Hemavathi dams in violation of 1892 and 1924 agreements. Several meetings between the

governments failed

1970 | TN took up with the Centre about illegal construction of projects and sought the reference of the dispute to a tribunal under Inter-State Water Disputes Act, 1956. The following year, the state moved Supreme Court to set up a tribunal

1973-1985 | Several meetings took place between the states and the Centre, but the dispute could not be settled amicably

1986-1990 | 26 sittings took

place among the states, and officers of the Centre, but no amicable settlement could be reached. The SC directs Centre to constitute Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal in 1990.

1991 | The tribunal passed interim order directing Karnataka to ensure release of 205tmcft to Mettur dam in TN

2007 | Final order given stipulating release of 192tmcft to TN during normal year, also holding the agreements of 1892 and 1984 valid and binding

CAUVERY WATER DISPUTE AUTHORITY

- **As per the Article 262-** Adjudication of disputes relating to water of inter- State rivers or river valleys.
- **Power of Parliament-** Parliament can provide for adjudication of any dispute or complaint with respect to the use, distribution or control of the waters in inter-state river or river valley by law.
- It can provide by law that neither the Supreme Court nor any other court shall exercise jurisdiction in respect of any such dispute or complaint.
- **Inter State Water Dispute Act, 1956-** Any State may request the Centre to refer an inter-State river dispute to a tribunal for adjudication.
- If the Centre feels that negotiations cannot settle the dispute, it may setup a Water Disputes Tribunal *within 1 year* of the complaint.
- Cauvery Water Dispute Tribunal was formed through this act in 1990.
- **Dispute resolution** - Tribunals has the *power of civil court* and its verdict is equivalent to *Supreme Court verdict* when pronounced under the ambit of the Inter State Water Dispute Act.
- The verdict of the tribunal can be challenged in

Supreme Court via civil suits.

- **Amendment-** Tribunal award post 2002 can be altered by new tribunals.

WHAT WAS THE TRIBUNAL'S ORDER?

- **Water availability-** According to the tribunal's order, the total availability of water in the 802-km long Cauvery basin is 740 thousand million cubic feet (TMC) in a normal year.
- **Water utilisation-** Of the total 740 TMC, water awarded includes
 - 419 TMC to Tamil Nadu
 - 270 TMC to Karnataka
 - 30 TMC to Kerala
 - 7 TMC to Puducherry
- The remaining 14 TMC was reserved for environmental protection.
- To achieve this sharing, the order stated that Karnataka must release 192 TMC of water from Biligundlu Station (inter-state dam) in normal monsoon years.
- The tribunal also noted that in case the yield was less in a distress year, the allocated shares shall be proportionately reduced.

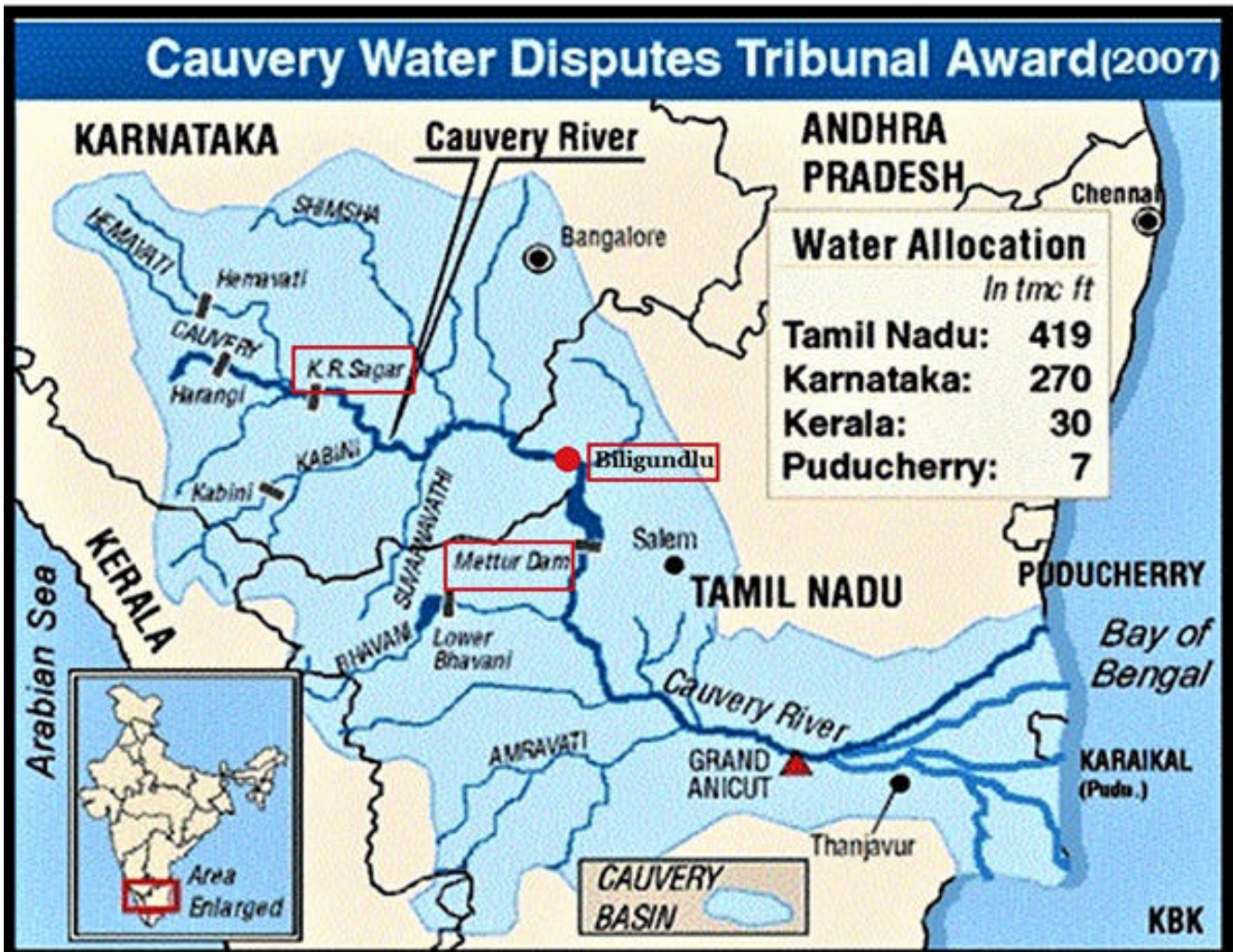


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WHAT IS THE CURRENT DISPUTE?

- **Supreme Court** - Tamilnadu sought the intervention of SC
- To make Karnataka immediately release 24,000 cubic feet per second (cusecs) from its reservoirs and
- Ensure the availability of the specified quantity of water at Biligundlu on the inter-State border for the remainder of the month.
- To stick with CWDT's final award.
- **Karnataka's stand**- It has contended that lower rainfall in the Cauvery catchment including in Kerala has led to the poor inflow to its own reservoirs.
- According to data of the Meteorological Department, Kodagu district (Cauvery river origin) received 44% less rainfall during June 1-August 15 than what it was expected to experience.
- The state decided to appeal to Cauvery tribunal to reconsider order on releasing water to Tamilnadu.
- **Tamilnadu's stand** - Tamilnadu is in the favour to formulate distress sharing formula, which is not accepted by Karnataka.

WAY FORWARD

- A distress-sharing formula, acceptable to all the stakeholders, seems to be the need of the hour.
- Government plans to create a single tribunal to deal with all inter State river disputes and reduce the complexity.
- Supreme Court is of the opinion to give water sharing on the basis of river basin and provide equitable sharing of water.

BREAKING BARRIERS: THE JOURNEY TOWARDS GENDER EQUALITY

- Gender equality is not only a matter of social justice but also a prerequisite for sustainable development and peace. It's a collective responsibility that requires the active involvement of governments, institutions, communities, and individuals. By challenging norms, promoting education, creating inclusive policies, and fostering equal opportunities, we can pave the way for a world where everyone, regardless of their gender, can thrive and contribute their talents to the fullest. Gender equality is not just a goal; it's a fundamental human right that will shape a brighter future for generations to come.



GENDER EQUALITY

CONTEXT: The Tamil Nadu government has sought the Supreme Court's intervention to make Karnataka immediately release 24,000 cubic feet per second (cusecs) from its reservoirs.

WHAT IS THE HANDBOOK?

The Handbook on Gender Stereotypes is released by the Supreme Court of India with the intention of assisting judges and legal practitioners in recognizing, understanding, and combating gender stereotypes present in legal language and judgments.

- It highlights common stereotypical words and phrases that are often used to describe women in legal documents.
- It points out instances where such language perpetuates antiquated or incorrect notions about women's roles and behavior.
- It also provides specific examples of language that should be replaced with more neutral and accurate terms.
- For instance, it suggests using "woman" instead of "career woman," "street sexual harassment" instead of "eve teasing," and "rape" instead of "forcible rape."

ALTERNATIVE TO STEREOTYPE-PROMOTING LANGUAGE

'ADULTERESS'

Woman who has engaged in sexual relations outside of marriage

'AFFAIR'

Relationship outside of marriage

'BASTARD' Non-marital child or, a child whose parents were not married

'BIOLOGICAL SEX' / 'BIOLOGICAL MALE' / 'BIOLOGICAL FEMALE'

Sex assigned at birth

'CARNAL INTERCOURSE'

Sexual intercourse

'CHILD PROSTITUTE'

Child who has been trafficked

'CONCUBINE' / 'KEEP'

Woman with whom a man has had romantic or sexual relations outside of marriage

'DUTIFUL WIFE' / 'FAITHFUL WIFE' / 'GOOD WIFE' / 'OBEDIENT WIFE'

Wife

'EVE TEASING'

Street sexual harassment

'HOUSEWIFE'

 Homemaker

'FEMININE HYGIENE PRODUCTS'

Menstrual products

'UNWED MOTHER'

 Mother

'VIOLATED'

(e.g. 'he violated her')

Sexually harassed / assaulted or raped

'MISTRESS' Woman with whom a man has had romantic or sexual relations outside of marriage

'PROSTITUTE'

 Sex worker

'PROVIDER' / 'BREADWINNER'

Employed or earning

'PROVOCATIVE CLOTHING / DRESS'

 Clothing / dress

'SEX CHANGE'

Sex reassignment or gender transition

'SPINSTER'

 Unmarried woman



OBJECTIVE:

- The handbook aims to promote more equitable and unbiased language usage in judicial discourse.
- The goal of the handbook is to encourage a shift towards language that reflects a more modern and respectful understanding of gender and promotes equal rights for all individuals, regardless of their gender.

WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR JUDGES TO USE THE RIGHT WORDS?

- The handbook argues that the language a judge uses reflects not only their interpretation of the law, but their perception of society as well.
- Even when the use of stereotypes does not alter the outcome of a case, stereotypical language may reinforce ideas contrary to our constitutional ethos.
- Language is critical to the life of the law. Words are the vehicle through which the values of the law are communicated.
- Words transmit the ultimate intention of the lawmaker or the judge to the nation.

INDIAN CONSTITUTION AND GENDER EQUALITY

The Indian constitution ensures equality for all, and this makes gender equality an inseparable element of it. The Right to Equality is covered under Articles 14 to 18 of the constitution. It says that the state cannot deny equal rights before law to any citizen of India.

It also prohibits any discrimination on the grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth. Since gender equality is inherent to the existing rights in the constitution of India, there is no specific gender equality law in India.

However, the country has enacted several other laws to ensure the right to equality for women. Article 42 of the constitution makes it mandatory for the state to provide “reasonable working conditions and maternity assistance for women”.

There are other laws for gender equality in India like Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961, The Hindu Succession (Amendment) Act of 2005, and the Prevention of Sexual Harassment at Workplace Act of 2013. All these acts are aimed at ensuring the right of equality to women by creating favourable conditions for them to thrive and succeed.

Thus, discrimination against women is prohibited under Articles 14, 15(2), 15(3), and 16 of the Indian Constitution, which also provide the state the power to grant protective discrimination in their favour under the right conditions. Under the Indian Constitution, these provisions are a component of the Fundamental Rights

HAVE THERE BEEN SIMILAR EFFORTS IN OTHER COUNTRIES?

- There have been projects in other countries, pushed by both academia and practitioners, which hold up a mirror for the court’s practices.
- For example, the Women’s Court of Canada, a collective of female lawyers, academics and activists write “shadow judgements” on equality law.
- In India, the Indian Feminist Judgement Project also ‘rewrites’ judgements with a feminist critique.

WHAT IS GENDER STEREOTYPING?

- Gender stereotyping refers to the practice of assigning specific attributes, characteristics, or roles to individuals based solely on their gender.
- These stereotypes can be pervasive in societies and can impact how people perceive and treat each other based on their gender.

- For example, women are supposed to be nurturing and avoid dominance, and men are supposed to be agentic and avoid weakness.
- Impacts of Gender Stereotyping on Women:
 - Gender stereotypes act as a barrier for girls to access quality education.
 - For example, stereotypes about the role of women as confined to the domestic and family sphere underpin all obstacles to girls’ equal access to quality education.
 - Women are often held back from high status positions in society.
 - The persistent gender gap in education, employment and wages is due in part to gender stereotyping.
 - Harmful gender stereotypes, rigid constructions of femininity and masculinity and stereotyped gender roles are a root cause of gender-based violence against women.

"Be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and others have greatness thrust upon them."

- WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE





KERALA RESOLUTION ON UNIFORM CIVIL CODE

CONTEXT: Recently, Kerala passed a resolution against Centre's move to implement Uniform Civil Code.

WHAT IS UNIFORM CIVIL CODE?

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) refers to the proposal of having a single set of personal laws applicable to all citizens of a country, irrespective of their religion, ethnicity, or cultural background. These personal laws typically cover matters such as marriage, divorce, inheritance, and adoption. The aim of a UCC is to ensure equality and uniformity in these aspects of civil life.

- Article 44 - It states that 'the State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a Uniform Civil Code throughout the territory of India'.
- Though DPSP is fundamental to the country's governance, it is not enforceable or justiciable in a court of law.
- Aim- To enforce a uniform legal framework to all citizens, irrespective of their religion.
- To safeguard the fundamental rights of all citizens and reduce social inequalities and gender discrimination.

In Shah Bano Begum Judgement of 1985, where a divorced Muslim woman demanded maintenance from her former husband, the apex court called for the implementation of the UCC.

WHAT IS KERALA'S RESOLUTION ON UCC ABOUT?

- **Affects secularism-** The Uniform Civil Code affects the secular fabric of the country.
- **Imposition of Manusmriti-** It is an ancient Hindu code that endorsed the oppressive caste system and was deeply prejudicial to women.
- **Non-enforceable-** The Uniform Civil Code is placed under Directive Principles of State Policy, which is not mandatory to implement.
- **Power of court-** The Court may order to enforce Fundamental rights. But, Article 44 of the Constitution cannot be enforced even by the courts.
- **Against federalism-** Centre could make a unilateral move on the contentious issue without consulting states, which is the basic structure of the Constitution.
- **Constitution-** It is essential to understand how much thought the founders of the Constitution put into their decision.
- **Negates tribal rights-** It would render the statutory autonomous councils for tribal development in North Eastern States redundant.
- **Violates article 25-** It seeks to erase the fundamental right of citizens to practice, profess and propagate the religion of their choice.
- **Article 162-** The constitution gives State governments the power to legislate on subjects where a central law does not occupy the field.
- **Limitations-** The executive power of the State is limited by the executive power conferred by the Constitution or by any law made by Parliament.
- If there is a central law, it automatically gains precedence over the state law on the subject.
- **Entry 5 of the Concurrent list-** Marriage, divorce, Adoption of infants and minors, wills, intestacy and succession, joint family and partition.
- State laws will not have precedence over the central laws for the issues mentioned in Entry 5 of the concurrent list.
- **Legislations-** Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 and Shariat Act of 1937, are central legislations on Hindu and Muslim personal laws.
- When the Hindu personal laws were codified in 1955, it replaced several provincial legislations that existed on the issue.
- **Judiciary stand-** Supreme Court refused to hear petitions challenging the move by certain states to set up committees to explore the feasibility of implementing a uniform civil code in their respective administrative jurisdictions.

WHAT IS THE POWER OF CENTRE WITH RESPECT TO UNIFORM CIVIL CODE?

- **Personal laws-** It is found in Concurrent List (List III) of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution.
- As per article 162, the executive power of a State extends to matters with respect to which the Legislature of the State has power to make laws hence the constitution of a Committee cannot be challenged.



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STATES IN FAVOUR OF UCC

- **Goa**- It is the only state in India that has a uniform civil code regardless of religion, gender and caste.
- It inherited the Portuguese Civil Code, 1867 even after it joined the Indian Union in 1961.
- **Uttarakhand**- Ranjana Desai committee was set up to prepare draft for the implementation of UCC.
- **Gujarat**- It announced to constitute a committee for the implementation of UCC in the state.
- **Madhya Pradesh**- It announced that it will form a committee to implement UCC in the state.
- **Assam**- It is in favour of UCC and also plans to ban polygamy by legislation.
- **Uttar Pradesh** - It decided to implement the UCC in the state.

STATES AGAINST UCC

- **Mizoram**- It unanimously passed resolution against Article 44, as it could clash with the customs and social practices of Mizos in the state.
- **Nagaland**- The Nagaland Tribal Council has written to the Law Commission that the UCC will dilute the provisions of Article 371A of the Constitution (Special provisions for the state).

- **Tamilnadu**- It wrote to 22nd Law commission that the UCC could violate individual's religious freedom.
- **Kerala**- It passed resolution against the UCC as it would affect secularism and federalism in the country.

WHAT LIES AHEAD?

- Reiterate Ambedkar's position - If implemented, UCC should also "make a provision that the Code shall apply only to those who make a declaration that they are prepared to be bound by it".
- Law commission report- 21st Law Commission report recommended that the UCC is "neither necessary nor desirable at this stage."

The debate over implementing a Uniform Civil Code has been particularly prominent in India, where there is a diversity of religious and cultural practices. The Indian Constitution, in Article 44 of the Directive Principles of State Policy, calls for the promotion of a Uniform Civil Code. However, due to the sensitivities surrounding religious and cultural practices, successive Indian governments have not been able to implement a comprehensive UCC, and personal laws in India continue to be governed by different religious communities. However, the concept of a Uniform Civil Code is often a subject of debate and controversy. Opponents argue that personal laws are deeply ingrained in religious and cultural traditions and should be respected as such. They express concerns that imposing a uniform code might infringe upon the religious freedoms and cultural practices of various communities.

DRDO REVAMP TO FOCUS ON FUTURISTIC MILITARY TECHNOLOGIES

CONTEXT: The Union government has established a high-powered committee to redefine the role of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO). This committee includes officials from the Ministry of Defence (MoD), the three services, industry, and academia. Its objective is to acquire advanced futuristic technologies for future warfare.

This PMO-driven initiative aims to rid India's premier defence research agency of 'redundant' tasks and remodel it on the lines of the US Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency.

BACK GROUND: It was formed in 1958 by the merger of the Technical Development Establishment and the Directorate of Technical Development and Production of the Indian Ordnance Factories with the Defence Science Organisation under the administration of Jawaharlal Nehru.

DRDO has often focussed on delivering what is of immediate requirement of the defence forces. It has not been able to lend sufficient attention on futuristic research. As a premium research organisation of the nation it should be on the correct side of the technological curve.

REVITALISING DRDO

India's Defence Research and Development Organization (DRDO) stands on the cusp of a significant transformation, driven by a growing recognition of the need to adapt and excel in the ever-evolving realm of defence technology. For years, DRDO has been tasked with meeting immediate demands and indigenizing existing weapon systems. However, the changing global landscape demands a shift in focus, and a nine-member committee led by former Principal Scientific Advisor, Prof. K. Vijay Raghavan, is set to redefine DRDO's role.

The transformation of DRDO seeks to address these issues head-on. The objective is to reposition DRDO as a key player in high-end futuristic technologies across air, ground, maritime, and space systems. This necessitates offloading redundant tasks to academia and industry, allowing DRDO to focus on cutting-edge innovations.

COMMITTEE'S MANDATE AND OBJECTIVES

The nine-member committee, led by Prof. K. Vijay Raghavan, has a comprehensive mandate to reshape DRDO for future excellence. Their key objectives include:

THE NEED FOR TRANSFORMATION

For decades, DRDO has played a vital role in advancing India's defence capabilities. However, it has also faced persistent concerns, including delays in critical projects and an emphasis on prototypes without well-defined plans for large-scale manufacturing.

While DRDO has excelled in missile and radar technologies, other areas have faced challenges, resulting in dissatisfaction among the armed services.

1. Restructuring and Redefining DRDO's Role: The committee aims to propose a revamped structure for DRDO that aligns with contemporary defence research needs. This includes revisiting priorities, resource Attracting and Retaining High-Quality Manpower: A critical challenge faced by DRDO is retaining skilled personnel. The committee will devise strategies to attract top talent and foster an environment conducive to innovation and research excellence.
2. Enhancing Collaboration with Foreign Experts and Entities: To accelerate research and development



processes, the committee will explore mechanisms to foster international collaborations, enabling DRDO to tap into global expertise and technological advancements.

3. Rationalizing Laboratories: DRDO's extensive network of over 50 laboratories across India will undergo a rationalization process. The committee will recommend ways to optimize resources and enhance collaboration between various research units.

ALIGNING WITH GLOBAL BEST PRACTICES

The decision to revamp DRDO is guided by the desire to align with international best practices, particularly the Defence Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) model in the United States. DARPA and DRDO share a common birth year, 1958, but their approaches differ significantly.

DARPA operates as a funding agency, without laboratories or research staff. It conducts research through contracts with universities, industry, and government R&D institutions. In contrast, DRDO boasts a substantial staff strength of about 30,000, with only 30 percent from the scientific community.

By adopting a model similar to DARPA, the Indian government aims to ensure that DRDO becomes "the initiator and not the victim of strategic technological surprises." This transformation seeks to enhance efficiency, encourage innovation, and streamline resource utilization within DRDO.

BUDGETARY SUPPORT AND PRIVATE SECTOR PARTICIPATION

The Union government has recognized the importance of private industry, start-ups, and academia in driving innovation and development in defence. In the 2022-

23 Union budget, 25 percent of the Ministry of Defence's R&D budget was allocated to these sectors. The aim is to encourage private industry to collaborate with DRDO and other organizations through the strategic partnership model.

Additionally, the government opened DRDO's doors to private players, allowing them to utilize government assets for projects without the need for substantial investments in infrastructure. These measures are part of broader initiatives like Aatmanirbhar Bharat, aimed at boosting indigenous defence manufacturing and expanding defence exports, with a target of Rs 35,000 crore by 2025.

CONCLUSION

The revamp of DRDO is a visionary step that reflects the Indian government's commitment to strengthening the country's defence research and development capabilities. This transformation comes in response to persistent concerns and challenges faced by DRDO, including delays in critical projects and a need to align with global best practices.

By redefining DRDO's role, attracting top-tier talent, fostering international collaborations, and optimizing resources, the Indian government aims to ensure that DRDO remains at the forefront of defence technology. This effort is not just about revitalizing a defence organization; it's about securing India's future in an increasingly complex and dynamic world.

As the nine-member committee, led by Prof. K. Vijay Raghavan, works diligently to submit its recommendations within three months, the nation anticipates a new era for DRDO – one marked by innovation, efficiency, and a resolute commitment to national security. With these transformations, DRDO is poised to take its place as a global leader in defence research and development, safeguarding India's interests for generations to come.



INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS





COUPS IN NIGER; REASONS AND CONCERNS

INDIA DECRIES CHINA ISSUING STAPLED VISAS FOR ARUNACHAL ATHLETES

NUCLEAR SIGNALLING

SIGNIFICANCE OF EXPANSION OF BRICS FOR INDIA

TAMIL NADU CM DEMANDS RETRIEVAL OF KATCHATHEEVU



COUPS IN NIGER; REASONS AND CONCERNS

CONTEXT: President Mohamed Bazoum is removed from power by the head of Niger's presidential guard, Abdourahmane Tchiani proclaimed himself as the head of the transitional government

This is the seventh coup in western and central Africa since 2020, including two each witnessed by Niger's neighbours Burkina Faso and Mali.

Reasons cited for the coup is the deteriorating security situation and bad governance.

As a consequence of this coup, The Constitution is dismissed, all institutions suspended, and the national borders closed.



BACKGROUND: Niger occupies a pivotal role within the Sahel, a transcontinental stretch from the Atlantic to the Red Sea marred by religious extremism and military rule. It stands as the largest West African nation, distinguished by its political stability among neighbouring states.

Surrounded by Algeria, Libya, Chad, Nigeria, Benin, Burkina Faso, and Mali, Niger's geographical significance is notable. It emerges as a linchpin in counteracting religious radicalism due to its hosting of US and French military bases.

Moreover, Niger's vast uranium reserves, accounting for 7% of global output, bestow it with economic prominence. This uranium sector is pivotal to the nation's GDP and governmental earnings.

ADDITIONAL INFO ON RELEVANCE OF COUP IN NIGER

Niger's history is marked by four military coups since gaining independence from France in 1960. The 2021 failed coup attempt occurred before President-elect Mohamed Bazoum's inauguration. It coincided with coups in neighbouring nations, creating a "coup belt."

As part of ECOWAS, Niger suspended countries with successful coups. Rising living costs, government ineffectiveness, and leadership changes triggered the coup, exacerbated by disputes over military junta attitudes. Despite being plagued by jihadist violence, Niger aided anti-jihadist efforts and became crucial for Western, especially French and American, operations.

Russian influence through the Wagner Group and Turkey's expanding role has added to the complexity of the situation.

POSSIBLE IMPACT OF THE COUP

The coup's ramifications on Niger's counter-Islamist efforts are notable, with signs of military dissatisfaction over inadequate militant-fighting support.

For the West, the coup shattered hopes, as Niger and Bazoum were considered vital for regional security.

There's potential for the Wagner Group's expansion due to uranium-rich Niger, amplified by the loss of Wagner leaders.

The coup disrupted the construction of Africa's longest oil pipeline from Niger's Agadem oasis to Benin's Port Seme Terminal. ECOWAS sanctions might cause substantial pipeline delays. The Trans-Saharan gas pipeline's planning coincided with the coup.

The International Crisis Group views the coup as a jihadist boost, mirroring previous upswings after Mali and Burkina Faso coups.



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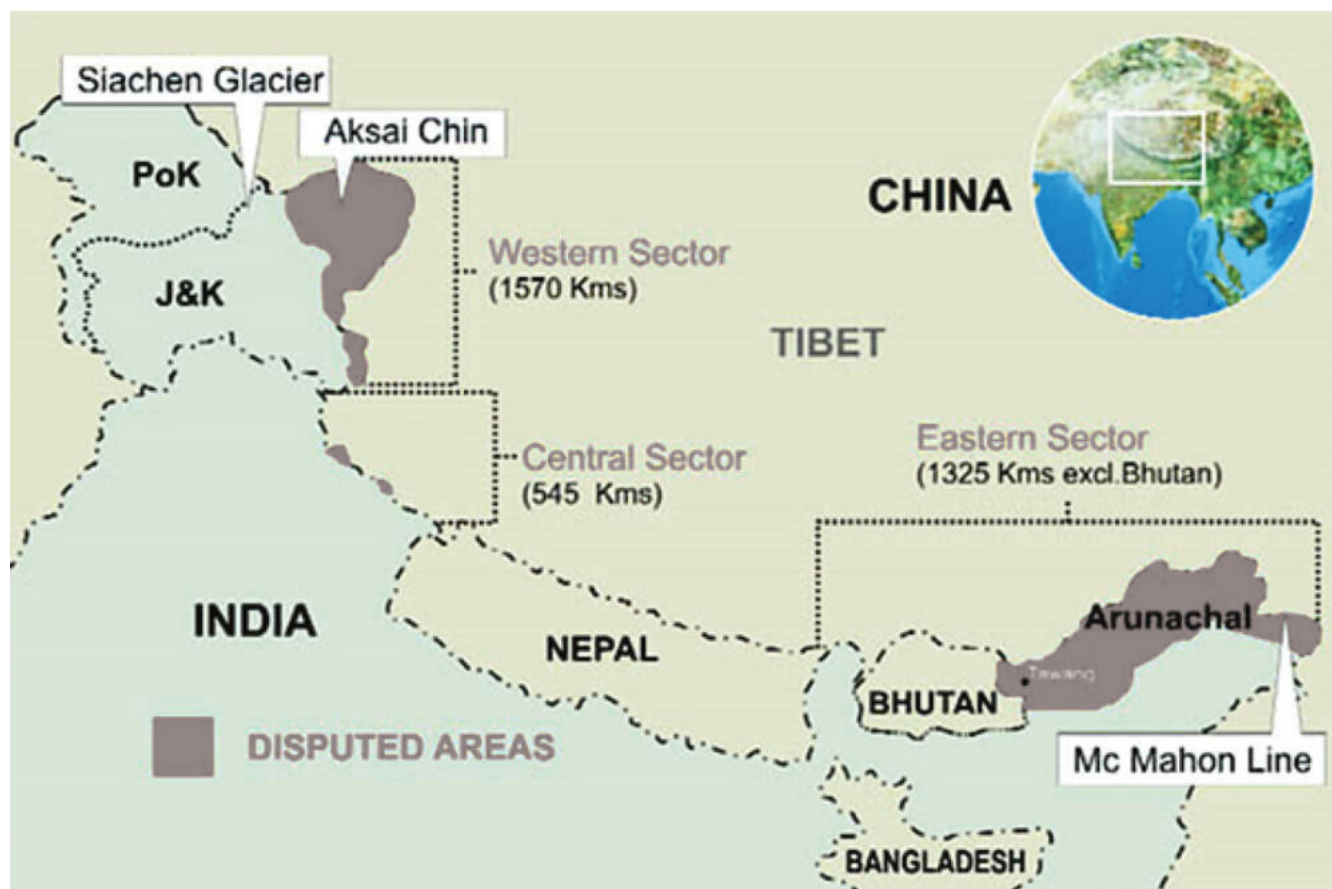
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INDIA DECRIES CHINA ISSUING STAPLED VISAS FOR ARUNACHAL ATHLETES

CONTEXT: India withdrew its 8-member wushu contingent from summer world University games in protest of China issuing stapled visas to 3 athletes from Arunachal Pradesh.



BACKGROUND: Wushu is the Chinese term for martial arts.

A stapled visa is simply an unstamped piece of paper that is attached by a pin or staples to a page of the passport and can be torn off or detached at will. This is different from a regular visa that is affixed to the passport by the issuing authority and stamped.

Passports, visas, and other kinds of immigration controls reiterate the idea of a nation-state and its sovereignty which is inalienable and inviolable.

A passport and visa entitle their holders to travel freely and under legal protection across international borders.

China disputes India's unequivocal and internationally accepted sovereignty over Arunachal Pradesh.

Hence, they started the practice of issuing 'stapled' visas (since 2005-06) to all Indian citizens from Arunachal Pradesh.

The stapled visas for J&K residents appear to have started around 2008-09.

China has made it a practice to issue stapled visas to Indian nationals from Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir. It says the visas are valid documents.

INDIA'S STAND ON STAPLED VISAS

India's long-standing and consistent position is that

- There should be no discrimination or differential treatment based on domicile or ethnicity in the visa regime for Indian citizens holding valid India passports, and
- That India reserves the right to suitably respond to such actions.

WHAT IS THE STAPLED VISA AND WHY IS IT ISSUED?

If the stapled visa is issued to someone, the immigration Officer does not stamp on the passport of the passenger/applicant. Rather an additional paper is attached to the passport of the passenger. The attached additional paper have the full detail of the trip like purpose and duration of the trip in the destination country. So instead of passport this paper is stamped by the officials called Stapled Visa.

Generally, when any one travel abroad, immigration officer put a stamp on the passport so that it can be known that why someone is visiting that country. But in case of Stapled Visa, the stamp is put on an additional paper instead of the passport of the traveller. This additional paper contains all the detail related to the trip of the Stapled Visa holder.

This additional paper is known as Stapled Visa.



WHICH COUNTRIES ISSUE STAPLED VISA?

Stapled Visas were previously issued by several countries including Cuba, Iran, Syria, and North Korea. These nations used to grant Stapled Visas to Chinese and Vietnamese citizens. However, this practice was halted following a mutual agreement among these countries.

While China no longer employs the Stapled Visa policy for most Indian states, it continues to issue these visas to residents of two specific Indian states, namely Arunachal Pradesh and Jammu & Kashmir. This distinction is due to China's assertion that Arunachal Pradesh is an integral part of Tibet, which China considers as its own territory due to the annexation of Tibet.

China's perspective on Arunachal Pradesh's status is rooted in its view of the region as being inseparable from Tibet, a viewpoint reinforced by China's incorporation of Tibet following its annexation. Despite this territorial claim, the people residing in Arunachal Pradesh are not regarded as Chinese citizens, leading to the issuance of Stapled Visas by China for them.

China contends that citizens of Arunachal Pradesh don't require visas to travel to what it considers their own country, which is China. However, the actual possession of the Arunachal Pradesh region lies with India, leading to the issuance of Stapled Visas or Nathi Visas for individuals from Arunachal Pradesh.

Thus, the complex interplay of territorial claims and citizenship perspectives has led to the issuance of Stapled Visas by China, highlighting the intricate diplomatic and geopolitical aspects at play.

WHY IT IS CALLED STAPLED VISA?

The main reason to say "Stapled Visa" is simply that the paper which is attached separately with a passport is stapled with the help of "stapler". That is why it is called Stapled visa.

IMPLICATIONS OF ISSUANCE OF STAPLED VISA:

1. It is rule in the Stapled Visa that when a Stapled Visa holder passenger (such as Arunachal resident) wants to return to his home country after completing his work in China, then his stapled visa, entry and exit pass are torn off.
2. The passport of the person traveling does not record any details of this trip which creates a security challenge for the administration of a country like India.

CHINESE CLAIM ON LAC

China challenges colonial-era boundaries, like the

McMahon Line, as products of imperialism.

It challenges the legal status of the McMahon Line, the boundary between Tibet and British India that was agreed at the Convention Between Great Britain, China, and Tibet at the Simla Convention of 1914.

It views Tibet as integral to its territory, urging LAC alignment to reflect Tibetan borders.

It is this disagreement that lies at the root of Chinese claims over the position of the Line of Actual Control (LAC), and its repeated transgressions into Indian territory, undermining the sovereignty of India over parts of Indian territory.

China controls Aksai Chin, citing strategic and historical reasons for its possession.

Emphasis on territorial integrity extends to disputed areas in Ladakh and Arunachal Pradesh.

Differences in LAC perception lead to tension and military standoffs in contested zones.

Historical agreements are cited to back claims and suggest boundaries were not mutually agreed.

Chinese strategy is generally known as **salami slicing**.

Strategic motives drive China's LAC assertion, securing borders and Himalayan advantage.

China claims some 90,000 sq km of Arunachal Pradesh as its territory.

It calls the area "Zangnan" in the Chinese language and makes repeated references to "South Tibet".

Chinese maps show Arunachal Pradesh as part of China.

LOOKING FORWARD

India should assert its position at the negotiating table while conveying to Chinese very clearly that India is ready to protect its sovereignty and interests by all means necessary.

Negotiations can be held only from the spirit of mutual respect and shared responsibility and not coerced by altering boundaries by force.

Meanwhile India should concentrate on building requisite border infrastructure which can strengthen its position on the actual ground.

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NUCLEAR SIGNALLING

CONTEXT: Concerns revive on nuclear escalation management between major powers amid Ukraine conflict and nuclear rhetoric.

STORY SO FAR: In 2021-2022, U.S. and Russian leaders discussed nuclear arms control but made no progress. Russia's military operation in Ukraine led to U.S. attempts to deter aggression, including sanctions and military assistance to Ukraine through NATO. Russian efforts to deter NATO involvement failed as NATO provided increasingly sophisticated weapon systems.

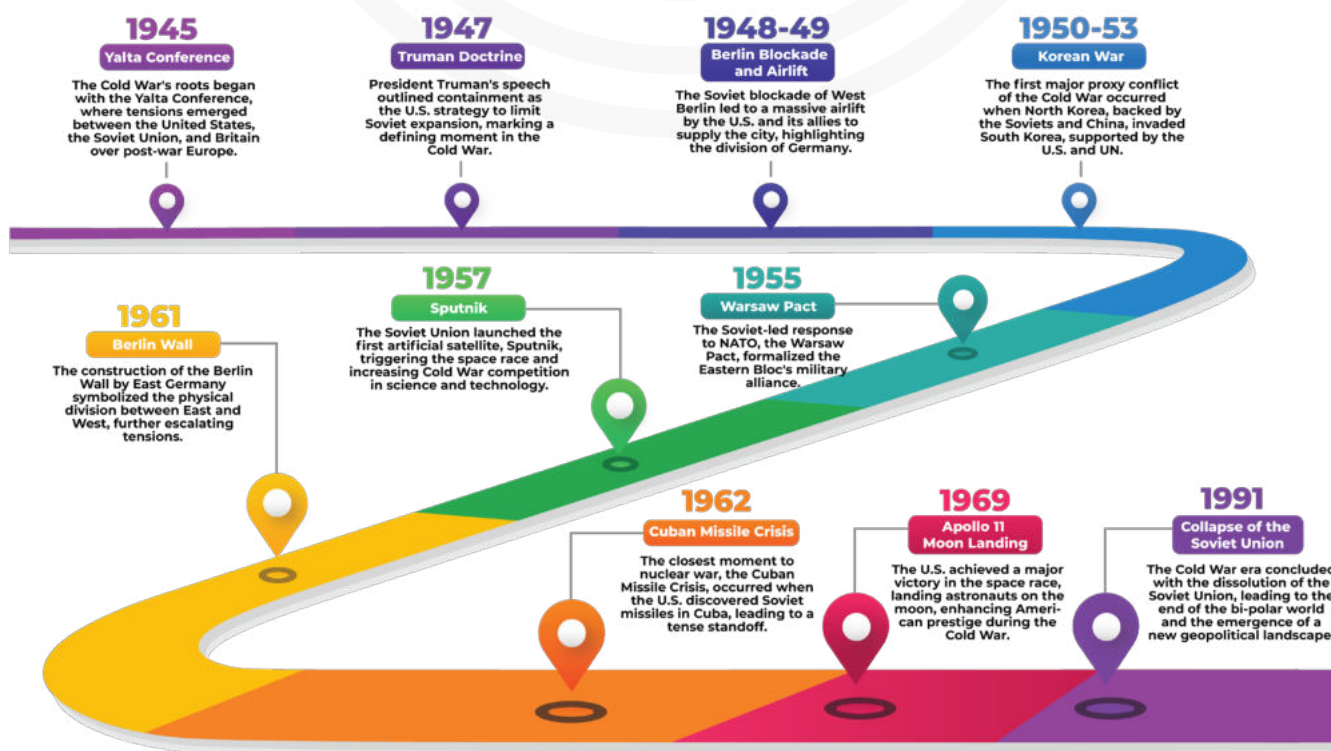
In March, NATO refrained from implementing a no-fly-zone in response to Russian threats against their airfields. Russia downplayed nuclear threat, stating it would use nuclear weapons only in an existential threat. U.S. reassured European allies and aimed to support Ukraine, maintain NATO unity, and avoid direct conflict with Russia. Both countries are engaging in escalatory rhetoric, operating in a grey zone. During the Cold War, U.S. and Soviet Union had proxy wars, but the current situation involves higher stakes and closer proximity.

COLD WAR LESSONS

- Deterrence relies on rational assessment of costs and benefits, but nuclear deterrence introduces uncertainty due to assured second strike capability.
- Thomas Schelling's work shaped nuclear deterrence theory, emphasizing that nuclear weapons are not usable but have political utility in preventing war with other nuclear powers.
- Schelling believed that a credible nuclear threat required uncertainty and risk to induce rationality in adversaries.
- The Cuban missile crisis and the absence of a direct territorial dispute between the U.S. and the Soviet Union contributed to restrained rhetoric during the Cold War.
- The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact and NATO's expansion have changed the security dynamics in Europe.
- The Ukraine conflict influenced Sweden and Finland to abandon neutrality and seek security under NATO's nuclear umbrella.
- The concept of deterrence continues to play a significant role in international relations, especially in managing nuclear capabilities and geopolitical tensions.

PROBING FOR RED LINES

Russia's nuclear doctrine permits nuclear use in response to WMD threats or aggression against it or allies. Putin's view on Ukrainians and Russians hinders Ukraine's sovereignty. The escalate-to-deescalate approach aims to use tactical nuclear weapons for favourable terms, but the U.S. rejects it due to the risk of uncontrolled escalation. The U.S. probes Russian red lines carefully, while Russia seeks ambiguity. Russia's military objectives remain unfulfilled, possibly causing evolving thresholds. Nuclear signalling operates in uncertain political territory. With changed dynamics, the Cold War's escalation management may no longer apply, and new rules are necessary to maintain the nuclear taboo.





SIGNIFICANCE OF EXPANSION OF BRICS FOR INDIA

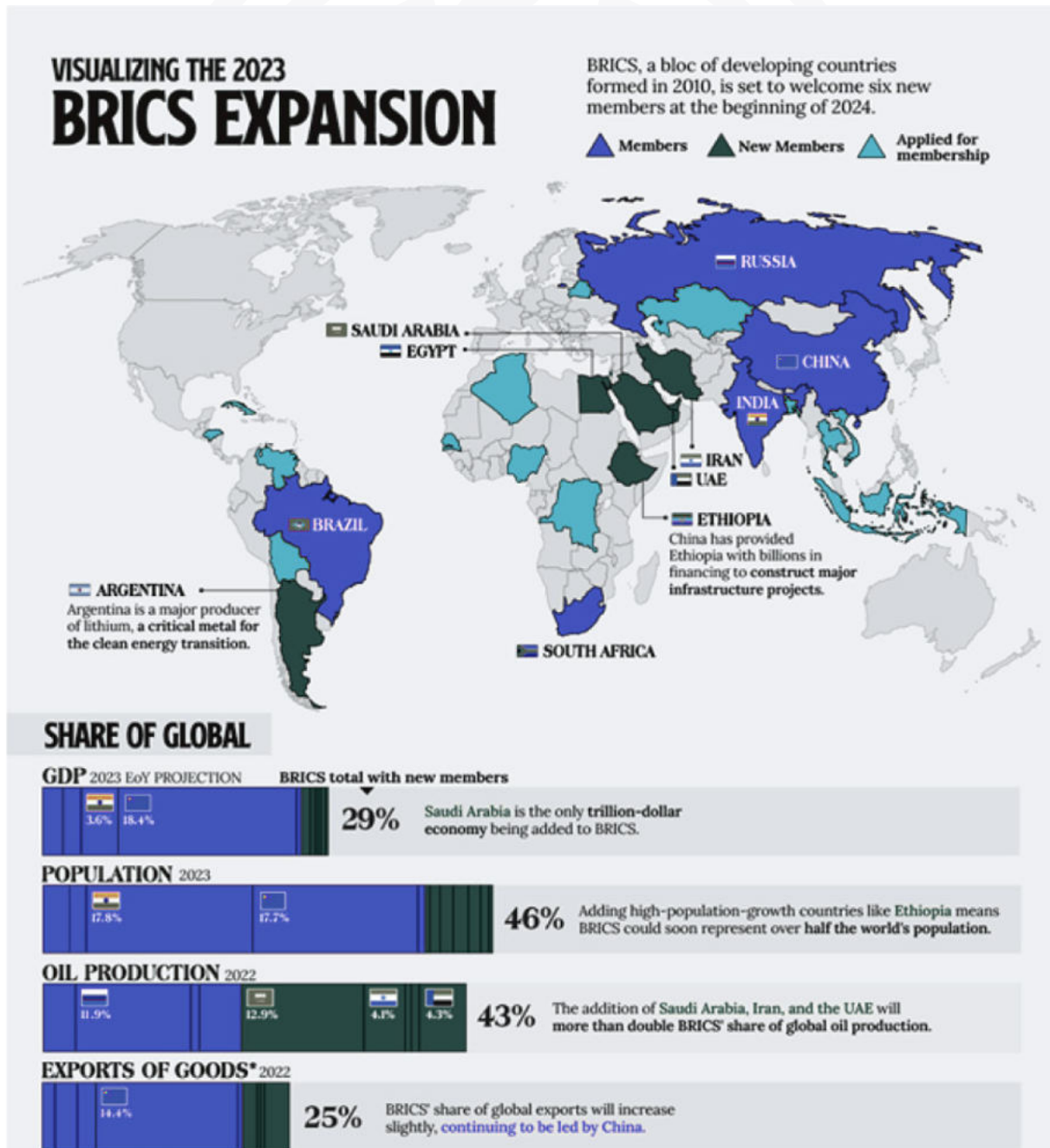
CONTEXT: The BRICS group, consisting of five countries, invited six other countries to join them during the 15th global summit hosted by South Africa at Johannesburg. This could make the alliance stronger in representing the 'Global South', but it also raises worries about China having too much power within the group. This was the first physical meeting of all the leaders after the Covid Pandemic.

BACKGROUND: BRICS stands for a group of important developing economies in the world: Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa. The term BRIC was first used by British Economist Jim O'Neill of Goldman Sachs in 2001 to talk about Brazil, Russia, India, and China as emerging economies. In 2006, the idea of this group became official during the initial meeting of BRIC Foreign Ministers. It was on the side-lines of the G8 Outreach Summit in Russia.

The first formal meeting was in June 2009, Yekaterinburg also in Russia. India was represented by Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh. Later, in December 2010, South Africa was asked to join BRIC, leading to the adoption of the term BRICS.

SHARE OF BRICS IN WORLD:

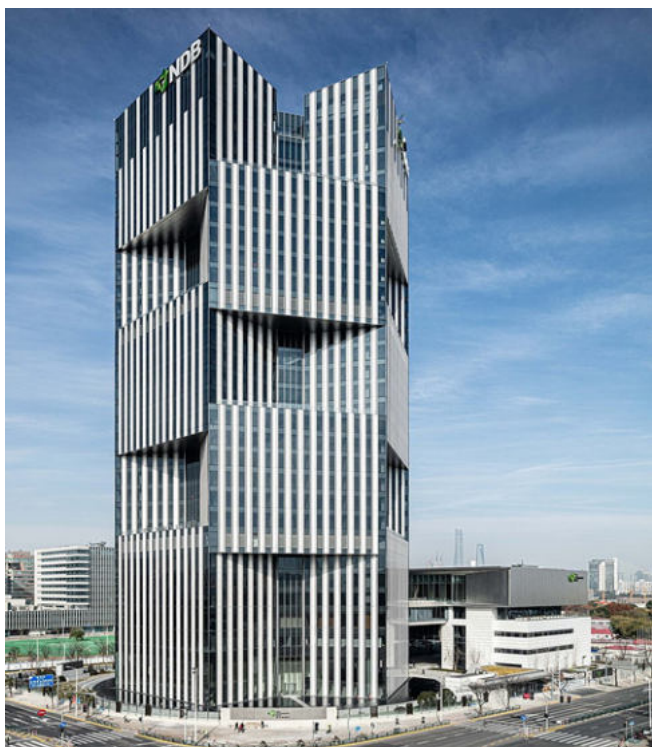
- BRICS includes these five economies,
- Representing 42% of the world's population,
- 30% of the world's territory,
- 23% of global GDP, and
- Around 18% of world trade,
- All are members of G20 which India is hosting this year





CHAIRMANSHIP

- The current Headquarters of BRICS is at Shanghai, CHINA.
- The chairmanship of the forum is rotated annually among the members, in accordance with the acronym B-R-I-C-S.
- India hosted the chair for the 2021 BRICS Summit.
- The Chair has to set the agenda, priorities and calendar for the year.
- This year, the agenda of the 15th Summit is 'BRICS in Africa: Partnership for Mutually Accelerated Growth, Sustainable Development and Inclusive Multilateralism'.



BRICS TOWER, SHANGAI, HQ OF BRICS

BRICS RATIONALE AND EVOLUTION:

The formation of BRICS in 2009 was driven by the idea that the four emerging markets of Brazil, Russia, India, and China would be the future economic powerhouses of the world. Today BRICS, comprising Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa, has emerged as an alternative to if not a counter to Western dominance in global forums, giving voice to the Global South's concerns. It arose alongside the rise of US superpower status and aimed to enhance cooperation among emerging economies.

Despite varying economic outcomes within BRICS, the conflict in Ukraine has led to Western unity and bolstered the China-Russia alliance. This has positioned BRICS as an aspiring coalition capable of contesting the Western geopolitical perspective. It could potentially serve as a counterbalance to Western-dominated groups such as the Group of 7 and the World Bank.

DIVERSE GOALS AND CHALLENGES:

While BRICS sought political and economic collaboration, member countries differed in their priorities. China's economic strength surged, while Russia and China grew wary of the West due to conflicts like Ukraine. India pursued US ties, complicating common policies.

Among its original members, while Russia finds itself facing a united West as adversary and China-US ties have dipped to a historic low, Brazil, South Africa, and India have important partners in the US and in Europe.

CHANGING DYNAMICS:

China and Russia extended influence in Africa, investing in infrastructure and conflicts. China has made investments worth billions of dollars in various infrastructure projects, and Russia's mercenary Wagner Group – whose troops also participated in the Ukraine War – has also made its inroads in several local conflicts. Over 20 nations expressed interest in joining BRICS, underlining its growing global significance. BRICS evolved from countering dominance to shaping an intricate web of strategic, economic, and political interests.

EXPANSION OF BRICS

- BRICS celebrates 15th summit, undergoing significant expansion from 5 to 11 member nations.
- Expansion reflects a strategic effort to enhance global influence and presence.
- New members include Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Ethiopia, and Argentina.
- Inclusion of these nations strengthens BRICS' representation in Middle East, Africa, and South America.
- Full membership for the expanded BRICS-11 becomes effective on January 1, 2024.
- Original BRIC members shared strong economies and growth potential.
- Extended BRICS-11 showcases diversity, encompassing both struggling and thriving nations.
- Implication of a broader agenda beyond economic matters due to this expansion.

BRICS decisions are unanimous, that is, all members have to agree for any decisions to be implemented.

EXPLAINING THE RATIONALE FOR THE EXPANSION

- Addition of new members strengthens BRICS' role as a representative of developing nations.
- BRICS currently comprises around 40% of the global population and over 25% of the world's GDP.
- Inclusion of new members increases its representation to nearly half of the world's population.
- The expanded group includes major oil producers: Saudi Arabia, UAE, and Iran.
- Some analysts are of the opinion that
 - The move towards BRICS is driven by anti-US sentiment and
 - the desire for multi polarity among Global South nations.



- China is a driving force behind the group's expansion, making it a core agenda item.
- Iran's invitation, amidst strained ties with the West, bears a China-Russia influence.
- Notably, Saudi Arabia and Iran's presence in the same group is remarkable, facilitated by China's mediation.
- BRICS membership aligns with Saudi Arabia's increasing independence from the US.
- Iran and Russia see membership as a global show of support against the West.
- Egypt, Ethiopia, and Argentina, despite US ties, join BRICS for various strategic reasons.
- Argentina, facing economic challenges, anticipates financial assistance from BRICS.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BRICS SUMMIT FOR INDIA:

- Notably, this summit holds great importance for India, marking the first in-person meeting post the India-China military standoff at the Line of Actual Control.
- Bilateral discussions between India's Prime Minister and China's President led to an agreement on troop disengagement and de-escalation at the LAC.(Doklam)
- India has actively contributed to shaping BRICS, outlining membership criteria and fostering strategic partnerships among new participants.
- Utilizing BRICS, India aims to extend its network of alliances and augment its geopolitical influence.
- India perceives BRICS as a platform that represents diverse perspectives, focusing on being "non-western" rather than "anti-western".
- India's objective is to bolster collaboration with China and Russia for a comprehensive Leader's declaration.
- Proposing a BRICS space exploration consortium, India aims to enhance cooperation in space technology and research.
- India also advocates for BRICS cooperation within the International Big Cat Alliance to protect endangered big cat species.

GEOPOLITICAL CONTEXT AND BROADER SIGNIFICANCE:

- The summit's significance grows in the wake of the Russian-Ukraine conflict of 2022, which has impacted global stability and security.
- BRICS discussions carry a perspective that is seen as an alternative to Western viewpoints.
- Given efforts to isolate Russia due to the Ukraine situation, the deliberations within BRICS assume increased importance.
- China is also facing increasing hostility with western nations

UNITED NATIONS REFORMATION, CLIMATE CHANGE, AND TRADE:

- India, along with fellow BRICS members, supports an extensive overhaul of the United Nations, including the

democratization and efficiency enhancement of the Security Council.

- BRICS nations collectively commit to addressing the challenges posed by climate change, ensuring a fair transition to low-carbon economies.
- Developed countries are urged by BRICS to set an example and support the transitioning efforts of developing nations.
- BRICS collectively opposes trade barriers imposed by specific developed countries under the pretext of combatting climate change.

Currently, there are two components that make up the financial architecture of BRICS, namely,

1. The New Development Bank (NDB), or sometimes referred to as the BRICS Development Bank, and
2. The Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA).

Both of these components were signed into treaty in 2014 and became active in 2015.

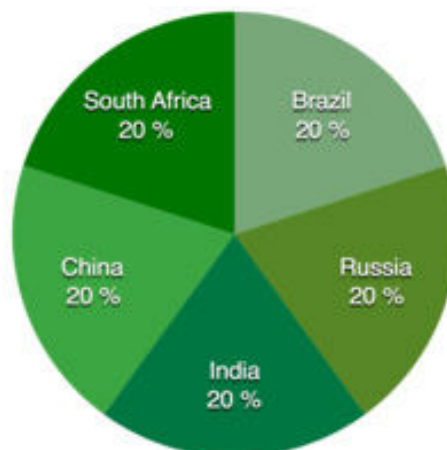
NEW DEVELOPMENT BANK

The New Development Bank (NDB), formally referred to as the BRICS Development Bank, is a multilateral development bank operated by the five BRICS states. The bank's primary focus of lending will be infrastructure projects with authorized lending of up to \$34 billion annually. It has so far 53 projects under way worth around \$15 billion.

The idea for setting up the bank was proposed by India at the 4th BRICS summit in 2012 held in Delhi. The creation of a new development bank was the main theme of the meeting. BRICS leaders agreed to set up a development bank at the 5th BRICS summit held in Durban, South Africa on 27 March 2013.

On 15 July 2014, the first day of the 6th BRICS summit held in Fortaleza, Brazil, the BRICS states signed the Agreement on the New Development Bank, which makes provisions for the legal basis of the bank. In a separate agreement, a reserve currency pool worth \$100 billion was set up by BRICS nations.

Recently Bangladesh, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates and Uruguay were added as new members of BRICS New Development Bank (NDB).



Equal distribution of shares between the shareholders of the NDB



BRICS CONTINGENT RESERVE AGREEMENT

The BRICS Contingent Reserve Arrangement (CRA) is a framework for providing protection against global liquidity pressures. This includes currency issues where members' national currencies are being adversely affected by global financial pressures. It is found that emerging economies that experienced rapid economic liberalization went through increased economic volatility, bringing an uncertain macroeconomic environment. The CRA is generally seen as a competitor to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and along with the New Development Bank is viewed as an example of increasing South-South cooperation. It was established in 2015 by the BRICS countries.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

1. BRICS PAYMENT SYSTEM

At the 2015 BRICS summit in the Russian Federation, ministers from BRICS nations-initiated consultations for a payment system that would be an alternative to the Society for Worldwide Interbank Financial Telecommunication (SWIFT) system.

The main benefits highlighted were backup and redundancy in case there were disruptions to the SWIFT system

China has also launched the development of their own SWIFT-alternative payment-system, the Cross-Border Inter-Bank Payments System (CIPS), which would enable financial institutions worldwide to send and receive information about financial transactions in a secure, standardized, and reliable environment.

India also has its alternative Structured Financial Messaging System (SFMS), as do Russian System for

Transfer of Financial Messages (SPFS) and Brazil (Pix).

2. BRICS COMMON CURRENCY UNION

BRICS countries committed themselves to study the feasibility of a new common currency or similar, at the 2023 BRICS summit in South Africa.

Fair and easier international trade as well as a major reduction in costs of transactions would be some of the reasons why the countries could forge a currency union.

A BRICS-issued currency would be different, as it would be comprised by challengers to the Western-led international order that on the scale of GDP, now collectively outweigh not only the reigning hegemon, the United States, but the entire G-7 weight class put together.

Some analysts are of the opinion that the BRICS would also be poised to achieve a level of self-sufficiency in international trade that has eluded other currency unions, such as the Eurozone, because of the geographic diversity of its members, which enables a broader range of goods and services.

SIGNIFICANCE For India, BRICS offers a platform to enhance economic cooperation, geopolitical influence, and development partnerships among emerging economies. It enables India to diversify diplomatic relations, boost trade opportunities, and collaborate on global issues, aligning with its growth and international aspirations. The challenge is how to manage the elephant in the room, China.

BRICS and SCO may be key multilateral partnership of India in the next half of 21st century, like NAM was in the middle of the 20th century in taking leadership of Global South.

TAMIL NADU CM DEMANDS RETRIEVAL OF KATCHATHEEVU ISLANDS

CONTEXT: Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K.Stalin, has revived the debate over Katchatheevu by reiterating the demand for retrieval from Sri Lanka.

Presently Katchatheevu is a 1673-acre uninhabited island administered by Sri Lanka located between Neduntheevu, Sri Lanka and Rameswaram, India. It has been traditionally used by both Sri Lankan Tamil and Tamil Nadu fishermen. It was never demarcated by Indian Government.

BACKGROUND: In the medieval era, this island, along with Pamban Island, was under the dominion of the Jaffna Kingdom. Starting from the 17th century, the island became affiliated with the Ramnad Kingdom situated in the Madurai district of India. Subsequently, as British colonial rule took hold in the Indian subcontinent, the island became incorporated into the Madras Presidency.

After the independence of India and Sri Lanka in 1947 and 1948, respectively, the issue of sovereignty over the island became prominent.





THE 1974 AGREEMENT:

The dispute over Katchatheevu escalated in 1974 when India and Sri Lanka signed an agreement that ceded the island to Sri Lanka. The agreement, known as the "Agreement on the Maritime Boundary between the Government of India and the Government of Sri Lanka," was aimed at settling the maritime boundary between the two countries.

The agreement demarcated the boundary between the two countries in the historic waters from Palk Strait to Adam's Bridge.

Later, a joint statement was issued. It stated that a boundary had been defined in conformity with the historical evidence, legal international principles and precedents.

It also pointed out that this boundary falls one mile off the west coast of the uninhabited Katchatheevu.

The pact brought to a close the talks held between the two sides since October 1921.

However, the agreement did not address the issue of traditional fishing rights of Indian fishermen in the surrounding waters.

FISHERFOLK AND KACHATHEEVU ISLAND

One of the most significant concerns arising from the Katchatheevu dispute is the impact on the livelihoods of Indian fishermen. The waters around Katchatheevu have been traditional fishing grounds for Indian fishermen, particularly from Tamil Nadu. The agreement of 1974 led to restrictions on Indian fishermen's access to these waters, leading to numerous arrests and conflicts with the Sri Lankan Navy over the years.

The supplemental pact in March 1976 made it clear that fishing vessels and fishermen of the two countries shall not engage in fishing in the historic waters, territorial sea and exclusive zone or exclusive economic zone of either of the countries without the express permission of Sri Lanka or India.

St. Anthony's Church there holds an annual festival, either in February or March, drawing devotees from both sides of the Palk Bay, a tradition which has been rooted in the shared culture of the region for ages.

THE ROLE OF POLITICS AND EMOTIONS:

The Katchatheevu issue is not just about territorial claims or fishing rights; it is also deeply intertwined with politics and emotions on both sides. In India, especially in Tamil Nadu, the dispute has been a matter of emotive political rhetoric, with political parties vying to champion the cause of the fishermen. This often puts pressure on the central government to take a stronger stance in negotiations with Sri Lanka.

STAND OF UNION GOVERN

In August 2013, the Union government provided a comprehensive response regarding the retrieval of Kachchatheevu from Sri Lanka, firmly stating that no Indian territory had been ceded in the process. The government's explanation shed light on the historical dispute surrounding the islet's status, which had persisted since the era of British India and Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). This dispute was compounded by the absence of a mutually agreed-upon boundary. A significant turning point came with the resolution of this issue through bilateral agreements reached in 1974 and 1976.

Fast forwarding to December 2022, the Union government reemphasized the significance of these agreements in its official statement to the Rajya Sabha. This statement underscored that Katchatheevu is indisputably situated on the Sri Lankan side of the India-Sri Lanka International Maritime Boundary Line. The government also highlighted that the matter, despite having been settled through historical agreements, was currently undergoing judicial review in the esteemed Supreme Court.

CONCLUSION: This ongoing legal political, diplomatic tussle demonstrates the complexities of territorial matters even after diplomatic agreements have been established, adding an additional layer of scrutiny to the historical and geographical aspects of Kachchatheevu's status.

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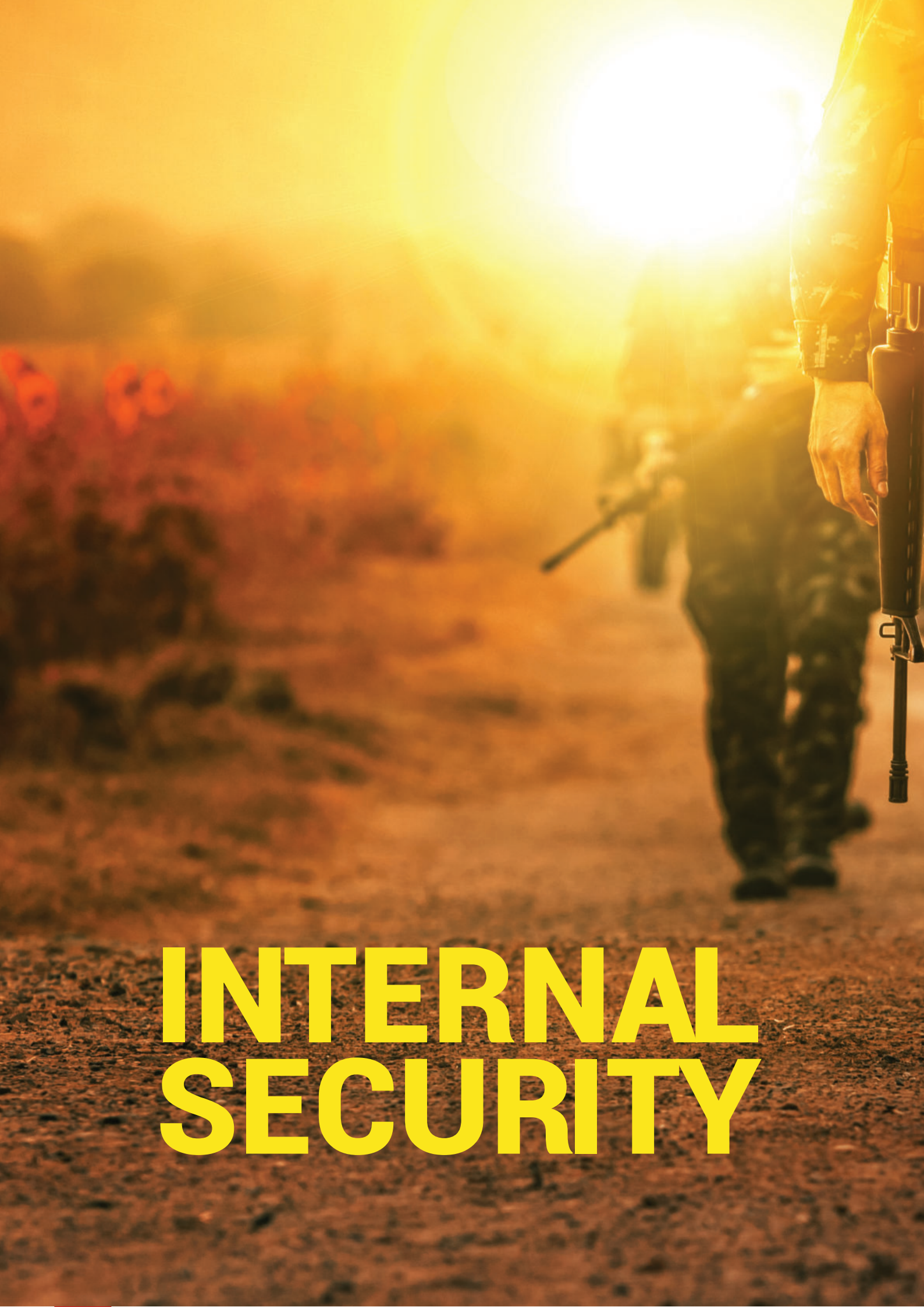
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INTERNAL SECURITY



NATIONAL SECURITY VERSUS PUBLIC INTEREST

NATIONAL DEEP TECH START-UP POLICY

PAKISTAN PASSES ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING BILL

OVER THE BORDERLINE

INS VINDHYAGIRI

KUKI BODY TO REIMPOSE HIGHWAY BLOCKADE



NATIONAL SECURITY VERSUS PUBLIC INTEREST

"the activity of design and engineering should have been carried out by the bidder and not through any external design agency/agencies"

-Division Bench, State High Court of Karnataka



CONTEXT: The High Court of Karnataka quashed a tender awarded by Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited (BHEL), a Public Sector Undertaking (PSU) citing interest of national security from the defence perspective assuming greater national significance than the public interest.

A Division Bench on an appeal filed by Macawber Beekay Pvt. Ltd., a Noida-based company declared the tender awarded by BHEL in favour of Kolkata-based BTL EPC Ltd, which had entered into a consortium agreement with Chinese firm Fujian Longking Co. Ltd to set up an ash handling plant forming part of installation of a thermal power station in Telangana as invalid. The Division Bench cited the order, issued by the Finance Ministry on July 23, 2020, in national defence interest, makes registration with competent authority mandatory for the bidders from countries having a land border with India.

National Deep Tech Start-up Policy

CONTEXT: The office of the Principal Scientific Adviser to the Government circulated a draft National Deep Tech Startup Policy (NDTSP) for public comments.

SALIENT FEATURES:

1. Ensure a preeminent position for India in the global deep tech value chain, in areas such as semiconductors, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and space technology.
2. Bolster research and development in deep tech start-ups, which work on fundamental and technical problems, unlike firms that monetise technology with distinguished business models.
3. Explore approaches to provide financing to deep tech start-ups at critical moments, such as before they go to market with their products or ideas.
4. Streamline the intellectual property regime for such start-ups, ease regulatory requirements, and proposes

measures to promote these firms.

5. Constitute an Export Promotion Board to ease barriers of entry for Indian deep tech start-ups into foreign markets, and that clauses to ease such market access be included in foreign trade agreements.



INDIA'S LARGEST ONLINE IAS COACHING ACADEMY



PAKISTAN PASSES ANTI-MONEY LAUNDERING BILL

CONTEXT: The Pakistan Senate passed the National Anti-Money Laundering and Counter Financing of Terrorism Authority Bill, 2023, a day after it was passed by the National Assembly.

SALIENT FEATURES: The Bill seeks to establish a central authority to curb money laundering and terror financing, bringing all institutions related to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) under one command. The authority will be headed by a chairman who will be appointed by the Prime Minister. The authority can convene meetings on the requisition of the chairman or half of its members.

SIGNIFICANCE: The Bill is expected to help the country not to be on the grey list of the Financial Action Task Force (FATF) again. Pakistan was placed on the grey list of the FATF in 2018 and had to make a huge effort to get out of it in 2021.

FINANCIAL ACTION TASK FORCE (FATF)

The Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) founded Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering (FATF) as an IGO in 1989 on the initiative of the G7 to formulate policies to address conventional threats to protect integrity of the global financial system

- **TYPE:** Inter-Governmental Organisation (IGO)
- **FOUNDED:** 1989
- **SECRETARIAT:** OECD Headquarters, Paris
- **COMPOSITION:** 37 member jurisdictions and 2 regional organisations.
- **MANDATE:** “Policy-making body” which works to generate the necessary political will to bring about national legislative and regulatory reforms in various areas regarding Money Laundering and terrorist financing.

OVER THE BORDERLINE

CONTEXT: Islamic State-Khorasan launched a terrorist attack at a political rally of Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), killing 54 people and gravely injured 200.

The Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam-Fazl (JUI-F), a hardline party led by Maulana Fazlur Rehman, a key member of Pakistan's ruling coalition in Pakistan's Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa (KP) has maintained ideological ties with the Afghan Taliban, has been targeted by the IS-K in the past. The IS-K, which has stepped up attacks in Afghanistan since 2021, has repeatedly targeted Taliban-affiliated groups besides Afghanistan's minorities.

Pakistan has followed decades-long strategy of supporting Islamist extremists for its geopolitical goals. During Afghanistan's anti-communist civil war, Pakistan supported the Mujahideen with weapons and training. In the early 1990s, during the intra-Mujahideen civil war,

ROLES AND FUNCTIONS

- Set global standards in anti-Money Laundering (ML) activities.
- Combat terrorist financing, in addition to money laundering since October 2001.
- Counter the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction since April 2012
- Examine and analyse trends and techniques to effectively respond to conventional, new and emerging threats.
- Promote effective implementation of legal, regulatory and operational measures to promote global financial integrity.
- Assess and monitor compliance with the FATF standards.

BLACKLIST AND GREY LIST

BLACK LIST: Countries known as Non-Cooperative Countries or Territories (NCCTs) are put in the blacklist. These countries support terror funding and money laundering activities. The FATF revises the blacklist regularly, adding or deleting entries.

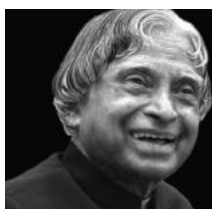
GREY LIST: Countries that are considered safe haven for supporting terror funding and money laundering are put in the FATF grey list. This inclusion serves as a warning to the country that it may enter the blacklist.

SANCTIONS UNDER GREY LIST

- Economic sanctions from IMF, World Bank, ADB.
- Problem in getting loans from IMF, World Bank, ADB and other countries.
- Reduction in international trade.
- International boycott.

Pakistan backed the emerging Taliban. After the Taliban were toppled in the US invasion in 2001, Pakistan played a double game – joining America's war yet harbouring the Taliban. Ever since the Taliban seized Afghanistan in August 2021, Pakistan has witnessed rising terror.

The Muslim youth across the Af-Pak region radicalised by decades of civil war radicalised pose security threats to the Pakistani establishment. The Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) emerged as the most powerful armed opposition to the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), also known as the Pakistan Taliban with close ideological links with the Afghan Taliban emboldened by the Taliban's return in Afghanistan. Pakistan, grappling with a political gridlock and a deteriorating economy, now faces a two-front security challenge – the Pakistani Taliban and the IS-K.



You have to dream before your dreams can come true..

- A. P. J. ABDUL KALAM



TEHREEK-E-TALIBAN-E-PAKISTAN (TTP)

Also called Pakistan Taliban, TTP is an umbrella organisation founded in 2007 by Baitullah Mehsud comprising of various Islamist armed militant groups operating along the Afghan–Pakistani border. The Pakistani Taliban share a common ideology with the Afghan Taliban and have assisted them in the 2001–2021 war, but the two groups have separate operation and command structures.

Among the stated objectives of TTP is to overthrow the government of Pakistan by waging a terrorist campaign against the Pakistan armed forces and the state. According to a United States Department of Defence report released in 2019, there are around 3,000 to 4,000 TTP militants in Afghanistan.

The TTP receives ideological guidance from and maintains ties with al-Qaeda. Following combating operations by the Pakistani military operations in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, TTP militants escaped from Pakistan to Afghanistan.

Between July and November 2020, various factions coalesce together making TTP more deadly that led to increased attacks. In 2020, after years of factionalism and infighting, the TTP underwent reorganization and reunification with Noor Wali Mehsud at helm. Mehsud essentially steered the TTP in a new direction, sparing civilians and ordering assaults only on security and law enforcement personnel, in an attempt to rehabilitate the group's image and distance them from the Islamic State militant group's extremism.

After the Taliban takeover of Afghanistan in August 2021, Pakistan was unable to persuade the Afghan Taliban to crack down on the TTP. The Afghan Taliban instead mediated talks between Pakistan and the TTP, leading to the release of dozens of TTP prisoners in Pakistan and a temporary ceasefire between the Pakistani government and the TTP. After the ceasefire expired on 10 December 2021, the TTP increased attacks on Pakistani security forces from sanctuaries inside Afghanistan. The Pakistani airstrikes in Khost and Kunar provinces on 16 April 2022 appeared to have been conducted in retaliation to the surge in terror attacks in Pakistan

INS VINDHYAGIRI



“These warships are follow-ons of the Project 17 Class Frigates (Shivalik Class), with improved stealth features, advanced weapons and sensors and platform management systems”

President Droupadi Murmu launched Vindhyagiri, the last in the series of three Project 17A (Alpha) frigates built by the Indian Navy at the Kolkata-based Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE). Named after a mountain range in Karnataka, Vindhyagiri is the sixth ship of the Project 17A frigates. Under the Project 17A programme, four ships by Mumbai-based Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Limited (MDL) and three by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited (GRSE) are under construction.

The Project 17A ships have been designed in-house by the Indian Navy's Warship Design Bureau. According to the Navy, as much as 75 % of the orders for equipment and systems of Project 17A ships are from indigenous firms, including MSMEs.



KUKI BODY TO REIMPOSE HIGHWAY BLOCKADE

CONTEXT: The Committee on Tribal Unity (COTU), Kangpokpi announced reimposition of the blockade of the Dimapur-Imphal National Highway-2 in protest against the failure of the Government of India to protect the Kuki-Zo community, and its failure to ensure free movement of goods meant for the hill districts. Earlier, the Meitei groups has blocked another route in the south that deliver supplies to the hill areas of Churachandpur and Tengnoupal. On August 19, an Assam Rifles convoy from Imphal could not proceed to deliver medicines, which included vaccines for children, to Kuki-dominated Churachandpur.



CENTRE TO MEET ITLF LEADERS

Union Home Minister Amit Shah will hold talks with representatives of the Indigenous Tribal Leaders Forum (ITLF) in New Delhi facilitated by Mizoram Chief Minister Zoramthanga. The Kuki People's Alliance (KPA) withdrew support to the BJP-led government in the State. The withdrawal of outside support of Kuki People's Alliance (KPA) with 2 MLAs is unlikely to impact the BJP, which has 32 seats. More than 20,000 tribal people have taken refuge in neighbouring Mizoram since the ethnic violence erupted in Manipur on May 3. The Chin-Kuki-Zo-Hmar tribes in Mizoram and Manipur share ethnic ties. The Manipur Police have recovered approximately 1,057 arms and 14,201 ammunitions have been recovered in the valley districts and 138 arms and 121 ammunitions have been recovered in the hill districts looted from police armouries since May 3. More than 4,000 weapons and lakhs of rounds of ammunition are said to have been looted from police armouries.

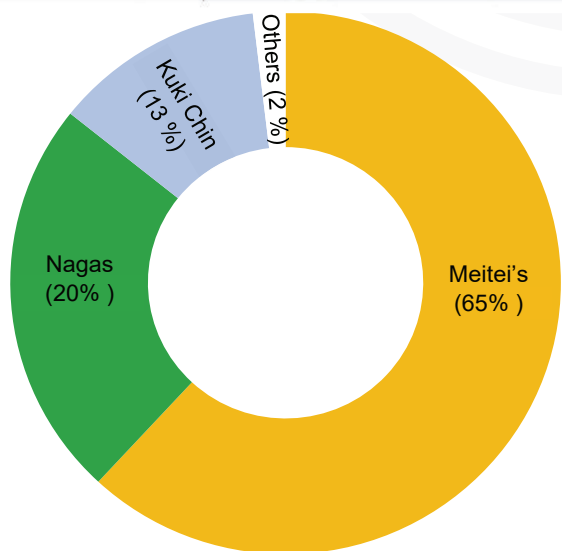


FIGURE: Pie chart representation of the population composition of Manipur.

Central and State security agencies have taken steps to allow uninterrupted vehicle movement. Convoys of Assam Rifles moved to Churachandpur to ensure uninterrupted supply of medicines and essential commodities to tribal-dominated Kangpokpi and Senapati districts. Tribal groups called to block the Jiribam-Imphal NH-37 also.

A three-judge Supreme Court Bench, headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud directed submission of a summary report of "approximately 6,000 First Information Reports [FIRs] registered on cases of murder, rape, arson, crimes against women, and burning of villages, homes and places of worship by the Manipur government during the ethnic clashes in the State. The court expressed shock over the delay of 14 days to register even a "zero FIR" on the sexual assault and gang rape of two women in Thoubal district on May 4. The Supreme Court proposes appointing its own Special Investigation Team (SIT) to investigate into matters related to the Manipur violence.

ECONOMICS

The background features a teal and blue color palette with a cityscape of modern buildings. Overlaid on this are various financial data visualizations: a candlestick chart with labels for months like 'July', 'August', 'September', 'October', and 'November'; a line graph with a dashed trend line and a solid line; a bar chart with a white line; and a series of blue triangles at the bottom. A grid of white dashed lines is present throughout the image.



SEMICONDUCTOR MANUFACTURING

THE ETHANOL IMPETUS

DOWNGRADING SOVEREIGN CREDIT RATINGS

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December



SEMICONDUCTOR MANUFACTURING

The Centre at the Semicon India summit made a fresh bid, including offering low corporate tax rates, financial assistance to attract major global chip manufacturers into the country.

A Committee has been constituted under the chairmanship of Ashwini Vaishnav, Union Minister of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) to steer the objectives in a structured, efficient, and strategic manner, and provide necessary guidance to the India Semiconductor Mission (ISM) executives.

INDIA SEMICONDUCTOR MISSION:

OBJECTIVES: Position India as the global hub for the Electronic Ecosystem Design and Manufacturing (EDSM).

SIGNIFICANCE:

Set India's leadership in technological areas and increase economic Self- Reliance.

Push innovation and build domestic capacities to ensure the digital sovereignty of India.

Increase the skilled employment opportunities expected to 35,000 direct jobs and 1 Lakh indirect jobs and 85,000 well-trained Engineers.

Facilitate capital support and Technological collaborations.

Promote high domestic value addition in electronics manufacturing.

Accelerate growth to achieve \$ 1 trillion digital economy and \$5 trillion GDP by 2025

ELIGIBLE BENEFICIARIES: Companies that are involved in:

Silicon semiconductor fabrication

Display Fabrication

Sensor Fabrication

Silicon photonics

Semiconductor Packaging

Semiconductor Design

COMPONENTS OF THE PROGRAM

CHIPS TO START- UP PROGRAM

OBJECTIVE: Support 100 Domestic SEMICONDUCTOR DESIGN COMPANIES for Integrated Circuits, Chipsets, System on chips, Systems and IP cores to launch Start-Ups under the Design Linked Incentive Scheme.

SEMICONDUCTOR FABRICATION AND DISPLAY FABRICATION

OBJECTIVE: Establish High- tech clusters with requisite infrastructure in terms of land, semiconductor grade water, high quality power, Logistics and research.

STRATEGY: Fiscal support of up to 50% of project cost for setting up Semiconductor Display and Fabrication Units.

ASSEMBLY, TESTING, MARKING, AND PACKAGING (ATMP)

OBJECTIVE: Support Assembly, Testing, Marking, And Packaging (ATMP) with Production Linked Incentive Scheme.

STRATEGY: Fiscal support of up to 30 % of project cost for setting up Assembly, Testing, Marking, And Packaging (ATMP) facilities.

SEMI CONDUCTOR LABORATORY

OBJECTIVE: The Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology will work for the Modernization and Commercialization of the Semi- Conductor Laboratory.

STRATEGY: The Union Minister of Electronics and Information Technology (MEITY) will explore the possibility for the Joint Venture of brownfield Semi- Conductor Lab facility with a commercial fabrication partner.



Foxconn Group Chairman Young Liu meeting Chief Minister M.K. Stalin in Chennai.

Taiwanese firm Foxconn Technology Group, a key supplier to major firms including Apple offered affirmative investment commitments worth ₹1,600 Cr. through its subsidiary Foxconn Industrial Internet (FII) to establish a mobile component manufacturing facility in Kancheepuram district at Tamil Nadu. The investment is expected to generate direct employment for 6000 people. A tripartite Memorandum of Understanding with Indian Institute of Technology-Madras (IIT-M) and Guidance enables Foxconn to support research and development capabilities in partnership with IIT-M to skill the talent pool to meet needs of the electronics industry and share knowledge and best practices in higher-order talent and workforce development.

Recently Micron Technology, a U.S.-based chip manufacturer announced a \$ 2.75 billion assembly, testing, marking and packaging facility in Gujarat under the \$ 10 billion Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme for chip makers in late 2021. A \$ 20 billion Joint Venture (JV) announced by Vedanta and Foxconn was cancelled after negotiations fell apart. The US has drawn over \$ 200 billion in commitments with \$ 52 billion financing support for semiconductor makers in 2021. Intel alone has committed \$80 billion in outlays across the European Union.

Design Linked Incentive Scheme:

Product design Linked Incentive of up to 50% of eligible expenditure

Product Deployment Linked Incentive S of 4% - 6% on net sales for 5 years

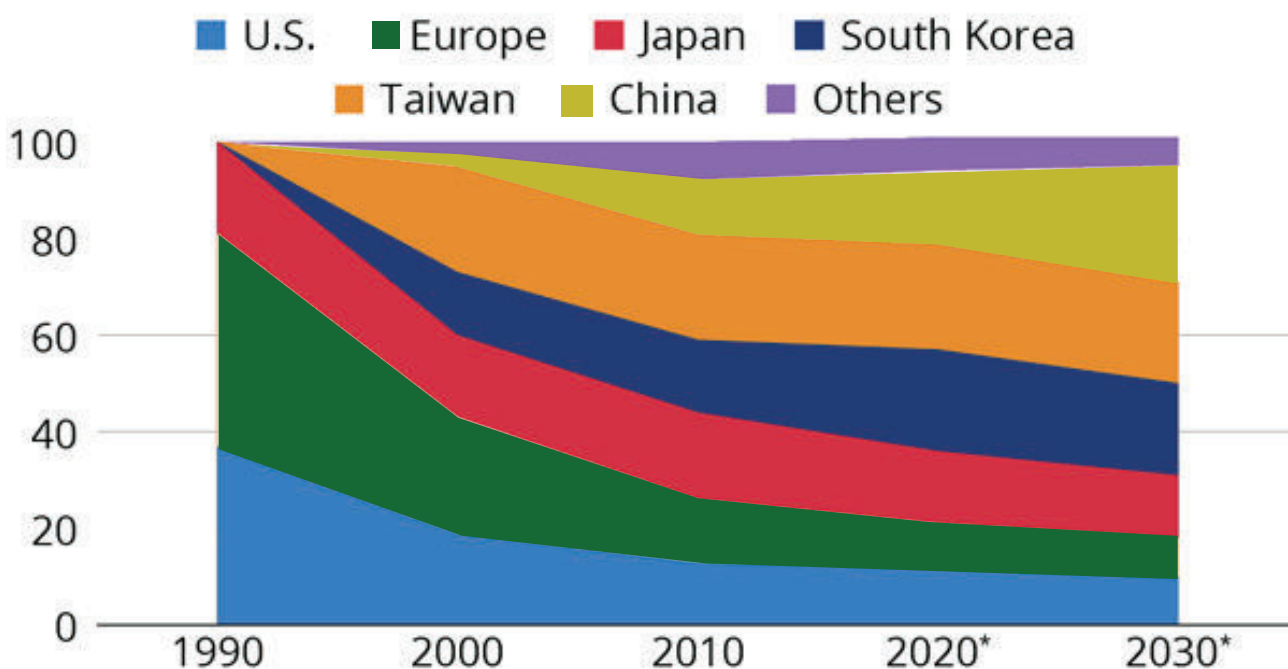


FIGURE: Schematic chart representing the share of global semiconductor manufacturing by location.

The Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) manages the India's semiconductor industrial policy. India Semiconductor Mission (ISM), a non-profit company set up by MeitY comprising of bureaucrats from MeitY manage schemes for manufacturing, assembly, displays and compound semiconductors. C-DAC, an R&D organisation again under the MeitY administered the policy for chip design.

The Union Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY) has begun a Chips2 Startup (C2S) programme, collaborating with over 100 universities and colleges to scale up workforce expansion by supporting existing quality training programmes. The certification of Private training centres preparing chip designers outside the conventional university system is important.

US CHIPS ACT, 2022

The United States' Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors and Science Act of 2022 (CHIPS Act) authorises \$ 52.7 billion over 5 years to boost American competitiveness, innovation and national security in semiconductors. This Whole of Government Approach: The United States' Creating Helpful Incentives to Produce Semiconductors and Science Act, 2022 constituted 4 dedicated funds with a focus upon a collaborative approach between several arms of the government for the execution of the Act.

MANUFACTURING AND RESEARCH: The Department of Commerce, the lead agency administers the \$ 50 billion CHIPS for America Fund to accelerate semiconductor manufacturing and research. The CHIPS Act created a CHIPS Program Office (CPO) to lay down the guidelines for assessing the financial viability of a project to catalyse private sector investments.

The Department of Commerce envisaged a \$11 billion plan focused on future research. The National Advanced Packaging Manufacturing Program (NAPMP)

would focus upon advanced packaging techniques that combine multiple semiconductors in a multi-dimensional arrangement on a single substrate with downscaling transistors becoming difficult. Packaging was considered a labour-intensive and low-margin component of the supply chain only a few years ago.

NICHE TECHNOLOGIES: The Department of Defence manages the \$2 billion fund for financing defence-unique technologies

GLOBAL PARTNERHIPS: The Department of State manage \$0.5 billion to coordinate with foreign partners on semiconductor supply chain security

SKILL DEVELOPMENT: The National Science Foundation manages \$0.2 billion fund to promote the growth of the semiconductor workforce.

Companies seeking funding under the CHIPS Act are required to submit workforce development plans. A nodal agency, the National Semiconductor Technology Center (NSTC), has been created to collaborate with industry and educational institutions.

"Be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and others have greatness thrust upon them."

- WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE





IMPORT CURBS ON LAPTOPS, TABLETS

The Union Ministry for Commerce and Industries deferred the application of the notification dated August 3 restricting imports of laptops, personal computers (PCs), tablets and servers till November 1, 2023.

The notification restricted imports of laptops, tablets, and all-in-one and small-factor personal computers (PCs) requiring import licences. Devices imported for research and development, and those repaired abroad, are exempted from these restrictions. The restrictions are not applicable to imports under Baggage Rules. The travellers are allowed to bring products from 'restricted list' from overseas without attracting penalties.

The import restrictions would reduce the availability of laptops assembled abroad in short-term. The notification would lead to longer wait times for individual products to be cleared for import and sale in India. The import duty and shipping fees make Laptops purchased online from overseas would make it expensive. Electronic goods

such as laptops are generally sold at lower rates than the maximum retail price (MRP), which allows manufacturers to hike prices on short notice when needed.

The Government and promised an expeditious approval to licence requests. The complex PC component value chains cannot be set up overnight, and concerns also flared up about adverse impact of such a move on India's software and IT-enabled services export prowess. The notifications were meant to kick start the supply chain network in India for promoting local assembly of PC and tablets in India.

The imports of PC and tablets, which fell almost 28 % in 2022-23 to \$5.3 billion. Any increase in costs or limitations on device options would also imply collateral damage for India's consumers. For many households and small enterprises, this is not just about crossing the digital divide but also access to government services increasingly going online in a Digital India. Unpredictable policies, excessive taxation and a return to maximum government, can derail India's reform story.



FIGURE: Tree map diagram representing the share of value of imports of laptops, tablets, and all-in-one and small-factor personal computers (PCs) to India.

CONCLUSION: Supply chain disruptions and geopolitical tensions, which are of particular significance in the Indo-

Pacific region have underscored the need for diversifying semiconductor supply chains and cross-country collaboration. The India-Japan partnership expected to shape the global semiconductor landscape, addressing new challenges such as semiconductor miniaturisation, AI integration, and quantum computing. India and United States would focus upon investment, innovation, and workforce development, facilitating the long-term strategic development of complementary semiconductor ecosystems. India, United States, Australia and Japan agreed to collaborate on semiconductors with a focus upon five areas: 'semiconductor design, manufacturing, equipment research, establishing resilience in the semiconductor supply chain, and talent development'. Joint research initiatives enable the pooling of resources and expertise to tackle complex challenges in semiconductor design, manufacturing processes, and materials science. The U.S.'s CHIPS and Science Act of 2022, which places strategic curbs on the expansion of semiconductor manufacturing by countries posing a direct threat to the U.S., including China.

THE ETHANOL IMPETUS

PM Narendra Modi set out a target to roll out 20 % Ethanol-Blended Petrol nation-wide by 2025. Ethanol, also known as ethyl alcohol, grain alcohol, drinking alcohol, or simply alcohol is an organic compound with the chemical formula C₂H₆O. Ethanol is a volatile, flammable, colourless liquid with a characteristic wine-like odour and pungent taste. It is a psychoactive recreational drug, and the active ingredient in alcoholic drinks

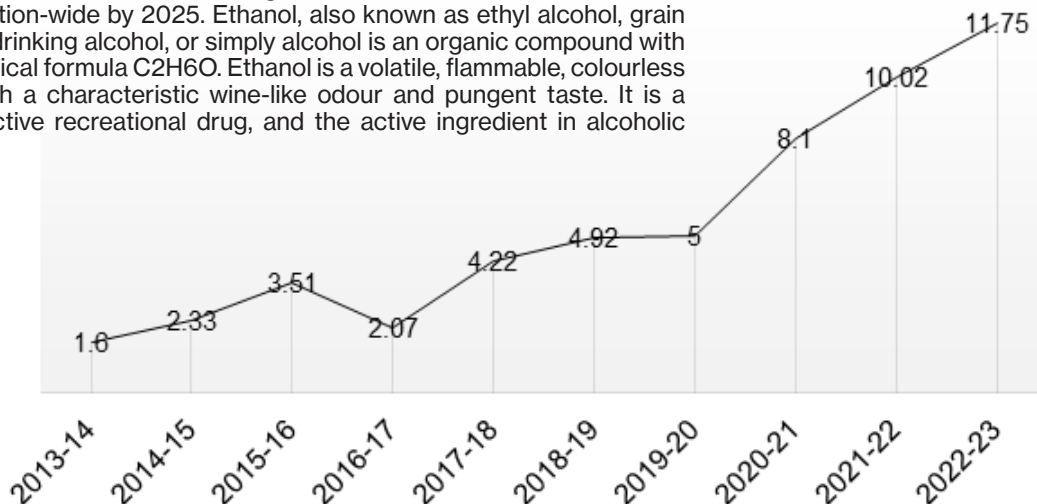


FIGURE: Bar chart representing the ethanol blending ratio in per centage.



In 2017-18, the Union Government introduced the Differential Pricing Policy whereby higher prices were fixed for ethanol manufactured from B-Heavy molasses and sugarcane juice / syrup.

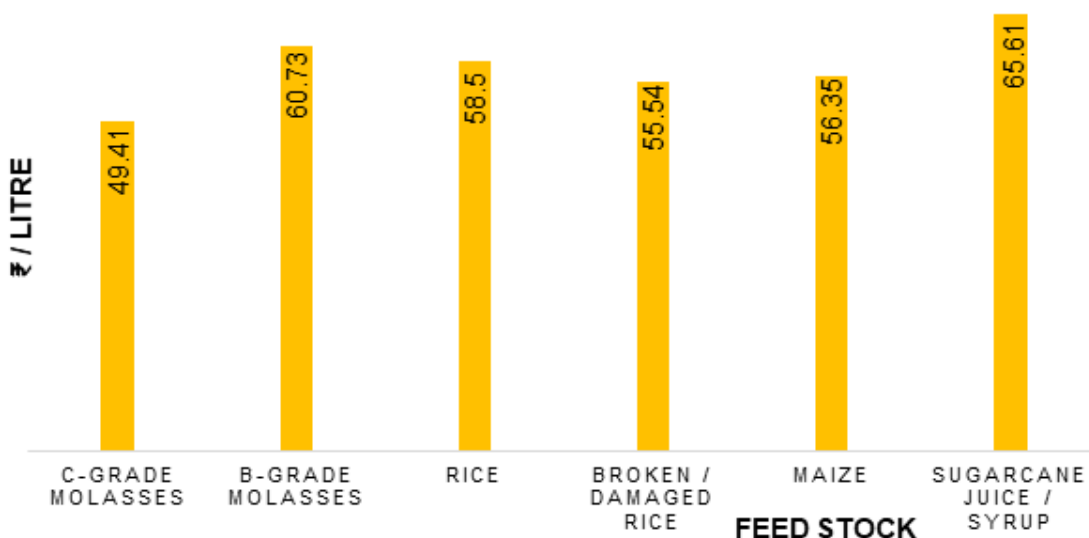


FIGURE: Bar chart representing the pricing of ethanol prepared from different feed stocks under the Differential Pricing Policy.

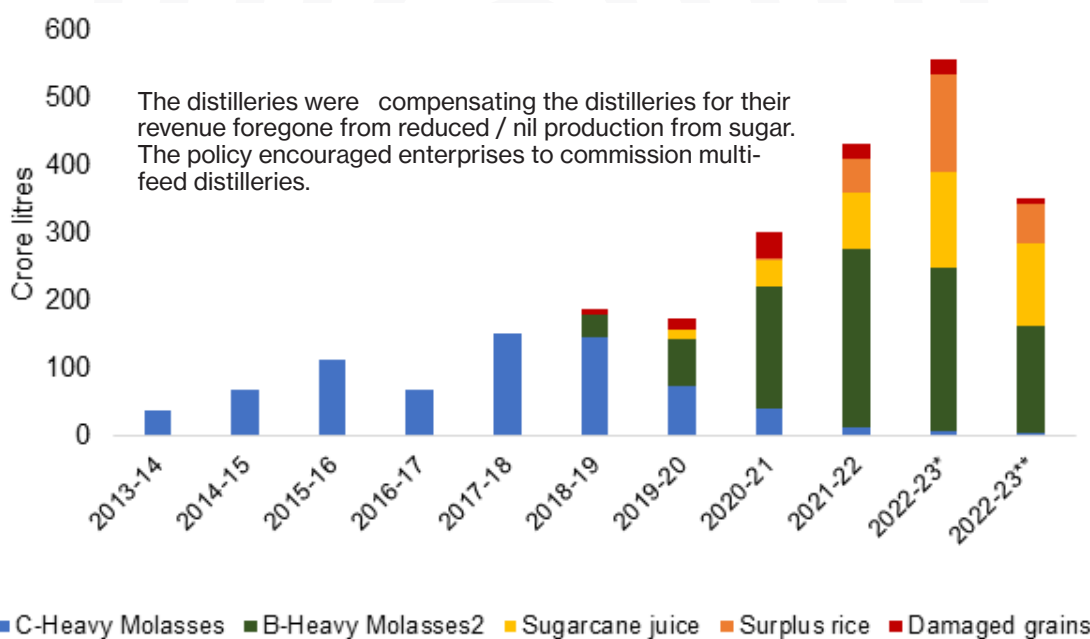


FIGURE: Bar chart representing the average yields from different feed stocks.

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DOWNGRADING SOVEREIGN CREDIT RATINGS

CONTEXT: On August 1, rating agency Fitch downgraded the Sovereign Credit rating of US to 'AA+' from 'AAA' — a rating that it had been holding at the agency since 1994.

SALIENT HISTORY: Rating agencies assess the creditworthiness of a region, country, its institutions or individual organisations based upon the ability to meet future payment obligations. Fitch rates credit quality from 'AAA' (its highest rating) to 'D' (lowest rating). 'AAA' is assigned to entities with "exceptionally strong capacity for payment of financial commitments". The downgrade in discussion, that is 'AA', denotes "very low default risk", in other words, "very strong capacity for payment of financial commitments".

Standard & Poor's (S&P) downgraded Sovereign Credit rating of US in 2011. Fitch cited the expected fiscal deterioration over the next three years, "high and growing" general government debt burden and the "erosion of governance" in comparison to similarly rated peers over the last two decades for the downgrade. There is a lack of medium-term fiscal framework with complex budgeting process, combined with several economic shocks, tax cuts and new spending initiatives led to successive increases in debt over the last decade.

Standard & Poor's	Moody's	Fitch	Outlook
AAA	Aaa	AAA	Prime
AA+	Aa1	AA+	High Grade
AA	Aa2	AA	
AA-	Aa3	AA-	
A+	A1	A+	Upper Medium Grade
A	A2	A	
A-	A3	A-	
BBB+	Baa1	BBB+	Lower Medium Grade
BBB	Baa2	BBB	
BBB-	Baa3	BBB-	
BB+	Ba1	BB+	Non-Investment Grade
BB	Ba2	BB	
BB-	Ba3	BB-	
B+	B1	B+	Highly Speculative
B	B2	B	
B-	B3	B-	
CCC+	Caa1	CCC+	Substantial risks
CCC	Caa2	CCC	Extremely speculative

FIGURE: Schematic representation of the sovereign credit ratings of the major rating agencies and corresponding investment outlooks.

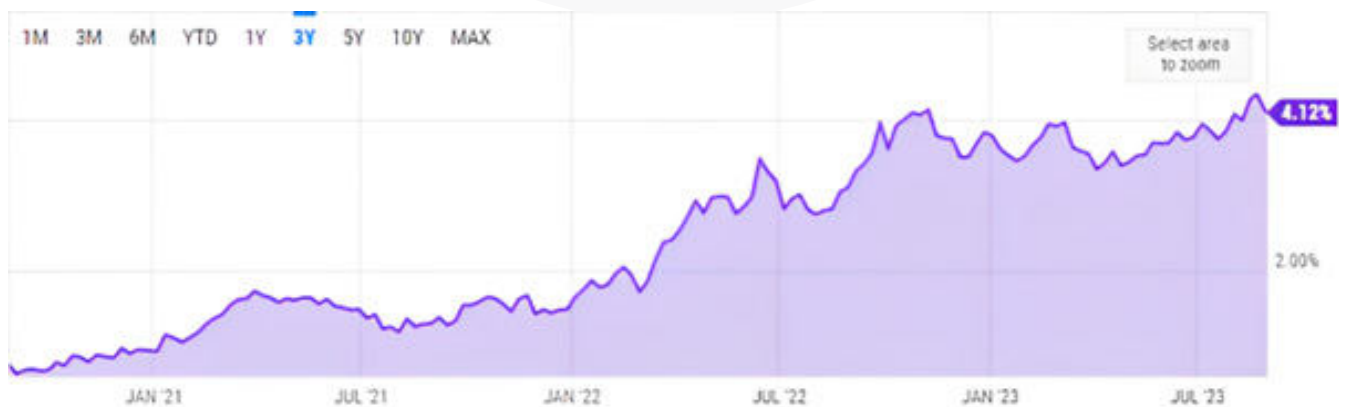


FIGURE: Line chart representing the sovereign credit ratings of the US Treasury Bonds.



**INDIA'S LARGEST ONLINE IAS
COACHING ACADEMY**



	2008	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14	'15	'16	'17	'18	'19	'20	'21	'22	
Fitch																
Mood y's																
S & Ps																
AAA Stable outlook		AAA negative outlook				AAA negative watch										

FIGURE: Schematic representation of the timeline of the sovereign credit ratings of the US

Fitch remarks

1. Deficit in general government finance to rise from 3.7 % in 2022 to 6.3 % of the GDP in 2023 with cyclically weaker federal revenues, new spending initiatives and a higher interest burden. The U.S. Congressional Budget Office (CBO) projects interest costs to double 3.6 % of the GDP by 2033.
2. Steady deterioration in standards of governance over the last 20 years, including on fiscal and debt matters with “repeated debt-limit political standoffs and last-minute resolutions have eroded confidence in fiscal management.”
3. An ageing population and rising healthcare costs would require more spending on the elderly absent fiscal policy reforms.
4. Slowdown in U.S. annual real GDP growth projections from 2.1% in 2022 to 1.2% in 2023, with weakening business investment and a slowdown in consumption would push the U.S. economy into mild recession in Q4 of current year and Q1 of next year.

REPORT CARD - GST JULY REVENUE

CONTEXT: The gross GST revenue collection for July, 2023 is ₹ 1,65,105 Cr. of which CGST is ₹ 29,773 Cr., SGST is ₹ 37,623 Cr., IGST is ₹ 85,930 Cr. (including ₹ 41,239 Cr. collected on import of goods) and cess is ₹ 11,779 Cr. (including ₹ 840 Cr. collected on import of goods).

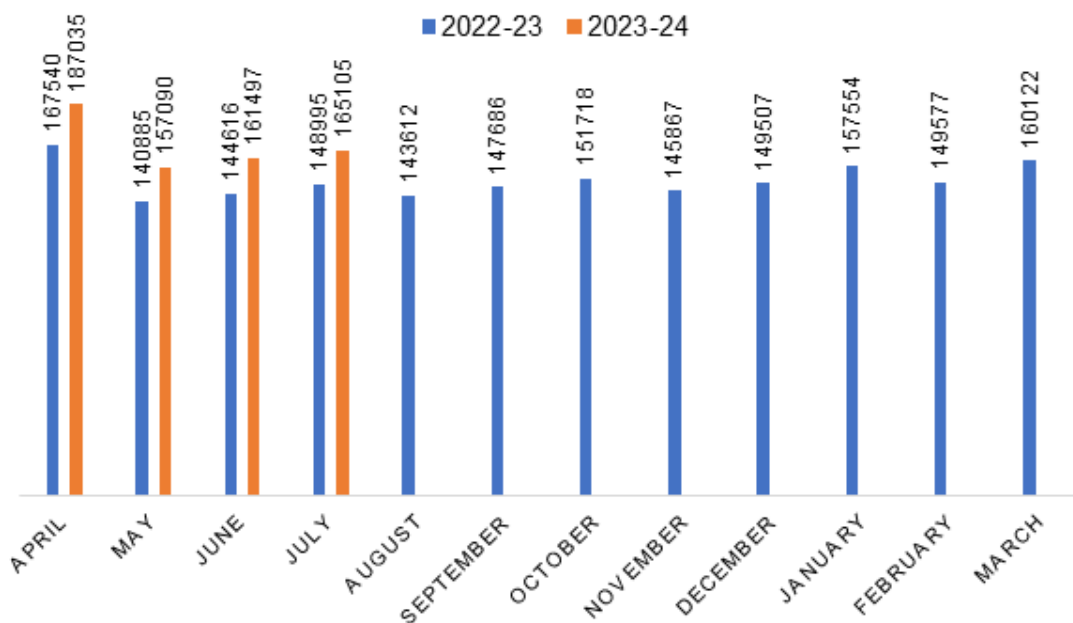
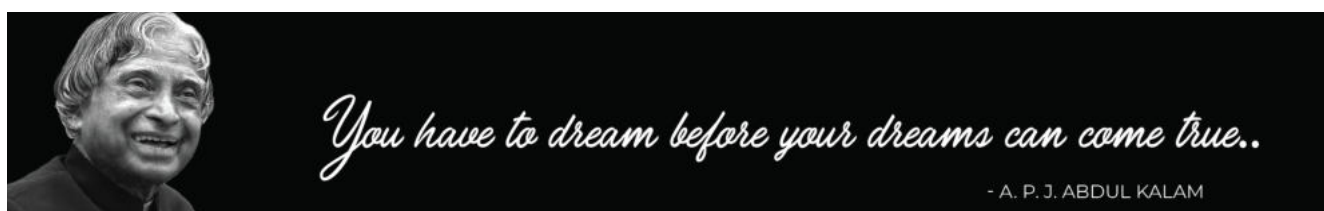


FIGURE: Column chart representation of Goods & Services Tax (GST) receipts (Cr.) (on Y-o-Y basis).

GST revenue growth at 10.8 %, slowest year-on-year growth in collections since July 2021. Revenues from domestic transactions and services imports grew 15 %. Integrated GST collections on goods imports dropped by 0.43 % to ₹41,239 Cr. GST Compensation Cess levies on goods imports dropped 15.6 % to ₹840 Cr. Six key States generate almost 60 % of the nationwide GST collections.





INDIA'S LPG STRATEGY

CONTEXT: India's dependence on imported LPG has steadily increased to over 64 % in FY23 (versus 46 % in the pre-PMUY phase). LPG prices since May 2020 have significantly increased after the volatile international prices, especially since the Russian war against Ukraine, and a domestic budget that relies on petroleum (and its products) taxation significantly.

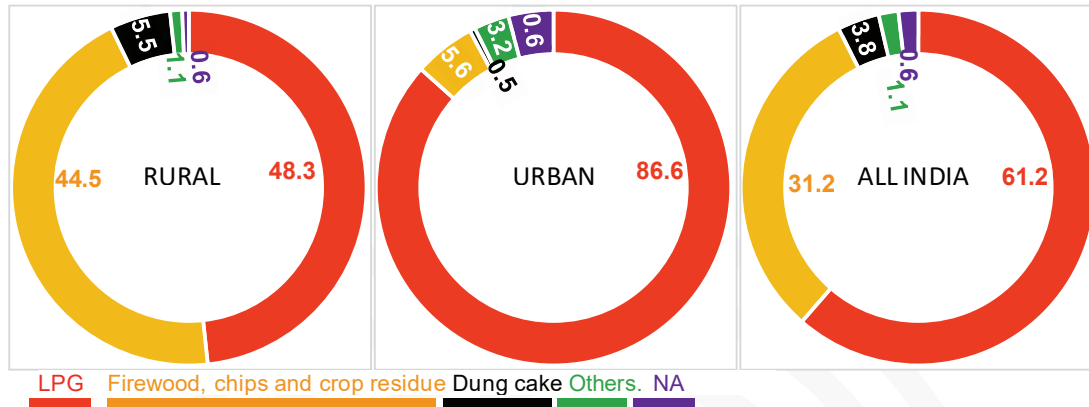
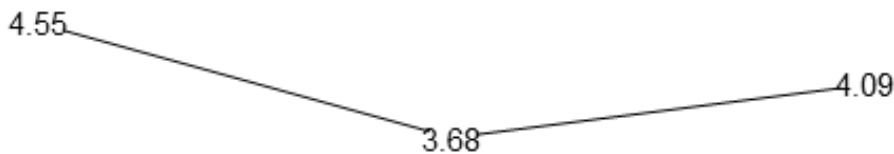


FIGURE: Pie chart Source: National Statistical Office 76th round Survey on drinking water, sanitation, hygiene and housing condition in India.

The rural share in the total LPG distributor base grew from 18 % to 60 % with the launch of the Grameen Vitrak Yojana in 2009. Approximately, 9.5 Cr. new household LPG connections were provided since 2016 under Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY). The share of Indian households using LPG as the primary cooking fuel had risen from 33 % in 2011 to 71 % in 2020.



In FY 21, 2 free cylinders were provided to all PMUY consumers as part of the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana. However, only 14.1 crore of the of the possible 24 crore free cylinders available were actually consumed. A nominal subsidy of ₹200 per cylinder was reinstated for PMUY consumers in September 2022.

FY 21

FY 22

FY 23

FIGURE: Line chart representation of the annual refill rates for LPG among PMUY consumers per active connection.

Diversity in clean cooking: India's clean cooking policy must shift from an LPG-only strategy and need to actively pivot towards the adoption of a suite of flameless-based cooking clean-cooking technologies - electric cooking, including induction cook-tops to name a few.

A CEEW study finds that even at a high tariff of ₹8 for each unit of electricity, e-cooking would still be cheaper than cooking using LPG at today's prices. In urban areas, nearly 10% of households already use electrical appliances

for their cooking needs, and they can seed the bigger transition that we want to realise in rural areas. With near 100% access to electricity connections, rural households can also shift specific cooking needs to electricity. The adoption of telescopic pricing of LPG beyond a threshold could displace LPG in higher-use groups and, in turn, create a demand for new e-cooking technologies and models, and precipitate a bandwagon effect. The Government of India has attempted to replicate the success of liquefied petroleum gas (LPG) adoption in urban households to poorer and rural households over the past 2 decades.



INFLATION WOES

CONTEXT: The higher prices for vegetables, fruit and pulses fuelled food inflation in June even as overall price stability has likely been restored with core inflation softening to a three-year low in the first quarter of 2023-24. The fall in international prices of several commodities has contributed to the softening of inflation levels in India.

“Negative cross-border spill overs and adverse global developments can act anytime as a deterrent to achieving the potential high growth path in the current financial year”

- Nirmala Sitharaman, Union Ministry of Finance

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has shed off its “accommodative policy stance” and has started raising policy rates to rein in on inflation. The inflation levels for the advanced economies are still higher than their respective target levels, as core inflation remains at elevated levels, contrasting with India’s softening price gains in non-food, non-energy items. The sown areas for pulses in the Kharif season 2023 is 114.9 lakh hectares, almost 9.2 % below the preceding kharif season. The existence of threats of supply-side shocks, including El Nino requires the Reserve Bank of India and the government to be cautious of inflation. Cereal prices, representing the basic staples of rice and wheat, the largest food component with an almost 10 % weight in the CPI surged by 13 % from July 2022 levels, posting a near doubling in the month-on-month pace to 1.2 %.

CHINA – AN OUTLIER

China is experiencing deflation at a time when other countries are facing an uphill task of battling unprecedented levels of inflation. China’s National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) recorded a fall in CPI by 0.3 % year-on-year in July for the first time since February 2021 against a CPI target of about 3 % for 2023. Producer Price Index (PPI) declines for a 10th consecutive month, shrinking 4.4 % in July. The property sector which contributes to a major share of Chinese GDP has been experiencing turmoil even before the pandemic. The People’s Bank of China continues to keep interest rates low to boost demand in the economy, sharp contrast to other central banks which have been tightening policy to fight high inflation after the Covid-19 pandemic. China’s slower-than-expected economic rebound is not strong enough to offset the weaker global demand and lift commodity prices. China has announced a stimulus programme China’s consumer sector fell into deflation and factory-gate prices declined in July.

The prices of 18 of the 19 items in the vegetables sub-group registered appreciable sequential price gains, with onions (19 %), potato (11 %), cauliflower (32 %), brinjal (24 %), ginger and garlic (almost 21% each) and potassium-rich green chillies (46 %) and tomato (214 %), leading to an overall rise in **vegetable prices to increase by 37 % firing up retail inflation to a 15-month high of 7.4% in July from June’s levels. The price of pulses too increased sharply at 13.6 % in recent months, accelerating to 13.3 % in July from 10.6 % in June.**

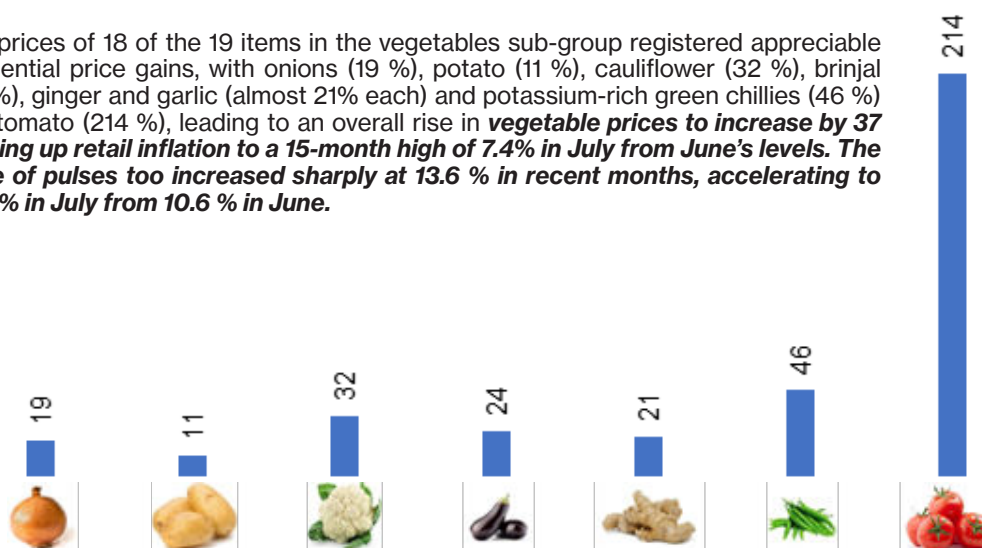


FIGURE: Column chart representation of the Year on Year (Y-o-Y) increase in the price of vegetables. (Source: Union Ministry for Food and Consumer Affairs).



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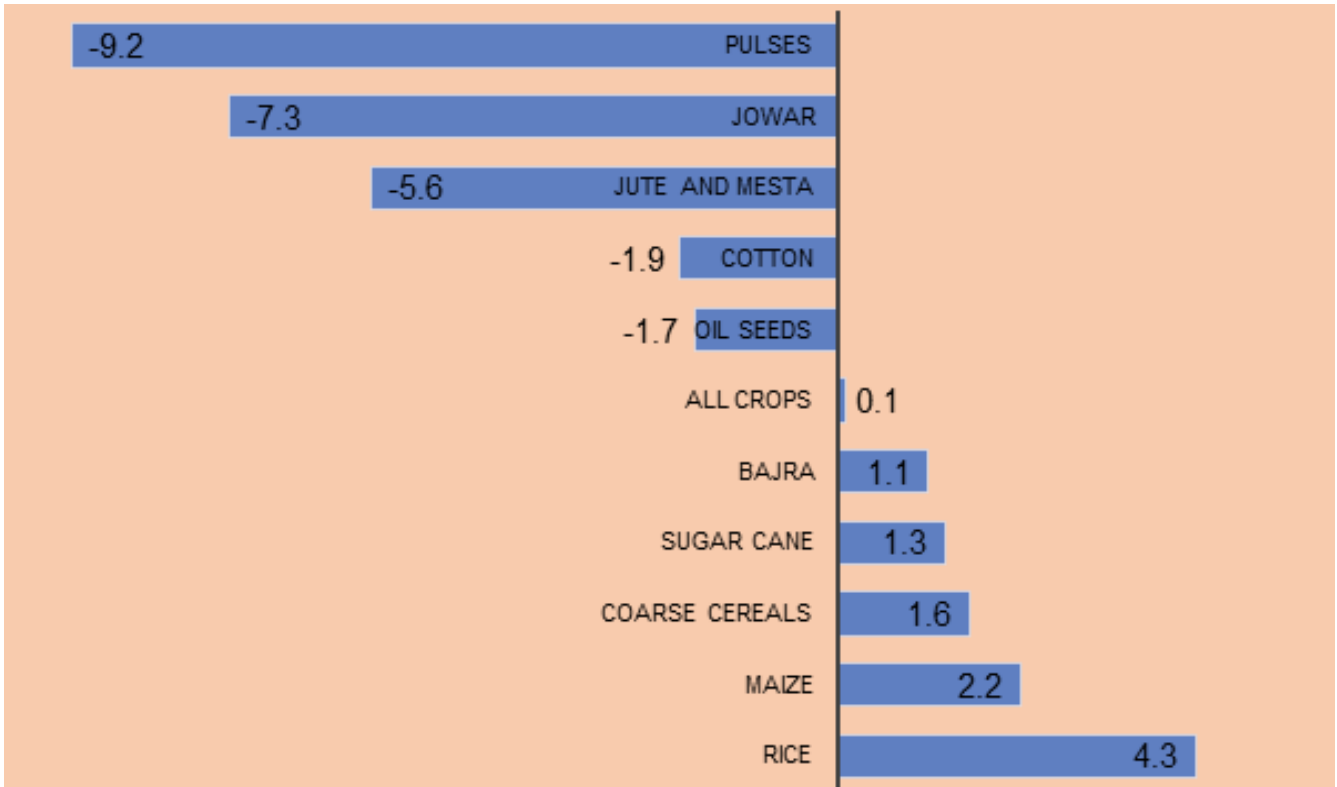


FIGURE: Column chart representation of the acreage of crops on a Year on Year (Y-o-Y) basis. (Source: Union Ministry for Food and Consumer Affairs).

The latest National Statistical Office (NSO) data showed retail inflation accelerating to a 15-month high. The primary driver of this surge was the food price component, with the Consumer Food Price Index-based inflation accelerating by a mind-numbing 696 basis points to 11.51 %, from June's 4.55 %. All items on the 12-member food and beverages group the of the Consumer Price Index (CPI), except oils and fats logged year-on-year increases in prices.

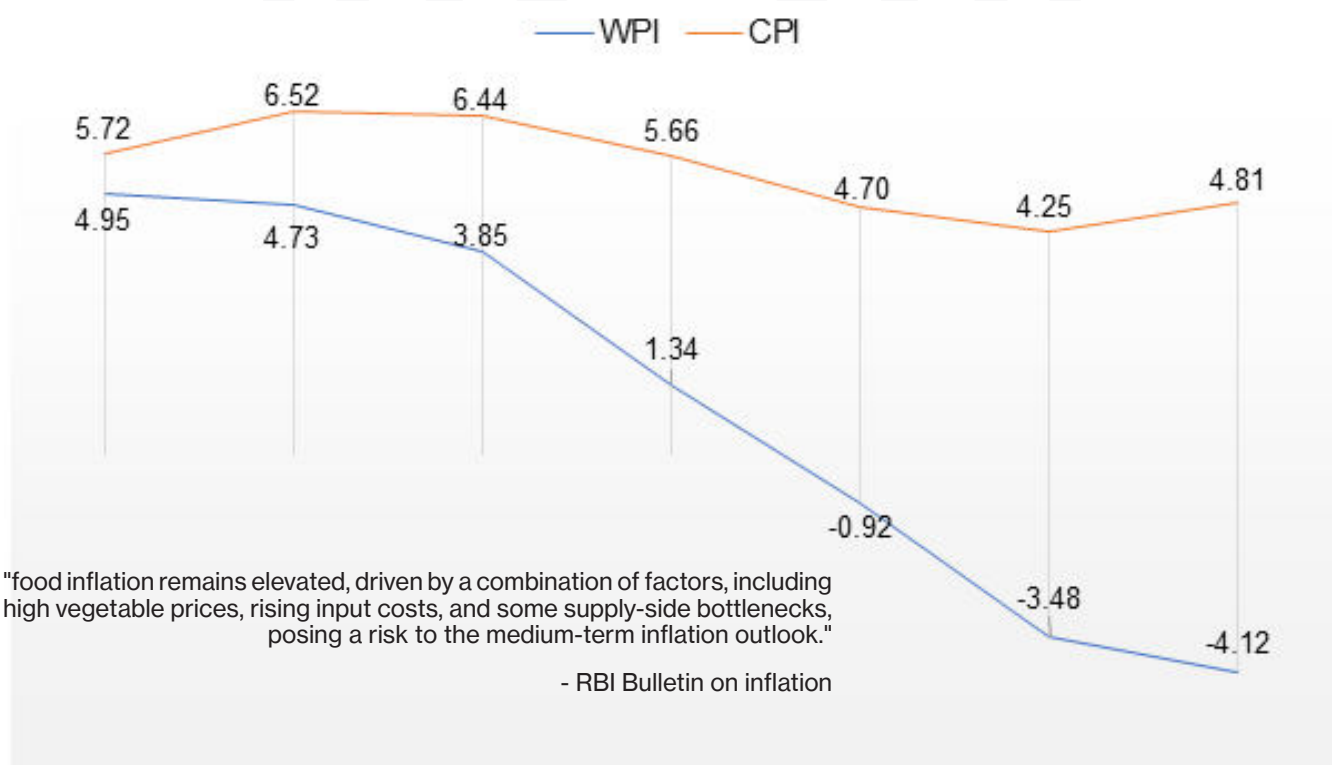


FIGURE: Line chart representation of wholesale price index-based inflation and consumer price-index based inflation rates.



India had received 7 % less rainfall cumulatively this monsoon compared to the long period average (LPA). India is expected to receive an average of less than 180 mm of rainfall this August, the lowest since records began in 1901. The kharif sowing of pulses has come down by 10 % compared to last year. Given that retail inflation of pulses accelerated to 13% in July, and especially with the retail inflation of toor dal rising to 34 %, a historically low August rainfall may increase food prices further.

The price of vegetables with a 6% contribution to the CPI increased by 37.3 % year-on-year, and 38.1% month-on-month in July. The all-India average retail price of the nutrient-rich food as on August 15 ₹107.87 a kilogram, over three times last year's Independence Day price of ₹ 31.66.

The Centre enhanced the buffer stock of onion from 3 lakh tonnes to 5 lakh tonnes with National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India (NCCF) and the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) procuring 1 lakh tonne each to achieve the additional procurement target alongside calibrated sale of the procured stocks in major consumption centres ₹25 a kg. The Centre imposed a 40 % duty on export of onions. The procurement for the buffer, targeted release of stocks and imposition of export duty will benefit farmers and consumers by assuring remunerative prices to onion farmers while ensuring continuous availability to consumers at affordable prices is expected to cool off the prices.

The Centre has prohibited the export of white rice, levied a 20% export duty on par-boiled rice till October 15, and permitted the export of Basmati rice for contracts with value of \$1,200 a tonne or above. The export of broken rice has been prohibited since last September and the

Rice production during the Rabi season 2022-2023 is 158.95 lakh tonnes, 13.8 % less than 184.71 lakh tonnes during Rabi 2021-2022. Rice sown during Kharif season 2022-23 is 384.05 lakh hectares as on August 25 compared with 367.83 lakh hectares during Kharif season 2021-22.

Third Advanced Estimate of the Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare

National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (NAFED) procuring 1 lakh tonne each to achieve the additional procurement target alongside calibrated sale of the procured stocks in major consumption centres ₹25 a kg. The Centre imposed a 40 % duty on export of onions. The procurement for the buffer, targeted release of stocks and imposition of export duty will benefit farmers and consumers by assuring remunerative prices to onion farmers while ensuring continuous availability to consumers at affordable prices is expected to cool off the prices.

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The government has increased the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for rice, and the paddy procured now by rice millers are at a price higher than the MSP. The restrictions on exports will ensure that there is no steep climb in rice prices in the market. When the bench mark price set by the government is high, the farmers will realise better prices.

INDEX OF INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION

CONTEXT: India's core sector grew by 8.2 % in June, the fastest pace in five months driven by an unprecedented increase in steel output by 21.9 % and nearly double-digit rise in coal and cement productions. The Centre has spent approximately ₹1.10 lakh Cr. during June 2023 registering a year-on-year expansion of more than 62 % and almost 24 % from the May 2023 on affordable housing, urban renewal and transportation networks. The tardy onset of the monsoon contributed to an improved performance for sectors like electricity and coal. Crude oil, an outlier registered a contraction by 0.6 % for the 13th straight month. Core sectors' overall growth was broad-based and reflected the upturn in infrastructure expenditures.

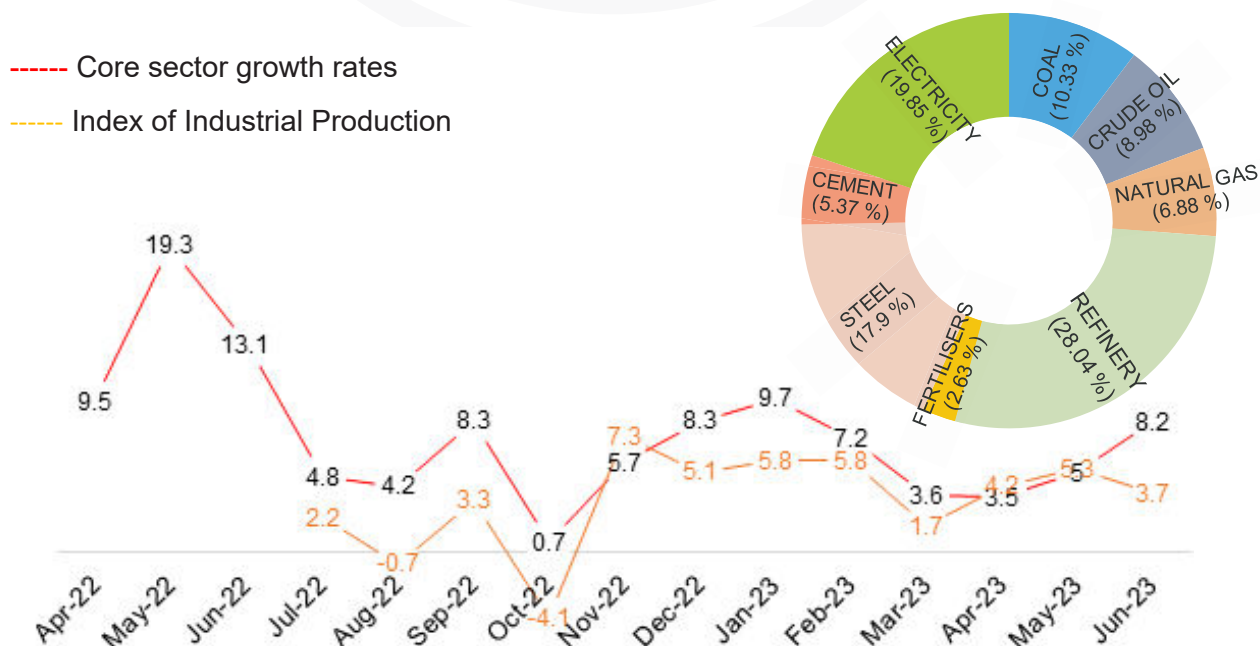


FIGURE: Line chart representation of the core sector growth rates (on Y-o-Y basis in per cent). Pie chart representation of weightage of core sector industries (Inset).

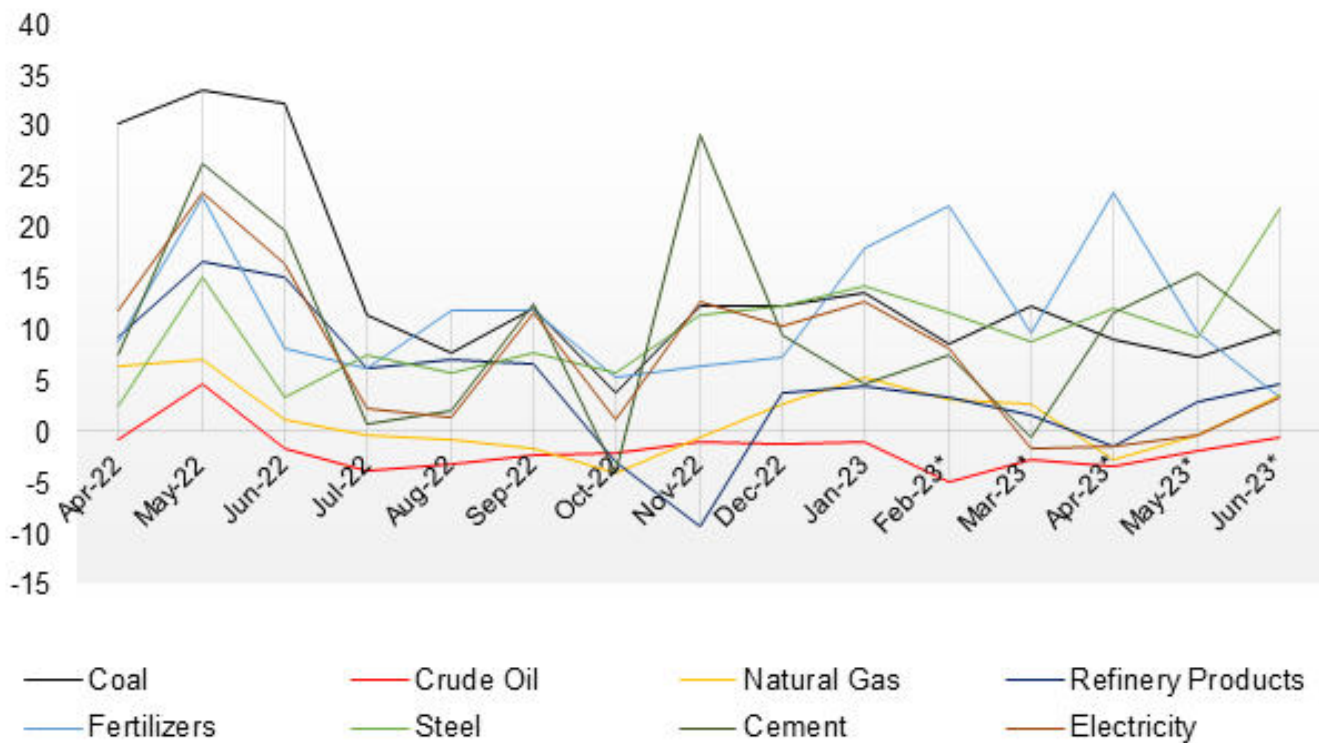


FIGURE: Line chart representation of the sub-sectorial growth rates (on Y-o-Y basis in per cent) of core sector industries.

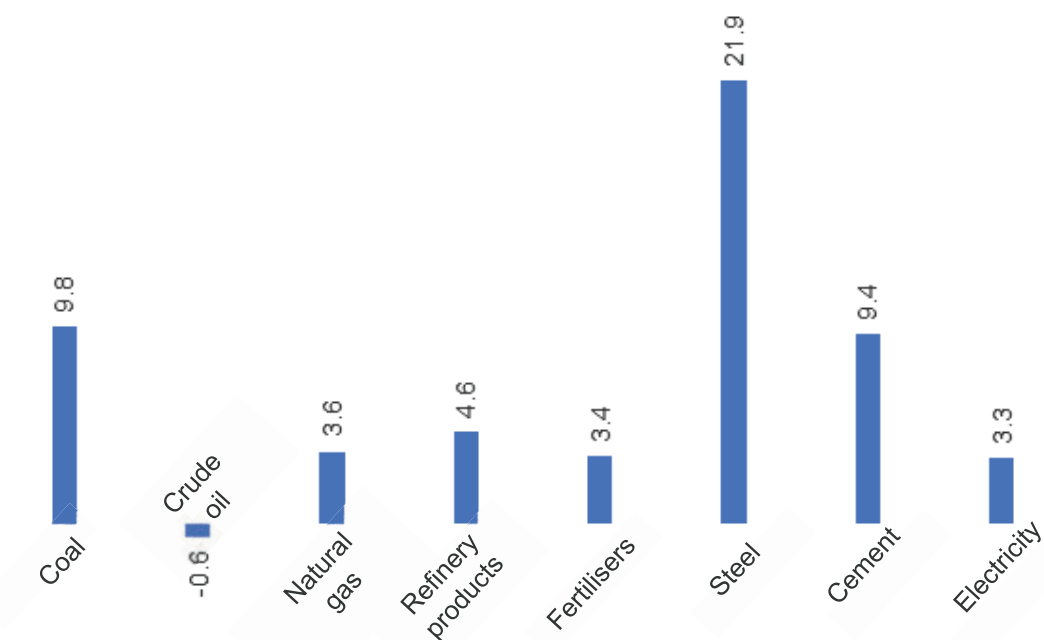


FIGURE: Column chart representation of growth of sub-sectorial growth rates on June 2023 (Month-o-Month basis in per cent) of core sector industries.

As many as 14 of the 23 manufacturing sectors in the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) registered a contraction in June, up from 12 sectors in May with industrial production growth slowed to a three-month low of 3.7 % in June, from 5.3 % in May. Capital goods output grew at its slowest pace of 2.2 % in June in eight months. The consumer durables output contracted by 6.9 % in June posting a growth of 1.23 % in May in six months. manufacturing growth easing to 3.1% from 5.8 % in May. The non-durable consumer items growth slowed to 1.2 % in June, from 8.4 % in May. SS



INDIA'S LARGEST ONLINE IAS COACHING ACADEMY



S&P GLOBAL INDIA SERVICES PURCHASING MANAGERS' INDEX

CONTEXT: The S&P Global India Services Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), rebounded sharply from June's three-month low to a 13-year high of 62.3 in July driven by the strong demand and new business gains. The pace of job creation remained "slight" and on par with the previous two months.

The food, labour and transportation costs drove up the Input costs at the fastest pace in 13 months. The output prices increased at the slowest rate in three months with firms wary of losing fresh contracts. Firms reported the second-fastest rise in export orders with rise in export orders from Bangladesh, Nepal, Sri Lanka and the UAE.

The S&P Global India Services Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) survey, a survey of about 400 manufacturers do not take into account the contribution of MSMEs, which collectively contribute more than a third to the gross value added generated by the manufacturing sector as a whole.

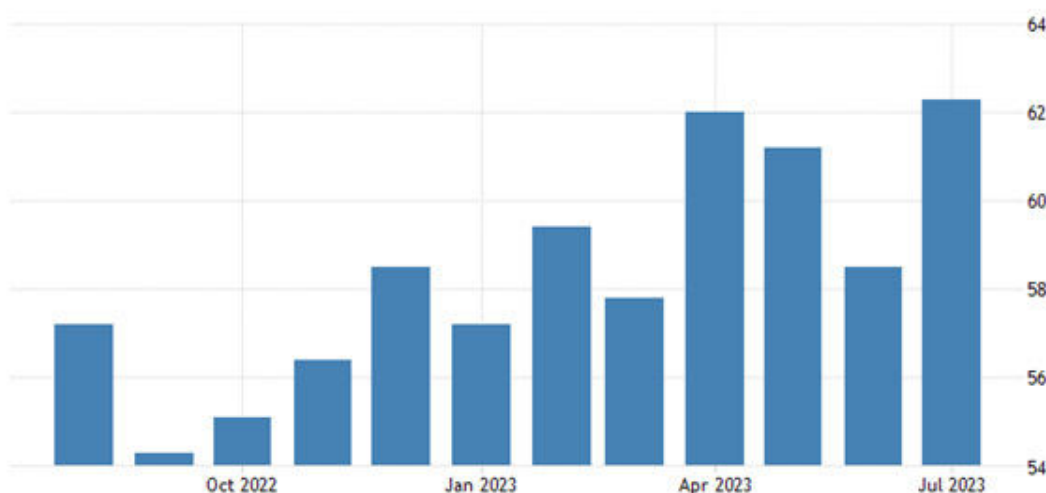


FIGURE: Column chart representation of the S&P Global India Services Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI).

VIVAD SE VISHWAS II SCHEME

CONTEXT: The Centre launched 'Vivad se Vishwas II – (Contractual Disputes)', a settlement scheme for contractual disputes with vendors or suppliers to the government and its undertakings. All contractors and suppliers to Union Government, Central Public Sector Undertakings and other agencies can file claims for settlement by October 31.

1. An aggrieved party who has secured an arbitral award by January 31, 2023 can file for settlement under the 'Vivad se Vishwas II Scheme. The settlement amount offered to the contractor will be up to 65 % of the net amount awarded or upheld by the Arbitrary Authority.
2. An aggrieved party who has secured a Court order by April 30, 2023 can file for settlement under the 'Vivad se Vishwas II Scheme. The settlement amount offered to the contractor will be up to 85% of the net amount awarded or upheld by the court.

VIVAD SE VISHWAS SCHEME REPORT CARD

Direct tax disputes (January 30, 2022)	Number of cases 510, 491	Tax demand raised ₹ 19.4 trillion
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FIGURE: Bar chart representation of number of tax litigations filed under 'Vivad se Vishwas I'.



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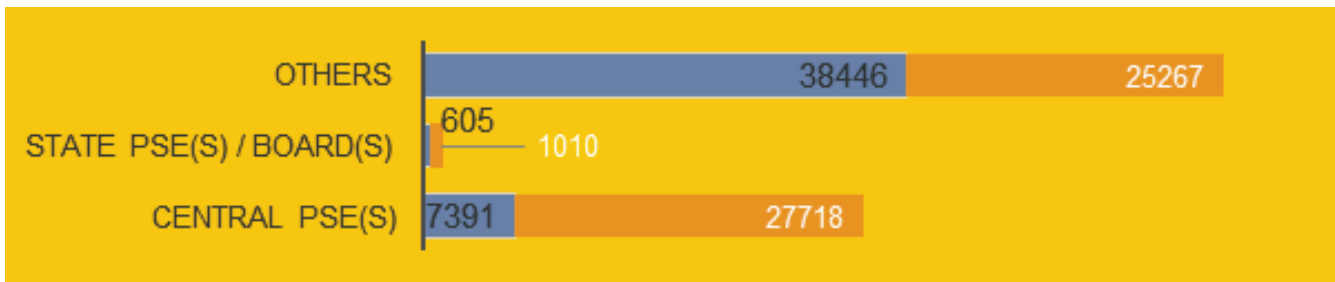
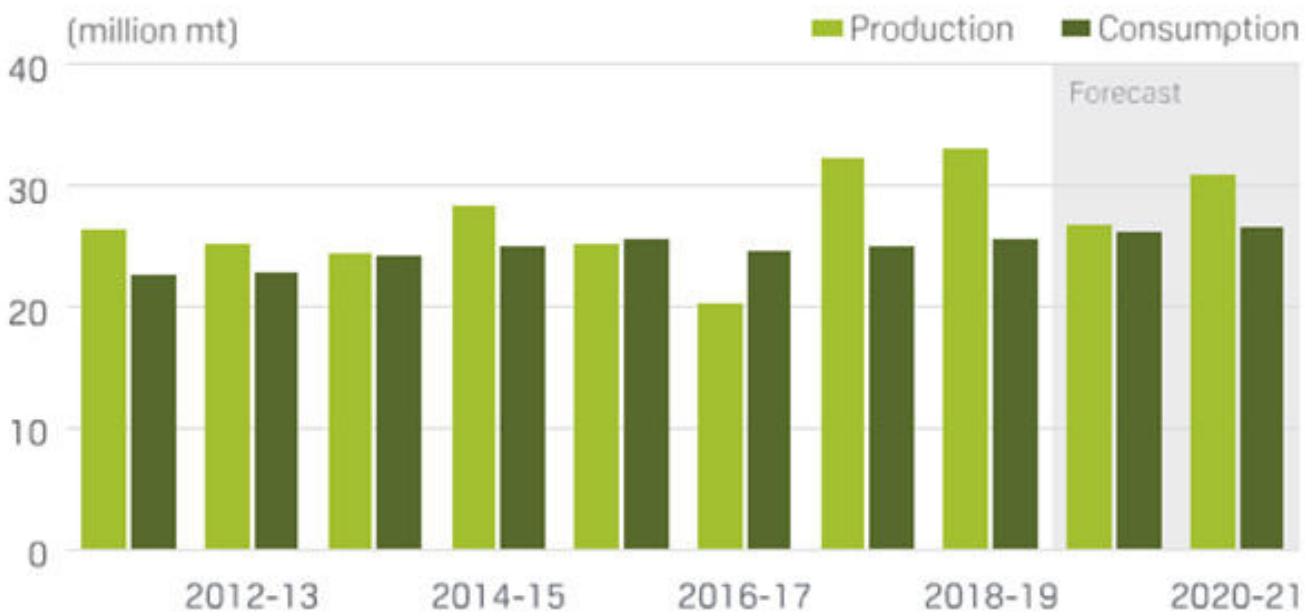


FIGURE: Bar chart representation of settlement status of tax litigations filed under the 'Vivad se Vishwas'.

INDIA'S SUGAR CRISIS

CONTEXT: India is the world's largest consumer of sugar surpassed Brazil as the world's top sugar producer in 2021-2022 with a record production of 35.9 MTPA. India exported a record of 11 MT exported in 2021-2022. Brazil, Australia, and Guatemala filed a complaint with the World Trade Organization (WTO) against India for violating international trade rules by offering excessive export subsidies and domestic support to farmers to outcompete other countries in the global sugar market. The WTO ruled against India and India also lost its appeal.

INDIA: SUGAR PRODUCTION AND CONSUMPTION



Source: S&P Global Platts

FIGURE: Column chart representation of the domestic production and consumption of sugarcane in India in MMTPA.

The Fair and Remunerative Price (FRP) Scheme mandate sugar mills to pay a minimum price to sugarcane farmers and heavy subsidies offered by the State Governments incentivise sugarcane farmers resulting in significant rise in production of sugar. The over-cultivation of sugarcane has caused a sugar surplus and high exports, impacting groundwater negatively. Sugarcane requires 3,000 mm of rainfall, but top-growing States get 1,000-1,200 mm, relying heavily on groundwater from confined aquifers, a limited resource. 100 kg of sugar needs two lakh litres of groundwater for irrigation. Environmentally responsible sugarcane cultivation practices that prioritise groundwater, such as drip irrigation, to tackle the issue in

the long run.

The Government launched the Ethanol Blending Programme in 2003 with a modest goal of achieving a blending rate of 5 %, but the target set for 2025 is 20 %. The use of ethanol-blended petrol (EBP) significantly reduces harmful emissions, such as carbon monoxide and various hydrocarbons, from vehicles. India's EBP program reduced crude-oil imports, sugar exports, and greenhouse-gas emissions. The government reduced the Goods and Services Tax on ethanol from 18% to 5% in 2021. In the same year, of the 39.4 MT of total sugar produced, about 35 MT were diverted to produce ethanol, while India achieved a blending rate of 10% months ahead of the target.



AMRIT BHARAT STATIONS

CONTEXT: Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the redevelopment of 508 railway stations spread across 27 States and Union Territories — 55 each in Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan (at a cost of ₹4,000 Cr.), 49 in Bihar, 44 in Maharashtra (₹1,500 Cr.), 37 in West Bengal, 34 in Madhya Pradesh (₹1,000 Cr.), 32 in Assam, 25 in Odisha, 22 in Punjab, 21 each in Gujarat and Telangana, 20 in Jharkhand, 18 each in Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, 15 in Haryana, 13 in Karnataka and others at a cost of over ₹ 24,470 Cr. Around, 1,300 prime railway stations in the country would be redeveloped under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme

90 YEARS of RAILWAYS

TRANSFORMING POLICIES SHAPING NEW INDIA

AMRIT BHARAT STATION SCHEME

Aiming to redevelop **1275 Stations** across the country by improving passenger amenities and landscaping

AMRIT BHARAT STATION: Develop Railway stations with better seating on platforms, upgraded waiting rooms, free Wi-Fi and other conveniences as “city centres”, with proper integration of both sides of a city driven by the vision of the overall urban development of a city, centred on a railway station. The redevelopment inspired by local culture, heritage, and architecture will provide modern passenger amenities along with ensuring well-designed traffic circulation, inter-modal integration, and signage for passengers. The Jaipur railway stations would have glimpses of the Hawa Mahal and Amer Fort in Rajasthan, Jammu Tawi railway station’s design would be inspired by the Raghunath Mandir.



POVERTY ESTIMATES

CONTEXT: The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) published by Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) use household surveys to estimate multiple deprivations in health, education and standard of living at individual levels. Each person in a given household is classified as poor or non-poor depending on the number of deprivations his or her household experiences.

MULTIDIMENSIONAL POVERTY INDEX (MPI): The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) published by Oxford Poverty and Human Development Initiative (OPHI) use household surveys to estimate multiple deprivations in health, education and standard of living at individual levels. Each person in a given household is classified as poor or non-poor depending on the number of deprivations his or her household experiences.

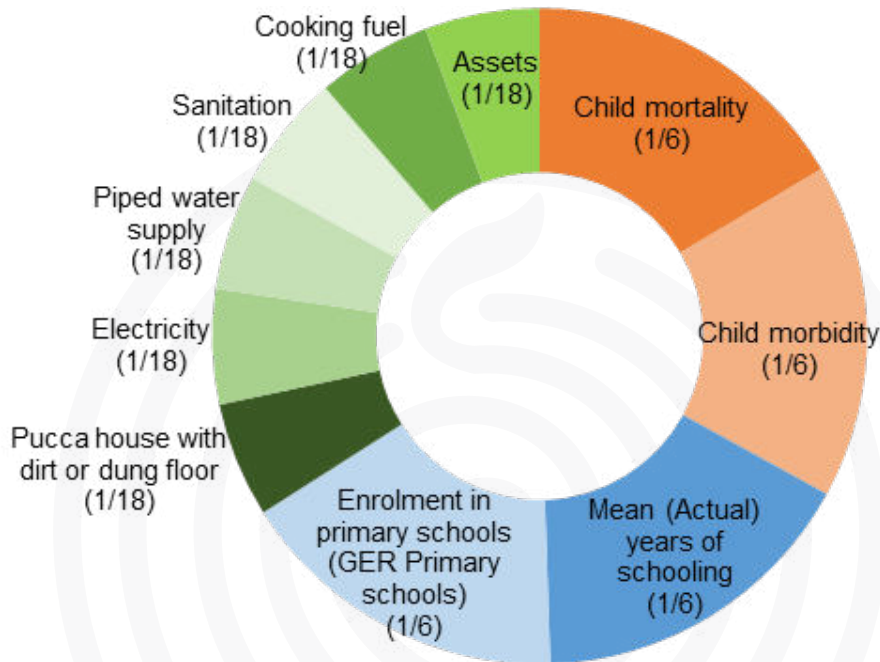


FIGURE: Pie chart representation of weightages assigned to parameters used to calculate the Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index.

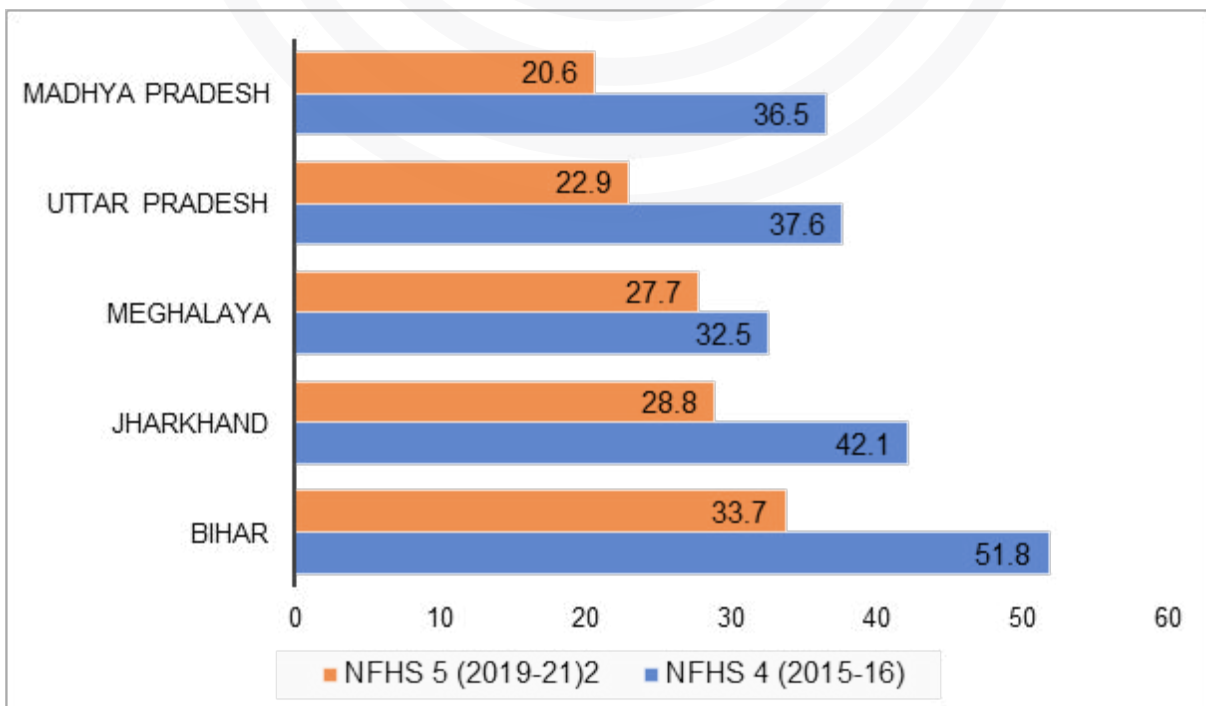


FIGURE: Bar chart representation of Multi-Dimensionally poor population as a share of population. (Source: National Family Health Survey).

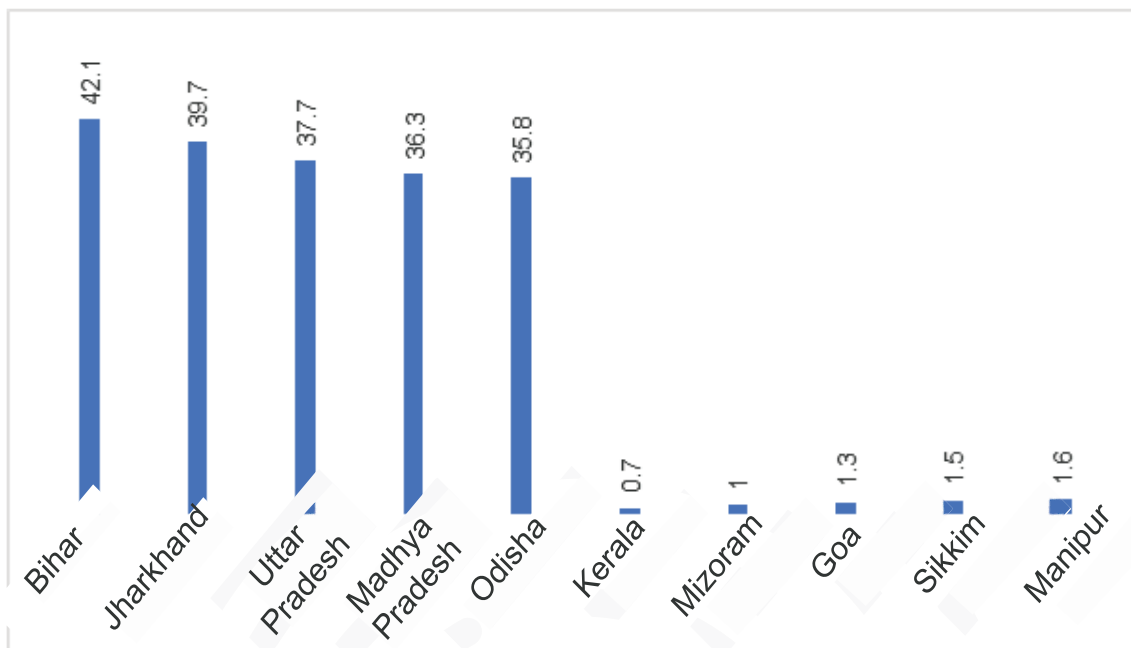


FIGURE: Bar chart representation of Multi-Dimensionally poor population as a share of population. (Source: National Multidimensional Poverty Index: A Progress Review 2023, NITI Aayog)

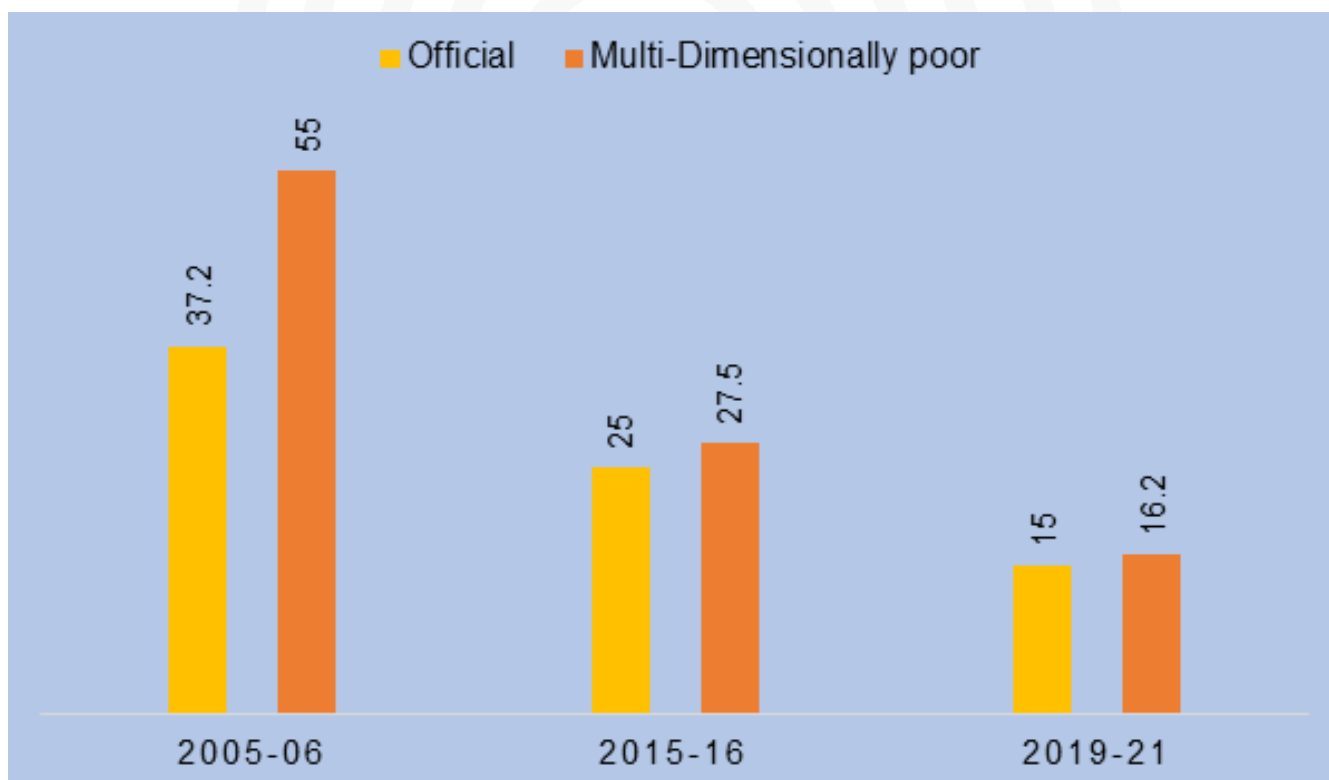


FIGURE: Column chart representation of official poverty estimates and Multidimensional poverty.

"Be not afraid of greatness. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and others have greatness thrust upon them."

- WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE





SALIENT HISTORY: The Suresh Tendulkar Committee recorded a decline in number of poor by 13.7 Cr. between 2004-05 and 2011-12 despite an increase in population based on consumer expenditure. According to the Rangarajan Committee methodology, the decline between 2009-10 and 2011-12 is 92 million, which is 46 million per annum. The Expert Group to Review the Methodology for Measuring Poverty (2014) cited reservations on using multiple indicators as these multidimensional indicators/measures raise several issues regarding their measurability, aggregation across indicators, and, crucially, of databases that provide the requisite information at reasonably short intervals. The multidimensional deprivations Collapsing many relevant but not necessarily commensurate dimensions into a single index makes little sense.

RBI'S PUBLIC TECH PLATFORM FOR FRICTIONLESS CREDIT

CONTEXT: On August 17, the RBI commenced a pilot programme endeavouring to evaluate the feasibility and functionality of the 'Public Tech Platform for Frictionless Credit'

Key drivers for innovation in financial inclusion

Account aggregator to manage consent for financial data sharing



SOURCE KPMG

Leveraging digitised land records for land record authentication and scale of finance

CREDIT APPRAISAL PROCESS: Any loan is preceded by a credit appraisal process to evaluate and accordingly predict the prospective borrowers' ability for repayment of credit/loan and adhering to the credit agreement. Financial information with different entities like central and state governments, account aggregators, banks, credit information companies, and digital identity authorities creates hindrances in frictionless and timely delivery of rule-based lending.

PILOT PROJECT: The RBI launched a pilot project testing an end-to-end digitalisation of the lending process in a paperless and hassle-free manner for Kisan Credit Card (KCC) loans, of less than ₹1.6 lakh, in September 2022. The pilot is currently ongoing in select districts of Madhya Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh and Maharashtra.

PROPOSED PUBLIC PLATFORM: The Reserve Bank Innovation Hub (RBIH), a wholly owned subsidiary of the RBI proposed an end-to-end platform with an open architecture, open Application Programming Interfaces (API) and standards, to which all financial sector players

would be able to connect seamlessly in a 'plug and play' model. Access to a fused multi-dimensional information ensures fact-based and quick credit assessments extending the credit to a larger set of borrowers with good credit history. The borrowers too would benefit by the resulting lower cost of accessing capital, which would translate into productive investment spending. Availing formal credit may entail multiple visits to the bank alongside cumbersome documentation.

An RBI survey indicated that processing of farm loans used to take two to four weeks and cost about 6 % of the loan's total value. A platform linking with services like Aadhar e-KYC, Aadhar e-signing, land records from onboarded State governments, satellite data, PAN validation, transliteration, account aggregation by account aggregators (AAs), milk pouring data from select dairy co-operatives, and house/property search data would help provide dairy loans, MSME loans (without collateral), personal loans and home loans in a hassle-free manner. Thus, it would cover all aspects of farming operations (essential to understand the exposure and default risk for loans of the nature) alongside those necessary for ascertaining financial profiles.



TOP 10 DEFAULTERS

CONTEXT: India's top 50 wilful defaulters owed banks as much as ₹ 87,295 Cr., with top ten wilful defaulters alone owing ₹ 40,825 Cr. as of March 31, 2023. Assets amounting to ₹15,113.02 Cr. have been confiscated and restituted to public sector banks.

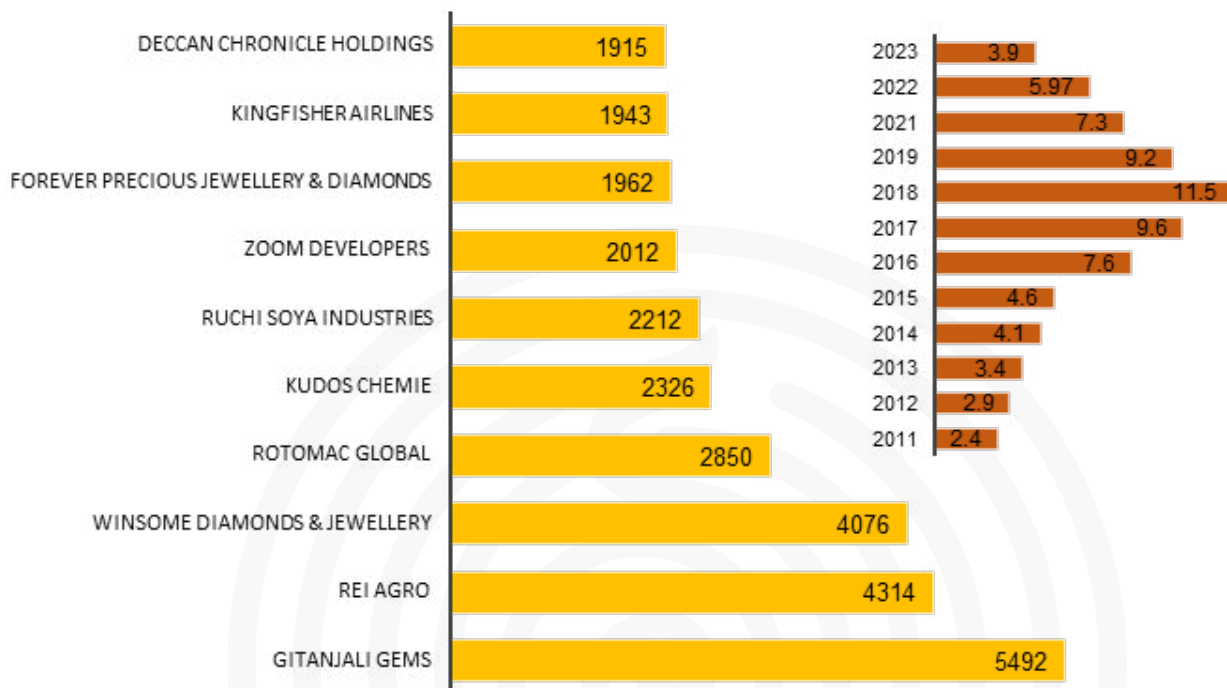


FIGURE: Bar chart representation of top 10 defaulters in ₹ Cr. Bar chart representation of Non-Performing Asset as a percentage of gross advances (Inset).

The Enforcement Directorate had filed applications against 19 persons to be booked under the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act of 2018, of which only 10 were declared FEOs. The amount of fraud involving them was more than ₹40,000 Cr. The Enforcement agencies can approach the Special Court constituted under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), 2002 to declare any absconder residing in a foreign territory refusing to return and face prosecution for scheduled economic offences involving value more than Rs 100 Cr.

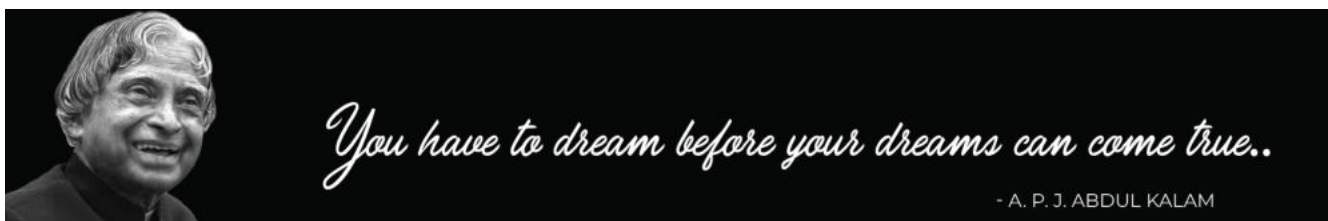
GST ON ONLINE GAMING

CONTEXT: The Parliament of India cleared Integrated GST (Amendment) Bill, 2023, and the Central GST (Amendment) Bill, 2023. States will also have to make legislative changes to their respective GST Acts.

Salient features:

1. Mandatory for offshore online money gaming firms providing services to Indian users to register in India and pay taxes or face blockages.
2. Facilitate the levy of 28 % GST on the face value of all bets made in casinos, horse-racing and online gaming.
3. Define online gaming, specified actionable claim and virtual digital assets.
4. Amend Schedule III of the Act to include "specified actionable claim" so as to provide "clarity regarding taxability of actionable claims involved in or by way of casinos, horse racing and online gaming".
5. Enable the levy of GST on monetary deposits on gaming portals, including those done through crypto assets.

The casinos, horse racing and the booming online games industry have appealed to Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council to reconsider the Council's move to impose a 28% GST on the face value of bets placed by participants, not in sync with global norms that tax the gross gaming revenue (i.e., their platform fees). Such a taxation system would lead to repeat taxation on reinvested earnings.





TRADE PROFILE OF INDIA

CONTEXT: India's overall exports (Merchandise and Services combined) in July 2023 is estimated to be USD 59.43 Billion, exhibiting a negative growth of - 5.06 % over July 2022. Overall imports in July 2023* is estimated to be USD 67.77 Billion, exhibiting a negative growth of (-) 12.92 % over July 2022.

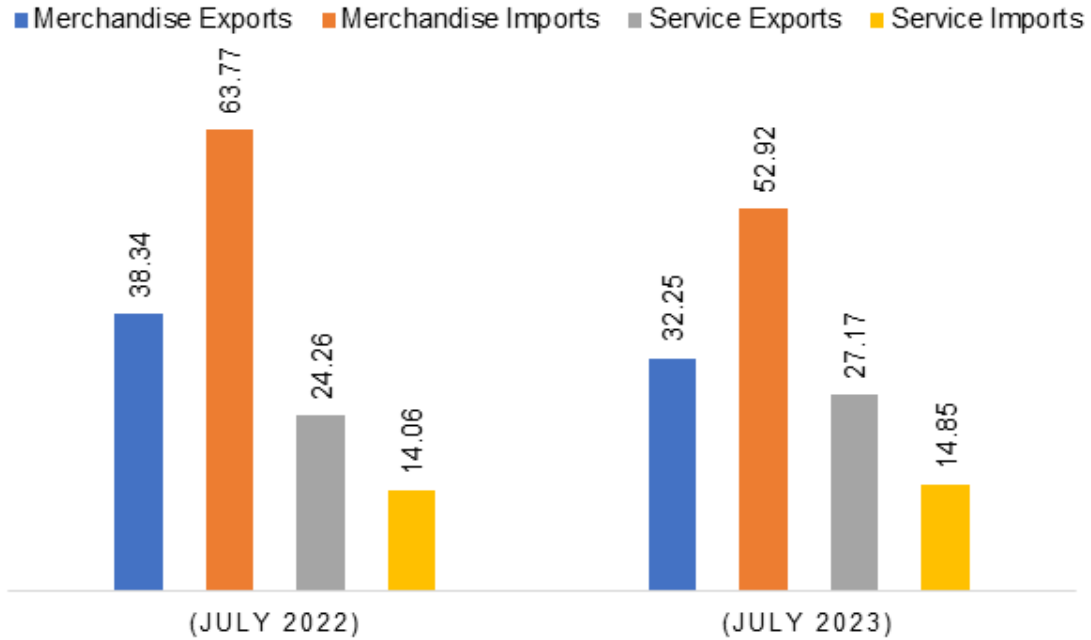


FIGURE: Comparative column chart representation of the exports and imports for the July 2022 and July 2023. (Source Union Ministry for Commerce and Industries). The latest data for services sector released by RBI is for June 2023. The data for July 2023 is an estimation, which will be revised based on RBI's subsequent release. (ii) Data for April-July 2022 has been revised on pro-rata basis using quarterly balance of payments data.

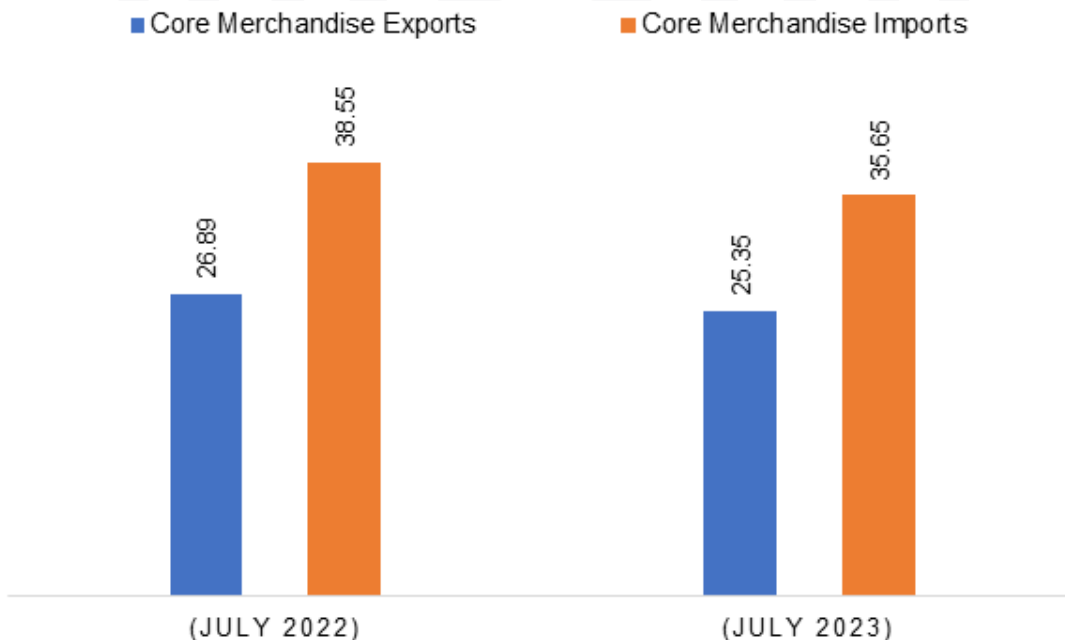


FIGURE: Comparative column chart representation of the core merchandise exports and imports for the July 2022 and July 2023. (Source Union Ministry for Commerce and Industries). Core merchandise excludes petroleum, gems & Jewellery including gold, silver & pearls, precious & semi-precious stones



MOBILE PHONE MANUFACTURING – A CHEQUERED HISTORY

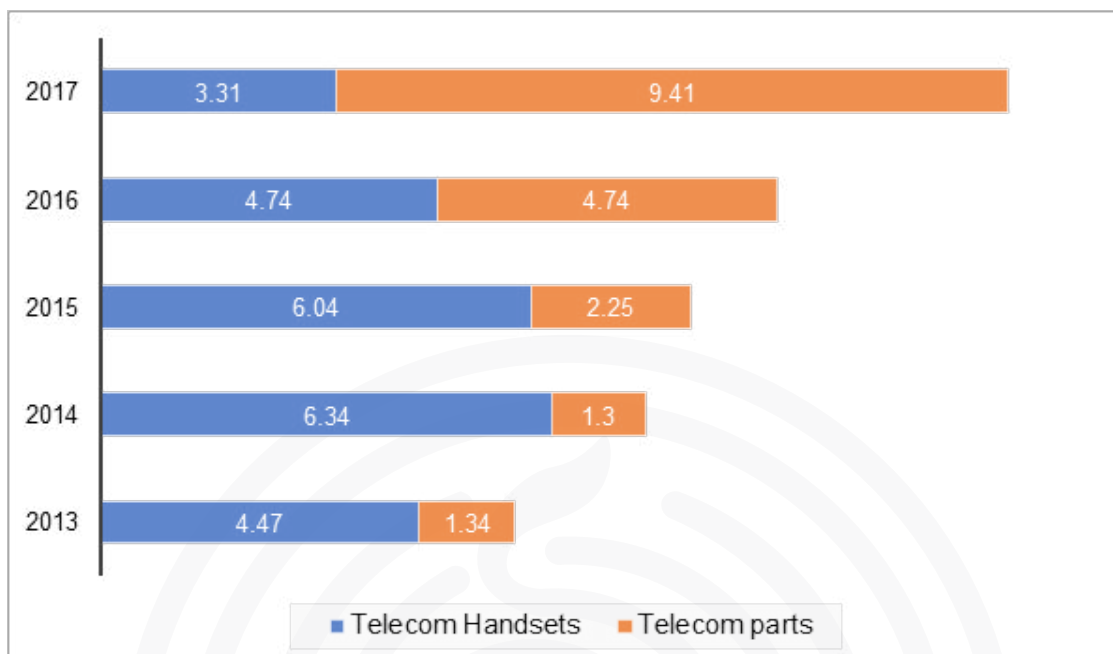


FIGURE: Bar chart representation of the imports of telecom handsets and telecom parts by value in billion US Dollars before the launch of the PLI Scheme.



“The imports of mobile phone components – including display screens, cameras, batteries, printed circuit boards – shot up between FY21 and FY23. The manufacturers import all of the necessary parts and assemble them in India to create a ‘Made in India’ product. Low-level assembly work doesn’t produce well-paying jobs and doesn’t nearly have anywhere the same multiplier effect that actual manufacturing might provide. Even if, only 60 % of screens, batteries, etc. imported are used to make mobile phones, the final import tally would still beat the final export tally.”

- Raghuram Rajan, former RBI Governor

The exports of mobile phone by value jumped from \$300 million in FY2018 to \$11 billion in FY23, while imports dropped from \$3.6 billion to \$1.6 billion during the

same period. All imports of screens, batteries, etc. are not exclusively used to make mobile phones. It is possible these items are used also for computer monitors, DSLR cameras, electric vehicles etc. Approximately, 22 % of mobile phone production in India is supported by the PLI scheme. The ‘value-addition’ for mobile manufacturing will go up as the broader supply and assembly chain settles in India.

- Rajeev Chandrashekhar, Union Minister of State for Electronics & Information Technology



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ECOLOGY





BIG CAT ALLIANCE

**FOREST (CONSERVATION) AMENDMENT BILL
2023**

BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (AMENDMENT) BILL

HIMALAYAN VULTURE

TAMPARA LAKE

**CORAL BENEFITS FROM REDUCED HUMAN
ACTIVITY AMID WARM OCEAN**

**MELTING GLACIERS FOSTER NEW
ECOSYSTEMS**

**MERGING OF VARIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL
ORGANISATIONS**

RAIL TRACK THROUGH GIBBON SANCTUARY

IWC'S INITIAL EXTINCTION ALERT



BIG CAT ALLIANCE

CONTEXT: Tiger population in Karnataka has grown with 563 big cats, second highest after Madhya Pradesh.

BACKGROUND: The latest tiger population survey in Karnataka shows growth, with 563 tigers, second to Madhya Pradesh. However, the growth is concentrated in protected areas like Bandipur and Nagarahole, leading to concerns about man-animal conflicts. Some argue for increasing the prey base to reduce conflicts, while others caution against habitat manipulation.

Protecting potential tiger habitats with low densities and strengthening corridor connectivity are long-term challenges. Stricter implementation of Eco Sensitive Zone rules and gaining community trust are essential to secure the future of tigers amidst developmental pressure.

Status of Tigers in India



Big Cats in India

India is home to several species of big cats, including the majestic Bengal tiger, the endangered Indian lion in Gir National Park, and the adaptable Indian leopard. Other lesser-known big cats like the snow leopard, clouded leopard, and marbled cat inhabit specific regions. Conservation efforts aim to protect these iconic and elusive felines.

India is the only country with all three prime members of the wild big cat family. It hosts 15 big cat species, with lions, tigers, and leopards being the most popular and attracting wildlife enthusiasts worldwide.

(For Further Details regarding the Global Big Cat Alliance (Ecology and Environment), Refer VEDHIK - SAMKALP Current Affairs Magazine March 2023)

FOREST (CONSERVATION) AMENDMENT BILL 2023

CONTEXT: Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill 2023 passed Lok Sabha, awaits discussion in Rajya Sabha.

BACKGROUND: The bill seeks to limit conservation scope, provide exemptions for strategic projects in border lands, and permit certain non-forest activities. A Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) with members from both Houses was formed to review the bill.

Current Act includes safeguards like forest clearance permissions and informed consent, which the amendment removes. The revision alters the Act's wide applicability, raising concerns about conservation efforts and environmental protection.

How does the Bill restrict the scope of the Act?

The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill 2023 restricts 'forest' definition to officially recorded areas, contrasting the broader existing Act. Previous Supreme Court ruling recognized forests irrespective of ownership, including "deemed forests" with significant tree cover.

Why is the exemption for border infrastructure controversial?

The Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill 2023 exempts certain linear infrastructure projects near the national border from forest clearance permissions. Experts worry that the vague definition of "strategic linear projects" could lead to ecologically damaging projects. The Bill was not referred to the relevant Parliamentary Standing Committee, bypassing oversight protocols.

States were directed to identify and notify their deemed forests, but delays persist, questioning the process's scientific validity. The amendment allows commercial activity on non-classified lands, potentially impacting the environment and local communities.

(For Further Details regarding the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill 2023 (Ecology and Environment), Refer VEDHIK - SAMKALP Current Affairs Magazine July 2023)



BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (AMENDMENT) BILL

CONTEXT: The Biological Diversity Bill passed, opposing its aim of conserving biodiversity, citing "ease of doing business" and AYUSH promotion.

ABOUT THE BILL: The Biological Diversity Bill exempts AYUSH and "codified traditional knowledge" from benefit sharing, raising concerns over exploitation and lack of clear definitions. It proposes monetary penalties instead of criminalizing offenses, leading to resource exploitation worries. The Act faces implementation challenges, and local communities may not receive fair benefits.

- Benefit sharing to be determined through agreements between users and local management committees.
- All offenses under the Act decriminalized.

How does the industry view the Act?

The proposed amendments to the Biological Diversity Act aim to ease compliance for industries, particularly the AYUSH sector. However, these changes raise concerns as they exempt users from sharing benefits with local communities and dilute environmental regulations, prioritizing "ease of doing business" over environmental protection.

MAJOR CHANGES

- The Bill modifies the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, easing compliance for domestic companies.
- AYUSH and "codified traditional knowledge" users exempted from sharing benefits with local communities.
- Research and bio-survey activities excluded from benefit sharing requirements.

Excerpts from "The Hindu - Why is the Biological Diversity Bill facing opposition? August 04, 2023"

HIMALAYAN VULTURE

NB: Put the image of Himalayan vulture as the background or anything

CONTEXT: First captive breeding of Himalayan vulture recorded in India at Assam State Zoo, Guwahati.

HIGHLIGHTS: The successful captive breeding of Himalayan vultures in Assam State Zoo, Guwahati, was published in the Journal of Threatened Taxa. The nestling was shifted to an artificial brooding facility and carefully monitored. The acclimatization to the tropical environment

contributed to the unique success of breeding. The Vulture Conservation Breeding Centers in India are working to protect critically endangered vulture species, including the white-rumped, slender-billed, and Indian vultures.

Himalayan vulture (*Gyps himalayensis*)



Excerpts from "The Hindu - Endangered Himalayan vulture, bred in captivity for the first time in India August 04, 2023"



TAMPARA LAKE

CONTEXT: NGT halts illegal construction around Odisha's Tampara Lake, a Ramasar site, due to lack of permissions.

BACKGROUND: Odisha's Tampara Lake, a Ramasar site, faces NGT directive against unauthorized construction. Wildlife Society of Orissa's petition highlights illegal work without permissions, citing non-adherence to wetland rules and inactive committees.

Tampara Lake and Ecological Significance

- Tampara Lake, near Chatrapur in Odisha, formed from a depression due to explosives in 1766, connected to Rushikulya river.
- Spread over 300 ha, Tampara supports 60 bird, 46 fish, and 48 phytoplankton species, plus vital species

like *Cyprinus carpio*.

- The lake's narrow channel links to Rushikulya for floodwater flow and goods transport, providing sustenance and water resources.
- With an average fish yield of 12 tonnes annually, Tampara Lake sustains local communities and offers water for agriculture and domestic use.
- Tampara serves as a habitat for diverse species, including vulnerable ones, and stands as a significant tourism, recreation, and ecological site.

CORAL BENEFITS FROM REDUCED HUMAN ACTIVITY AMID WARM OCEAN

CONTEXT: Integrated land and sea measures curbed coral loss during a Hawaii heatwave, showcasing strategies for reef protection, per Nature.

HIGHLIGHTS: Coral reefs, sensitive to marine heatwaves, suffer bleaching and death. NOAA's Jamison Gove and team link reef surveys and 20-year land-sea impact data, notably 2015's 2.2°C-above-normal heatwave. Human influences – urban runoff, pollution, fishing limits – studied for coral health preservation.

Impact on Corals Due to Human Activity

- Coral Bleaching: Human-induced climate change raises sea temperatures, causing coral bleaching and weakening ecosystems vital for marine life.
- Coastal Development: Urbanization and pollution degrade coastal areas, disrupting coral habitats and reducing water quality, endangering coral survival.

- Overfishing: Unregulated fishing damages reefs' delicate balance, disrupting food chains and diminishing biodiversity, compromising coral health and ecosystem stability.
- Marine Pollution: Runoff from agriculture and industry introduces pollutants, harming coral reefs, disrupting growth, and impacting marine species dependent on healthy reefs.
- 5. Tourism Impact: Unsustainable tourism practices, including anchoring and physical contact, erode coral structures, leading to habitat destruction and reduced resilience against environmental stressors.

MELTING GLACIERS FOSTER NEW ECOSYSTEMS

CONTEXT: Human-induced climate change could shrink non-polar glacier areas by half by century-end, impacting ecosystems and society.

HIGHLIGHTS: Human-induced climate change could reduce non-polar glacier areas by up to 51% by 2100 under high-emissions scenarios, but as low as 22% under low-emissions conditions. Loss could create new ecosystems over land ranging from Nepal to Finland, per Nature study by Bosson and team.

- Human-induced climate change could halve non-polar glacier area by 2100, per Nature study. Novel ecosystems may emerge.
- High-emissions scenario could cause 50% glacier loss by 2100, while low-emissions could reduce loss

to 22%.

- Jean-Baptiste Bosson's model projects glacier area loss ranging from 22% to 51% under different climate scenarios.
- Retreat of glaciers outside Polar Regions could create new ecosystems spanning Nepal to Finland, with ecological shifts.
- Emergence of diverse ecosystems underlines need for climate mitigation and in-situ protection, amid complexities of glacial conservation.



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MERGING OF VARIOUS ENVIRONMENTAL ORGANISATIONS

CONTEXT: MoEFCC retreats from merging key agencies like FSI, NTCA, WCCB, and CZA under its Ministry after initial plans.

BACKGROUND: Proposed merger of key environmental agencies in COVID-19 lockdown criticized as it could weaken their autonomy and effectiveness. NTCA concerned about loss of independence and interference. MoEFCC cited "ease of doing business" as justification.

HIGHLIGHTS: MoEFCC drops merger plan for key environmental bodies after wildlife conservationist's petition, citing technical difficulties. NTCA, FSI, WCCB, CZA serve different roles: Tiger Reserves, forest data, enforcement, zoos.

The notification suggests reorganizing regional offices without clear criteria, drawing criticism. Government's

merger plan for Project Tiger and Project Elephant raises concerns about NTCA autonomy and lack of legal backing for Project Elephant. Decision-making process in MoEFCC's wildlife division questioned.

Experts emphasize need for dedicated and decentralized efforts to bolster environmental monitoring. Regional offices' roles expanded for approvals and safeguards. Adequate funding and infrastructure essential. Maintaining balance between regulatory outcomes and environmental protection while upholding social justice recommended.

RAIL TRACK THROUGH GIBBON SANCTUARY

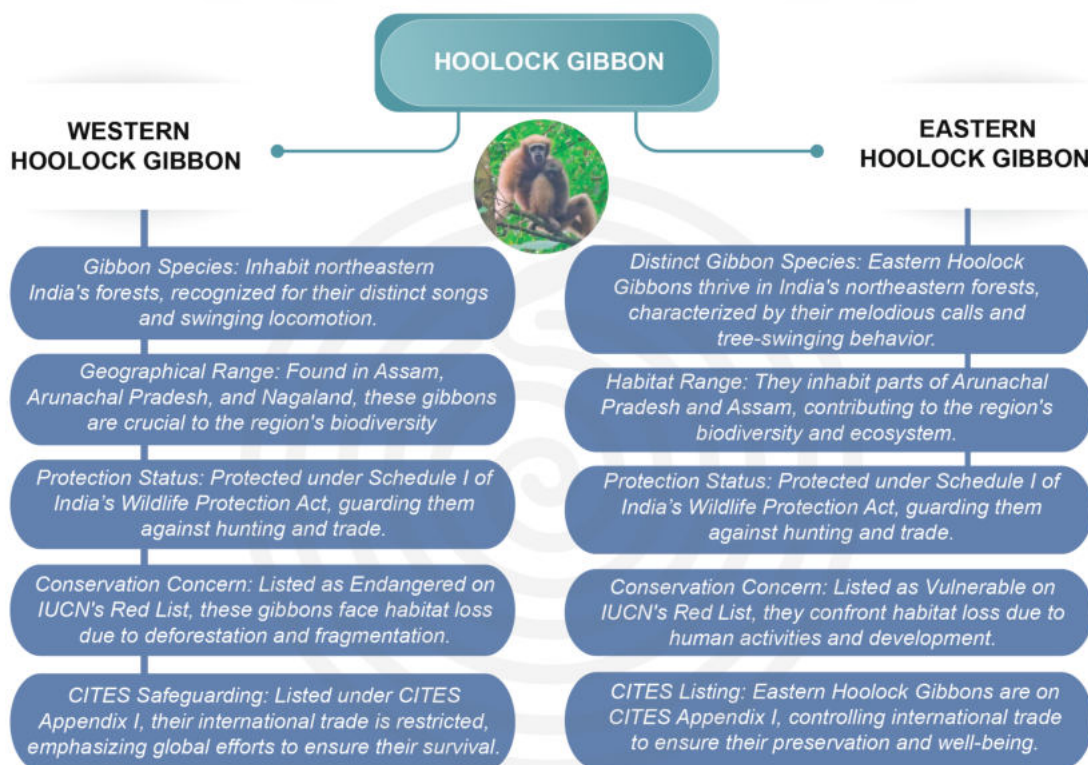
CONTEXT: Primatologists propose relocating railway track in Assam's gibbon sanctuary to aid wildlife movement, inspired by WII's canopy bridge design.

BACKGROUND: Scientists in India propose shifting a rail track within Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary for hoolock gibbons, inspired by a canopy bridge concept. The study, led by Rohit Ravindra, suggests minimizing habitat disruption in the 21 sq. km sanctuary that houses 125 endangered hoolock gibbons, combating their habitat loss and fragmentation.

HIGHLIGHTS: Hollongapar Gibbon Sanctuary, home to India's only ape, the hoolock gibbon, faces habitat loss and isolation due to a rail track. The sanctuary's 21 sq. km area lacks connectivity with surrounding forests, causing genetic isolation among gibbon families. Scientists recommend an artificial canopy bridge to aid their survival.

HOOLOCK GIBBON

- **Gibbon Species:** Hoolock gibbons are lesser apes found in Asia, known for their distinctive calls and swinging locomotion.
- **Habitat:** They inhabit tropical and subtropical forests, often dwelling in treetops and displaying brachiation, or tree-swinging movement.
- **Distinctive Features:** Hoolocks have white eyebrows, long arms, and a unique vocal repertoire used for territorial communication.
- **Diet:** Their diet includes fruits, leaves, and insects, contributing to forest ecosystem health through seed dispersal.





IWC'S INITIAL EXTINCTION ALERT

CONTEXT: The IWC issued an Extinction Alert for the vaquita porpoise, with around 10 left in the Gulf of California, urging gillnet bans for recovery.

BACKGROUND: The vaquita porpoise's dire situation led the IWC to issue its first Extinction Alert. With only around 10 left in Mexico's Gulf of California, the IWC believes full enforcement of gillnet bans could prevent extinction. The IWC's Scientific Committee is spearheading the effort to address extinction concerns for various cetacean species.

Vaquita porpoise

- Vaquita porpoise, smallest cetacean, inhabits Gulf of California, Mexico, facing critical endangerment due to bycatch.
- Habitat Location: Vaquitas live exclusively in Gulf of

California's upper waters, highlighting their limited range and vulnerability to human impacts.

- IUCN Status: Vaquita is "Critically Endangered," with under 10 individuals remaining, emphasizing urgent need for conservation action.
- CITES Appendix: Vaquita listed under CITES Appendix I, highest protection level, prohibiting international trade of vaquita products to curb illegal trade.
- Conservation Efforts: Mexico's efforts include gillnet ban, patrols, and research, joined by global initiatives to save vaquitas from extinction

INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION (IWC)

The International Whaling Commission (IWC) regulates whale hunting and conservation, aiming to ensure sustainable use of whale resources.

- Headquarters: IWC's headquarters located in Impington, UK, facilitates international discussions on whaling issues and marine conservation.
- India's Membership: India, an IWC member since 1981, supports whale conservation efforts and advocates for non-lethal research and responsible whale watching.
- Status: IWC balances whaling rights and conservation concerns, fostering dialogue among member nations for sustainable management of whale populations.
- Conservation Impact: IWC's measures impact global whaling policy, striving to protect whale species and marine ecosystems through scientific research and cooperative efforts.



INTERNATIONAL WHALING COMMISSION

THE DEBT-FOSSIL FUEL TRAP

CONTEXT: Debt-ridden nations struggle to shift to renewable energy due to inflated fossil fuel project revenues, perpetuating dependence, warns report.

BACKGROUND: Indebted nations, mainly in the global south, struggle to shift from fossil fuels to renewables due to inflated project revenues, leading to increased debt, according to a report by Debt Justice. Poor countries rely on fossil fuels for revenue to repay loans, hindering transition efforts.

HIGHLIGHTS:-

- Debt Burden in Global South: Developing nations in Africa, Latin America, and Asia grapple with rising debts. External debt payments surged 150% between 2011 and 2023, reaching a 25-year peak, exacerbating financial strain.
- Climate Impact: Extreme weather prompts further borrowing for adaptation, exacerbating debt.

Dominica's debt rose from 68% to 78% after Hurricane Maria's 2017 impact.

- Fossil Fuel Response: To manage debts, nations like Argentina embrace fossil fuel extraction. For instance, Argentina supports fracking in Northern Patagonia's Vaca Muerta field for revenue generation.
- Fracking Concerns: Experts express worries about environmental harm from fracking. Proposed benefits might not outweigh fossil fuel revenue risks and investment needs, leading to more debt.
- Risks and Consequences: Reliance on fossil fuels to curb debt could backfire. Argentina's approach might increase debt without sufficient revenue, reinforcing the "debt-fossil fuel trap."



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SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY



HYBRID EV

AKIRA RANSOMWARE

SPACE DEBRIS

ASPARTAME

DEEP TECH STARTUPS

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ZARTH – APP TO CATCH A SUPERNOVA

ROOM-TEMPERATURE SUPERCONDUCTOR HOPE FADED

ACOUSTIC SIDE CHANNEL ATTACKS

LCA TEJAS SUCCESSFULLY TEST-FIRES INDIGENOUS ASTRA



HYBRID EV

CONTEXT: Hybrid EVs provide a transition opportunity to economically developing countries towards becoming net-zero despite infrastructure challenges

HIGHLIGHTS: Hybrid electric vehicles (EVs) play a crucial role in the world's net-zero transition, offering emission reductions and cost benefits. They provide a practical solution for economically developing countries facing grid limitations and lack of fast-charging infrastructure, enabling a gradual shift towards sustainability.

Electric vehicle (EV) and Hybrid Electric vehicle (EV)

- **Power Source:** EVs are fully electric, powered solely by batteries, while hybrid electric vehicles (HEVs) combine an internal combustion engine with an electric motor.
- **Emissions:** EVs produce zero tailpipe emissions, while HEVs emit some pollutants due to their reliance on fossil fuels.
- **Range:** EVs typically have a shorter range on electric power alone, whereas HEVs have unlimited range due to the gasoline engine.
- **Charging vs. Refueling:** EVs require charging from electric outlets, while HEVs can be refueled at gas stations like traditional cars.
- **Energy Efficiency:** EVs are generally more energy-efficient than HEVs, as they don't waste energy through internal combustion engines.

Fuel Economy of Hybrid and Fully Electric EV

Hybrid EVs, combining ICE, generator, and battery, achieve 1.5-2x better fuel economy in cities and 1-1.5x on highways than conventional ICE vehicles. Plug-in hybrid EVs, with a small battery chargeable from the grid, offer 3-4x higher fuel economy for short commutes in electric mode. They provide the flexibility to switch to hybrid mode for intercity trips, offering efficiency benefits.

Net emissions, a crucial metric, consider well-to-wheel emissions (tailpipe and fuel production) and life-cycle emissions (including vehicle and battery production, maintenance, and recycling). Emissions vary based on power grid decarbonisation in different countries. Full EVs show lower well-to-wheel and life-cycle emissions when power production emissions are lower, emphasizing the importance of decarbonizing power generation for sustainable EV impact.

Is Hybrid Electric vehicle (EV) is significant for India's

Net Zero Emission target?

Possibilities:

- **Transition Phase:** HEVs can serve as a bridge to a fully electric future, easing the transition and reducing immediate emissions.
- **Driving Habits:** HEVs suit driving patterns in India, where long distances and limited charging infrastructure pose challenges for EV adoption.
- **Lower Emission:** Compared to conventional vehicles, HEVs emit fewer pollutants, contributing to a gradual reduction in emissions.
- **Technological Advancements:** Improving hybrid technology can enhance efficiency and make it a more viable option in India's context.
- **Affordability:** HEVs are often more affordable than fully electric vehicles, making them accessible to a broader section of the population.

Challenges:

- **Limited Emission Reduction:** HEVs may not achieve India's ambitious net-zero targets as they still rely on fossil fuels and emit greenhouse gases.
- **Dependency on Petrol:** HEVs can perpetuate India's dependence on imported petroleum, hindering energy security and sustainability.
- **Incentive Misallocation:** Focusing on HEVs might divert attention from building the necessary EV infrastructure and charging ecosystem.
- **Rapid Technological Change:** A prolonged reliance on HEVs might delay the adoption of more advanced, cleaner technologies.
- **Environmental Impact:** Although better than conventional vehicles, HEVs still contribute to air and noise pollution, impacting public health and well-being.

While HEVs offer some advantages in specific contexts, they may not be the most effective solution for achieving India's net-zero emission target. Prioritizing investments in infrastructure, supporting EV adoption, and promoting renewable energy sources are crucial steps toward a sustainable future.

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AKIRA RANSOMWARE

CONTEXT: The Indian government warns about "Akira" ransomware targeting Windows and Linux devices, employing double extortion tactics and data leaks.

ABOUT AKIRA RANSOMWARE: Akira ransomware encrypts data, appends ".akira" extension to filenames, and deletes Windows Shadow Volume copies to hinder data recovery. It uses VPN services to distribute malicious files and demands ransom, threatening to leak stolen data on the dark web if not paid.

Akira ransomware uses Windows Restart Manager API to terminate services for uninterrupted encryption. It avoids encrypting essential system folders and files. After encryption, it leaves akira_readme.txt note with negotiation site link and unique password for victim communication. The negotiation site includes a chat system for communicating with the ransomware gang.

Akira ransomware spreads through spear phishing emails with malicious attachments, drive-by downloads, and insecure Remote Desktop connections. It targets corporate networks in various domains, gaining admin credentials to spread laterally. The threat actors also steal sensitive data for extortion leverage. It has been active since March 2023.

What is ransomware attack and how it works?

A ransomware attack is a malicious cyber-attack where hackers use malware to encrypt a victim's data, rendering it inaccessible. The attackers then demand a ransom, typically in cryptocurrency, in exchange for providing the decryption key to unlock the files. Ransomware is often spread through phishing emails, malicious links, or

exploiting vulnerabilities in software or networks.

A ransomware attack involves the deployment of malicious software to seize control of a victim's data, making it unusable unless a ransom is paid. The attackers employ various methods to infect systems, including phishing emails with infected attachments, drive-by downloads, or exploiting weak security configurations. The attackers then extort victims by demanding payment in cryptocurrency, adding complexity to tracking and apprehending them.

NB: Need to insert in how it works?

What can users do to protect against ransomware?

- CERT-In advises users to maintain up-to-date offline backups to prevent data loss from ransomware attacks.
- Regularly update operating systems and networks, including virtual patching for legacy systems.
- Implement Domain-based Message Authentication, DKIM, and Sender policy for email validation to prevent spoofing.
- Enforce strong password policies and multi-factor authentication (MFA) for enhanced security.
- Strict external device usage policy, data encryption, and blocking malicious file types are recommended to avoid malware.

SPACE DEBRIS

CONTEXT: ISRO gives PSLV C56 'second mission' to fight debris

BACKGROUND: ISRO achieved a double success on July 30, successfully placing seven Singaporean satellites into orbit and conducting a unique scientific experiment with the fourth stage of a PSLV rocket. The experiment involved lowering the stage into a lower orbit after placing customer satellites to mitigate space debris. This reduces the stage's lifespan in space and opens up the precious orbit for future satellites. The experiment was declared successful, showcasing ISRO's efforts in addressing space debris problems consciously.

What is space debris?

Space debris refers to defunct human-made objects in orbit around Earth, including discarded rocket stages, old satellites, and fragments from collisions.

Types: Debris can be categorized as large objects, fragments, or micrometeoroids, posing different risks to operational satellites and spacecraft.

Collision Risks: Space debris travels at high speeds, and collisions can cause catastrophic damage to operational satellites, exacerbating the debris problem.

Mitigation Efforts: International organizations and space agencies work to mitigate space debris by implementing guidelines for satellite disposal and collision avoidance.

Long-term Concerns: The accumulation of space debris poses a significant long-term threat to space activities and

can hinder future space exploration endeavors.

Safeguarding Indian space assets from debris (Source: ISRO)

ISRO closely monitors space objects' close approaches to its assets, with 4382 events closer than 1 km and 3148 events closer than 5 km in 2021. Threats include fragments of Fengyun 1C and Cosmos-Iridium collision. Collision avoidance maneuvers (CAM) have increased significantly, with 19 CAMs carried out in 2021. The trend is expected to continue due to the growing space object population.





ASPARTAME

Context: Aspartame, a widely-used artificial sweetener, declared a possible carcinogen by WHO due to cancer risk.

HIGHLIGHTS AND FINDINGS: The WHO's announcement about aspartame being a possible carcinogen has sparked concerns. Evaluations are conducted by IARC, a WHO-affiliated committee studying cancer causes, analyzing over a thousand substances for their role in carcinogenesis.

The IARC uses a grading system to classify substances based on their cancer-causing potential. Grade 1 includes known human carcinogens like smoking and asbestos. Grade 2A comprises probable human carcinogens like red meat, while Grade 2B includes possible ones like cell phone radiation. Grade 3 lacks sufficient data for classification.

The IARC grading system categorizes substances based on their potential to cause cancer, but it doesn't measure the actual risk of cancer. The grading indicates the hazard level, not the level of harm. Two agents with the same grade may not have the same cancer risk; they only share the same hazard.

ASPARTAME

Aspartame is an artificial sweetener used as a

sugar substitute in various food and beverage products.

- **High Sweetness:** It is intensely sweet, about 200 times sweeter than sucrose (table sugar), allowing for low-calorie sweetening.
- **Low-Calorie Option:** Aspartame has minimal caloric content, making it popular in diet foods and beverages.
- **Chemical Composition:** Composed of two amino acids, aspartic acid, and phenylalanine, it is metabolized in the body like other proteins.
- **Heat Sensitivity:** Aspartame breaks down at high temperatures, limiting its use in cooking or baking.
- **Safety Concerns:** Extensively studied, it is considered safe for most people, but individuals with phenylketonuria (PKU) should avoid it due to phenylalanine.
- **Global Usage:** Found in numerous products worldwide, from soft drinks and desserts to pharmaceuticals and tabletop sweeteners.

DEEP TECH STARTUPS

CONTEXT: Startup boom in India, led by young entrepreneurs, expands to Tier 2 & 3 cities, driving innovation across sectors.

PRESENT PROGRESS: The Indian Startup Boom, led by young entrepreneurs and supported by the government's Startup India movement, expands to Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities, driving entrepreneurship and innovation across diverse sectors beyond e-commerce.

Deep tech startups in India, fostered by institutions like IIT Madras's Research Park and C-CAMP, are driving technology innovation and risk-taking in the country. Indian industry prefers investing in deep-tech startups and acquiring successful scaled technologies. Tatas acquired Saankhya and Tejas Networks, Reliance acquired Faradion, and Hero Motors invested in Ather Motors. The startup ecosystem's retained risk appetite is attributed to a system-wide shared approach to measuring risk and progress during funding negotiations.

What Are Deep Tech Startups?

They are companies that develop advanced, scientific-based technologies (e.g., AI, biotech) to solve complex problems. They invest in R&D, hold valuable IP, have a long-term vision, and require specialized expertise. Market entry barriers and investor interest are higher due to the complexity.

Draft National Deep Tech Startup Policy

The NDTSP Consortium has released a draft policy for public consultation, following PM-STIAC's

recommendation. It aims to strengthen the Indian deep tech startup ecosystem. The Consortium includes representatives from various government departments, ISRO, DRDO, NASSCOM, CII, and FICCI, working on a comprehensive policy framework.

The draft NDTSP captures various new policy instruments and suggests necessary policy changes under the following themes:

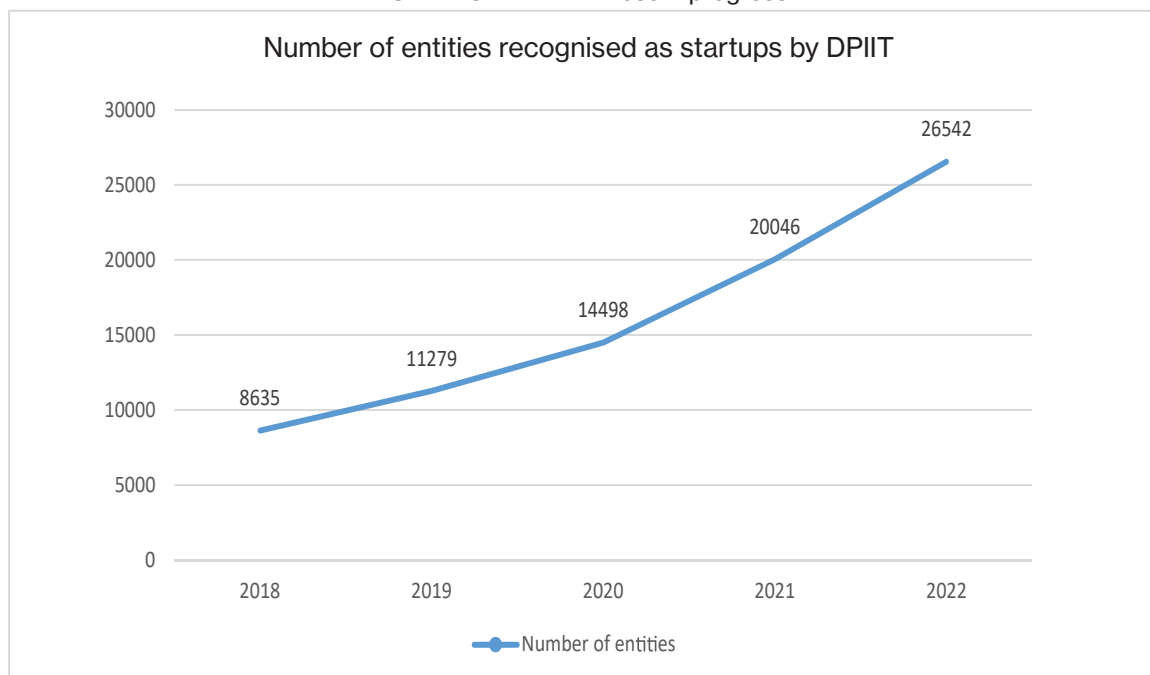
- Nurturing Research, Development & Innovation
- Strengthening the Intellectual Property Regime
- Facilitating Access to Funding
- Enabling Shared Infrastructure and Resource Sharing
- Creating Conducive Regulations, Standards, and Certifications
- Attracting Human Resources & Initiating Capacity Building
- Promoting Procurement & Adoption
- Ensuring Policy & Program Interlinkages
- Sustaining Deep Tech Startups



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STARTUP INDIA – Present progress



Credit: Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade, Ministry of Commerce & Industry

PRIVATE FIRMS TO BID FOR AND MINE LITHIUM

CONTEXT: India's Parliament passed a law allowing auction and mining of lithium reserves, boosting EV battery production.

BACKGROUND: The Rajya Sabha passed the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023 to amend the Mines and Minerals Act. The amendments aim to bring transparency in mineral concessions, establish welfare foundations, promote exploration, and impose stringent penalties for illegal mining.

PROPOSED CHANGES

Omission of 6 minerals from the list of 12 atomic minerals specified in Part-B of the First Schedule of the Act

- The Bill proposes to remove these minerals from the atomic minerals list, allowing private sector involvement.
- Private sector participation will boost exploration, mining, and availability of these minerals to the atomic sector as well.

Empowering Central Government to exclusively

auction mineral concessions for certain critical minerals

- Parliament empowers Central Government to exclusively auction critical minerals: molybdenum, tungsten, cobalt, graphite, vanadium, and more.
- Only 19 out of 107 mineral blocks auctioned by State Governments so far, necessitating Central Government involvement.

Introducing exploration license for deep-seated and critical minerals.

- Bill introduces Exploration License (EL) to undertake reconnaissance and prospecting for critical and deep-seated minerals.
- EL granted through auction, allowing exploration for minerals like copper, gold, silver, lithium, and more.

LUNA-25 MISSION

CONTEXT: ROSCOSMOS Luna-25 and India's Chandrayaan-3, landing on the Moon simultaneously, won't interfere due to separate sites.

BACKGROUND: Russia's Luna-25 and India's Chandrayaan-3 won't clash on the Moon, with separate landing zones and space availability, despite launching around the same time. Luna-25 from Vostochny, Russia, and Chandrayaan-3 both aiming to land on August 23.

HIGHLIGHTS: Russia's Luna-25 and India's Chandrayaan-3, with distinct landing zones, won't disrupt each other. Luna-25's multi-stage Moon landing process includes trajectory launch, five-day flight, and lunar orbit stay. Chandrayaan-3 targets the lunar South Pole. China's Yutu-2 is the sole active rover. Luna-25's lunar orbit projected by August 16, landing by August 21-23.

LUNA-25 Mission

- Luna 25, launched on Aug 10, 2023, is a Russian lunar lander for the Moon's South Pole, focusing on regolith composition and lunar polar exosphere.
- The lander comprises a four-legged base with rockets, an upper compartment housing solar panels, communication gear, and scientific instruments.
- With a dry mass of 800 kg and about 950 kg propellant at launch, Luna 25 aims to study plasma, dust, and regolith composition.



- Luna 25's mission combines investigation into the Moon's surface composition, plasma, and dust in its unique south polar region.

MISSION FAILURE:-

- Mission Failure: Russia's Luna-25 spacecraft crashed on the Moon due to a glitch during a critical orbit-changing maneuver, highlighting the complexity of lunar soft landings.
- Risk in Lunar Landings: The incident underscores the challenges of safely landing spacecraft on the Moon, demonstrating the technical and navigational difficulties involved in autonomous landings.

- Investigation Initiated: Roscosmos formed a committee to investigate the failure and determine the specific cause of Luna-25's crash, reflecting the commitment to learning from failures in space exploration.

- Technical Glitch: Luna-25 suffered a technical problem during an orbit modification, which potentially led to excessive thrust application and loss of lunar orbit, as speculated by experts.

- Mission Parameter Deviation: The spacecraft's operation exceeded design parameters during the orbit change, indicating the necessity for precise calculations and control during lunar descent attempts.



CHANDRAYAAN-3 UPDATES - CHANDRAYAAN-3 IN TRANSLUNAR ORBIT

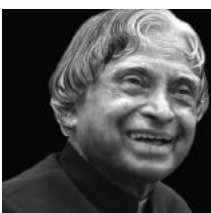
CONTEXT: ISRO successfully puts Chandrayaan-3 in translunar orbit

BACKGROUND: ISRO successfully performed Translunar Injection (TLI) for Chandrayaan-3, sending it towards the moon. It is expected to reach lunar orbit on August 5, followed by lunar-orbit insertion and four orbit maneuvers. The spacecraft consists of a lander module, propulsion module, and rover. The soft landing is planned for August 23.

TRANSLUNAR ORBIT

A trans-lunar orbit refers to the trajectory of a spacecraft beyond Earth's orbit, traveling towards or around the Moon.

- **Space Missions:** It is utilized by spacecraft for lunar exploration, lunar landing attempts, or as a waypoint for missions to other celestial bodies.
- **Escape Velocity:** Achieving trans-lunar orbit requires reaching escape velocity from Earth, typically facilitated by powerful rocket engines.
- **Gravity Assist:** Gravity assists from the Moon can be utilized to alter spacecraft trajectories and conserve fuel during interplanetary missions.
- **Mission Complexity:** Trans-lunar missions present technical challenges due to long distances,



You have to dream before your dreams can come true..

- A. P. J. ABDUL KALAM



communication delays, and precise orbital calculations.

ISRO's successful Translunar Injection of Chandrayaan-3 marks a significant step in the mission's journey to the moon. With a well-planned schedule for lunar orbit insertion and soft landing, India's space agency

is advancing towards another remarkable lunar exploration endeavor.

NB: For further details of Chandrayaan-3 mission (Science and Technology), refer July 2023 Vedhik - SAMKALP current affairs Magazine

CHANDRAYAAN-3 UPDATES - CHANDRAYAAN-3 LANDS ON MOON'S SURFACE

CONTEXT: India's Chandrayaan-3 lands near Moon's South Pole, 4th nation to soft-land; PM Modi hails global collaboration, rover deploys for research.

BACKGROUND: India's Chandrayaan-3 Lander Module successfully lands on Moon, marking fourth nation to soft-land. PM Modi emphasizes global unity, celebrates ISRO's achievement. Rover deployed for in-situ lunar surface analysis, carrying scientific payloads for experiments during its 14-day mission.

What is a soft landing?

A soft landing on the Moon refers to a controlled descent of a spacecraft that safely touches down without significant damage or impact, ensuring a safe arrival.

- Controlled Approach: Precise calculations guide the spacecraft's descent, ensuring a safe and targeted landing on the moon's surface.

- Retro Rocket Assistance: Retro rockets are employed to slow down the spacecraft's speed, allowing for a gentle and controlled touch on the lunar surface.
- Shock Absorption: Specially designed landing legs absorb the impact energy, preventing any damage to the spacecraft and its delicate instruments.
- Reduced Surface Disturbance: By using careful techniques, the disturbance to the moon's surface and potential dust upheaval is minimized during landing.
- Exploration Facilitation: Achieving a soft landing opens doors for in-depth lunar exploration, enabling scientific research and the possibility of future manned missions.

CHANDRAYAAN-3 PROGRESS SO FAR



INDIA STRUGGLES TO ACHIEVE 2025 TB DETECTION GOAL

CONTEXT: India aimed to eliminate TB by 2025 with National Strategic Plans (NSPs), but missed diagnostic targets; challenges persist under revised NSP 2020-2025.

BACKGROUND: Revised NSP emphasizes early TB detection through precise diagnostic tools; molecular tests were intended to replace smear microscopy. However, with only three years left to meet the 2025 goal, this transition hasn't occurred. In 2022, a notable proportion of diagnoses lacked bacteriological confirmation. Moreover, limited drug-resistance testing and low results for rifampicin resistance raise concerns. Meeting universal testing goals remains a challenge despite NSP's objectives.

WHO Global TB Report 2022 and India

- Increased TB Cases in India: India reported 21.4 lakh TB cases in 2021, a notable 18% rise from the previous year, aided by proactive interventions and measures.
- Pradhan Mantri TB Mukta Bharat Abhiyan: The initiative involves 40,000 Nikshay Mitra assisting 10.45 lakh TB patients' nationwide, fostering improved TB care and support.



- Resilience amid Pandemic: Amid COVID-19 disruptions, India's TB Program adapted, contributing to successful case notification increase, showcasing the nation's response effectiveness.
- Robust Detection Strategies: Active Case Finding drives and advanced diagnostics have been pivotal in screening 22 crore people, enabling early TB detection and community protection.
- Data Accuracy and Collaboration: India collaborates with WHO to enhance accurate TB incidence and mortality estimates, recognizing the need for systematic studies for conclusive data.

METAGENOME SEQUENCING TECHNOLOGY

CONTEXT: Global mpox virus outbreak in 2022 linked to super-spreader event, genome sequencing aided understanding and surveillance.

BACKGROUND: Metagenome sequencing transformed pathogen identification during the COVID-19 pandemic, allowing rapid and unbiased virus identification directly from patient samples, changing the course of pathogen surveillance and identification methods. SARS-CoV-2 became one of the most sequenced organisms due to this approach's scalability and effectiveness.

Metagenome Sequencing

- Metagenome sequencing analyzes genetic material from diverse organisms in an environment, revealing their collective genomic information and interactions.
- Diversity Insight: It unveils the genetic diversity of complex ecosystems, allowing us to understand microbial communities' roles in various environments, like soil or the human gut.
- Functional Potential: Metagenome data identifies functional genes and pathways, helping decipher microbial contributions to nutrient cycling, disease resistance, and other ecosystem processes.
- Uncharted Microbes: This technique enables discovery of previously unknown microorganisms, expanding our knowledge of the microbial world and its potential applications.
- Biotechnological Applications: Insights gained from metagenome sequencing have practical uses, such as developing enzymes for biofuels, discovering novel antibiotics, and enhancing agricultural practices.

E-COURTS TO OFFER NATIONAL LINK

CONTEXT: Chief Justice of India plans to expand Supreme Court with 27 courts, 51 judges' chambers, emphasizing modernization for accessibility.

BACKGROUND: Chief Justice of India unveils plan for Supreme Court expansion: 27 courts, 51 judges' chambers. Current setup includes 17 courtrooms, 2 registrar courts. Chief Justice highlights infrastructure overhaul priority for enhanced accessibility and inclusivity, modernizing judicial facilities, detailed during Independence Day speech.

E-COURTS MISSION MODE PROJECT

The e-Courts Project, based on the 2005 ICT policy, aims to digitally transform Indian judiciary. The e-Committee under the Chief Justice of India advises on computerization, while the Mission Mode Project, overseen by the Department of Justice, aims to ICT-enable district courts nationwide.

- Digital Transformation: The e-courts project aims to digitize judicial processes, enhancing efficiency and accessibility in Indian courts.
- Online Case Management: It enables electronic filing of cases, online case tracking, and digital records management for quicker and smoother proceedings.
- Nationwide Network: The project connects district and higher courts across India, promoting uniformity in technology adoption and case management.
- Virtual Hearings: E-courts facilitate virtual hearings, reducing geographical barriers and enabling remote participation for litigants, lawyers, and judges.
- Transparency and Speed: The initiative enhances transparency by providing public access to case information, while automation accelerates case disposition and reduces paperwork.

DIGITAL PERSONAL DATA PROTECTION ACT, 2023

CONTEXT: Rajya Sabha passes DPDP Bill, aiming for data protection and innovation balance, but exempts government, sparking mixed reactions.

BACKGROUND: India enacts Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023, post Supreme Court privacy ruling. Law evokes mixed reactions due to government exemptions and weakened data protection board powers, marking India's belated entry into global privacy regulatory landscape.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- The Digital Personal Data Protection Act applies to digital data within India, including online collection or digitized offline data. It extends to data processing outside India for local goods or services.
- Consent is essential for lawful data processing, but not needed for voluntary sharing or state processing for permits, licenses, services.
- Data fiduciaries must ensure data accuracy, security, and deletion post-purpose completion. Individuals gain rights for information, correction, and grievances.
- Government agencies can be exempted from the Bill's provisions for security, public order, and offense prevention.
- India establishes the Data Protection Board to oversee compliance and address non-compliance issues in the Act.



Salient Features of the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 (Credit: PIB)

The Bill protects digital personal data (that is, the data by which a person may be identified) by providing for the following:

- The obligations of Data Fiduciaries (that is, persons, companies and government entities who process data) for data processing (that is, collection, storage or any other operation on personal data);
- The rights and duties of Data Principals (that is, the person to whom the data relates); and
- Financial penalties for breach of rights, duties and obligations.

The Bill is based on the following seven principles:

- The principle of consented, lawful and transparent use of personal data;
- The principle of purpose limitation (use of personal data only for the purpose specified at the time of obtaining consent of the Data Principal);

- The principle of data minimisation (collection of only as much personal data as is necessary to serve the specified purpose);
- The principle of data accuracy (ensuring data is correct and updated);
- The principle of storage limitation (storing data only till it is needed for the specified purpose);
- The principle of reasonable security safeguards; and
- The principle of accountability (through adjudication of data breaches and breaches of the provisions of the Bill and imposition of penalties for the breaches).

The Bill provides for following rights to the individuals:

- The right to access information about personal data processed;
- The right to correction and erasure of data;
- The right to grievance redressal; and
- The right to nominate a person to exercise rights in case of death or incapacity.

DATA PROTECTION BOARD OF INDIA

- A Data Protection Board of India will be established by the Central Government, operating as a body corporate.
- The Board's headquarters will be determined by the Central Government.
- The Board will consist of a Chairperson and Members chosen for their expertise in relevant fields.
- The Chairperson and Members' terms, salaries, and conditions will be prescribed, with a 2-year term and possibility of reappointment.
- The Chairperson will oversee administrative matters, authorize scrutiny of communications, and delegate functions among Members.

ZARTH – APP TO CATCH A SUPERNOVA

CONTEXT: ZARTH app, inspired by Pokemon Go, combines augmented reality and serious science, developed by IIT Mandi and Gandhinagar students.

BACKGROUND: ZARTH app, enables users to contribute to science while gaming, utilizing open-source Sky Map. Named 'ZTF Augmented Reality Transient Hunter,' it merges play and serious research. ZARTH app, inspired by ZTF's real-time data, lets users catch transient celestial events like supernovae, flaring stars. Users score by catching and ranking transients based on rarity and importance, enhancing astronomy data and aiding machine learning algorithms. App promotes citizen science and astronomy outreach.

ZARTH IN CLASSROOMS: ZARTH app's potential for STEM education and citizen science acknowledged by Dr. Mahabal. Encourages global implementation of ZTF-like surveys for transients. Android app with plans for iPhone release. ZARTH app sets higher standards for rare astronomical event detection through human-AI collaboration, aiding exciting discoveries.

SUPERNOVA

- A "supernova" is a colossal stellar explosion, releasing an extraordinary burst of energy and light. It marks the dramatic end of a massive star's life cycle, scattering elements into space.

- Element Formation: These explosions create and disperse heavy elements, enriching the universe with elements essential for life.
- Brightness Surpasses Stars: Temporarily outshines entire galaxies, allowing scientists to study distant cosmic phenomena and measure cosmic distances.
- Types Differ: Divided into two main types, Type I (no hydrogen) and Type II (hydrogen-rich), each providing unique insights into stellar evolution.
- Neutron Star or Black Hole: Depending on the remnant left after the explosion, a supernova can result in the formation of a neutron star or a black hole.



ROOM-TEMPERATURE SUPERCONDUCTOR HOPE FADED

CONTEXT: Hopes of room-temperature superconductivity with material LK-99 have dimmed. South Korean claims faced scrutiny, revealing it's an insulator, not a superconductor, due to impurities and temperature-related distortions.

BACKGROUND: The excitement sparked by South Korean researchers' claim of LK-99 as a room-temperature superconductor has faded. Though no official conclusion matched the initial announcement, preprint papers from both South Koreans and independent scientists were published to verify the claim. This prompted global efforts, including in India, to validate the findings. Ultimately, the material's behavior with weak magnetic fields and temperature-related distortions debunked its superconducting claims.

What are Superconductors?

Superconductors are materials that exhibit zero electrical resistance and expel magnetic fields when cooled below a certain critical temperature, allowing for efficient electricity flow and unique magnetic properties.

- **Zero Resistance:** Superconductors have no electrical resistance below a critical temperature, enabling efficient electricity transmission with minimal energy loss.

- **Magnetic Expulsion:** They expel magnetic fields, creating the Meissner effect, leading to applications in levitation and magnetic shielding.
- **Critical Temperature:** Each superconductor has a specific critical temperature, often requiring extremely low temperatures, limiting practical applications.
- **Potential Applications:** Superconductors offer high-performance technologies like powerful magnets for MRI, efficient power transmission, and advanced particle accelerators.
- **Cooling Challenge:** Achieving and maintaining the low temperatures needed for superconductivity is a major technical challenge for wider adoption in various fields.

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ACOUSTIC SIDE CHANNEL ATTACKS

CONTEXT: Durham University study shows AI decoding passwords from keystroke sounds, raising Acoustic Side Channel Attack risks.

BACKGROUND: Deep learning boosts Acoustic Side Channel Attack (ASCA) precision in classifying laptop keystrokes. AI's progress amplifies risks in side channel attacks. Collaborative research involving Cornell, Durham, Surrey, and Royal Holloway Universities explores ASCA utilizing audio from Zoom calls and smartphones, achieving a 95% accuracy without language model usage.

Understanding Acoustic Side Channel Attacks

Acoustic Side Channel Attacks (ASCAs) exploit keyboard sounds to decipher keystrokes and expose sensitive data. ASCAs use AI-enhanced techniques, posing security threats by analyzing readily available acoustic cues.

- Side Channel Attacks (SCAs) exploit auxiliary signals emitted during encryption, including sound, to compromise device security.
- Acoustic Side Channel Attacks (ASCAs) decode keyboard sounds to expose keystrokes, often underestimated by users.
- ASCAs misuse keyboard acoustics, overlooked while users hide screens for security. Non-mechanical

keyboards reduce sound, but improved technology aids analysis.

- ASCAs utilize keyboard clicks for eavesdropping, posing risks due to users' failure to consider acoustic leakage.
- Laptop use broadens ASCA impact; uniform keyboard models make AI-enabled deep learning models efficient at interpreting keyboard acoustics.

Accuracy of the attacks

Researchers from Cornell, Durham, Surrey, and Royal Holloway Universities used audio from Zoom calls and smartphones to conduct Acoustic Side Channel Attacks (ASCA). Their deep learning model achieved 95% accuracy in deciphering keystrokes from nearby phones. MacBook Pro's keyboard model also enabled high accuracy.

Users Protect Against Acoustic Side Channel Attacks

To counter Acoustic Side Channel Attacks (ASCA), altering typing methods, like using touch-based typing, could lower success rates. Changing typing style, creating complex passwords, and avoiding predictable phrases also improve resistance to ASCAs

LCA Tejas Successfully Test-Fires Indigenous ASTRA

CONTEXT: Tejas LCA LSP-7 successfully fired indigenous ASTRA BVR missile off Goa coast, meeting objectives in a flawless test.

BACKGROUND: Tejas LCA successfully fires Astra BVR missile off Goa coast. The test met all objectives, demonstrating a flawless launch. Monitoring involved ADA, DRDO, HAL, CEMILAC, and DG-AQA officials.

LCA Tejas: A versatile 4.5 generation fighter jet, built for all-weather, multi-role capabilities, including offensive air support, close combat, and ground attacks. It's designed

for both Air Force and Navy roles, with single and twin-seater variants. The advanced LCA Mk1A features AESA Radar, EW suite, and more.

ASTRA Missile: An advanced BVR air-to-air missile, capable of targeting agile supersonic aerial threats. It's developed by DRDL, RCI, and DRDO labs. The successful Astra firing from Tejas promotes self-reliant India.



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CSAT





READING COMPREHENSION





Q1. Historically, the biggest challenge to world agriculture has been to achieve a balance between demand for and supply of food. At the level of individual countries, the demand-supply balance can be a critical issue for a closed economy, especially if it is a populous economy and its domestic agriculture is not growing sufficiently enough to ensure food supplies on an enduring basis; it is not so much and not always, of a constraint for an open, and growing economy, which has adequate exchange surpluses to buy food abroad. For the world as a whole, the Supply-demand balance is always an inescapable prerequisite for warding off hunger and starvation. However, global availability of adequate supply does not necessarily mean that food would automatically move from countries of surplus to deficit if the latter lacks purchasing power. The uneven distribution of Inoger, starvation, under or malnourishment, etc., at the world level thus owes itself to the presence of empty-pocket hungry mouths, overwhelmingly confined to the underdeveloped economies. Inasmuch as 'a two-square meal' is of elemental significance to basic human existence, the issue of the worldwide supply of food has been gaining significance in recent times, both because the quantum and the composition of demand have been undergoing big changes and because, in recent years, the capabilities individual countries to generate an uninterrupted chain of food supplies have come under strain. Food production, marketing and prices, especially price-affordability by the poor in the developing world, have become global issues that need global thinking and global solutions.

1. According to the above passage, which of the following are the fundamental solutions for the world food security problem?

- Setting up more agro-based industries
- Improving the price affordability by the poor
- Regulating the conditions of marketing
- Providing food subsidies to one and all

Select the correct answer using the code given below:"

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

2. According to the above passage, the biggest challenge to world agriculture is:"

- (a) to find sufficient land for agriculture and to expand food processing industries
- (b) to eradicate hunger in underdeveloped countries
- (c) to achieve a balance between the production of food and non-food items
- (d) to achieve a balance between demand for and supply of food

3. According to the above passage, which of the following helps/help in reducing hunger and starvation in developing economies?

- 1. Balancing demand and supply of food
- 2. Increasing imports of food
- 3. Increasing purchasing power of the poor
- 4. Changing the food consumption patterns and practices

Select the correct answer using the code given below:"

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

Q2. I must say that, beyond occasionally exposing me to laughter, my constitutional shyness has been of no disadvantage whatever. In fact, I can see that, on the contrary, it has been all to my advantage. My hesitancy in speech, which was once an annoyance, is now a pleasure. Its greatest benefit has been that it has taught me the economy of words. I have naturally formed the habit of restraining my thoughts. And I can now give myself the certificate that a thoughtless word hardly ever escapes my tongue or pen. I do not recollect ever having had to regret anything in my speech or writing. I have thus been spared many a mishap and waste of time. Experience has taught me that silence is part of the spiritual discipline of a votary of truth. Proneness to exaggerate, to suppress or modify the truth, wittingly or unwittingly, is a natural weakness of man, and silence is necessary in order to surmount it. A man of few words will rarely be thoughtless in his speech; he will measure every word. We find so many people impatient to talk. There is no chairman of a meeting who is not pestered with notes for permission to speak. And whenever permission is given, the speaker generally exceeds the time limit, asks for more time, and keeps on talking without permission. All this talking can hardly be said to be of any benefit to the world. It is so much a waste of time. My shyness has been, in reality, my shield and buckler. It has allowed me to grow. It has helped me in my discernment of truth.

1. The author says that a thoughtless word hardly ever escapes his tongue or pen. Which one of the following is not a valid reason for this?"

- (a) He has no intention to waste his time.
- (b) He believes in the economy of words.
- (c) He believes in restraining his thoughts.
- (d) He has hesitancy in his speech.

2. The most appropriate reason for the author to be spared many a mishap is that"

- (a) He hardly utters or writes a thoughtless word.
- (b) He is a man of immense patience.
- (c) He believes that he is a spiritual person.
- (d) He is a votary of truth.

Q3. Biomass as fuel for power, heat, and transport has the highest mitigation potential of all renewable sources. It comes from agriculture and forest residues as well as from energy crops. The biggest challenge in using biomass residues is a long-term reliable supply delivered to the power plant at reasonable costs; the key problems are logistical constraints and the costs of fuel collection. If not managed properly, energy crops compete with food production and may have undesirable impacts on food prices. Biomass production is also sensitive to the physical impacts of a changing climate.

Projections of the future role of biomass are probably overestimated, given the limits to the sustainable biomass supply, unless breakthrough technologies substantially increase productivity. Climate-energy models project that biomass use could increase nearly four-



fold to around 150 – 200 exajoules, almost a quarter of world primary energy in 2050. However, the maximum sustainable technical potential of biomass resources (both residues and energy crops) without disruption of food and forest resources ranges from 80 – 170 exajoules a year by 2050, and only part of this is realistically and economically feasible. In addition, some climate models rely on biomass-based carbon capture and storage, an unproven technology, to achieve negative emissions and to buy some time during the first half of the century.

Some liquid biofuels, such as corn-based ethanol, mainly for transport, may aggravate rather than ameliorate carbon emissions on a life-cycle basis. Second-generation biofuels, based on lignocellulosic feedstocks – such as straw, bagasse, grass and wood – hold the promise of sustainable production that is high-yielding and emit low levels of greenhouse gases, but these are still in the R&D stage.

1. What is/are the present constraint/constraints in using biomass as fuel for power generation?

1. Lack of sustainable supply of biomass
2. Biomass production competes with food production
3. Bio-energy may not always be low carbon on a life-cycle basis

Select the correct answer using the code given below:"

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

2. Which of the following can lead to food security problems?

1. Using agricultural and forest residues as feedstock for power generation
2. Using biomass for carbon capture and storage
3. Promoting the cultivation of energy crops

Select the correct answer using the code given below:"

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only

3. In the context of using biomass, which of the following is/are the characteristic/characteristics of the sustainable production of biofuel?

1. Biomass as a fuel for power generation could meet all the primary energy requirements of the world by 2050
2. Biomass as a fuel for power generation does not necessarily disrupt food and forest resources.
3. Biomass as a fuel for power generation could help in achieving negative emissions, given certain nascent technologies.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:"

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Q4. Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been a hot topic in recent years, with its potential to revolutionise various industries. While AI promises greater efficiency, improved decision-making, and convenience, it also raises concerns about its impact on the job market. AI technologies, such as machine learning and robotics, have already started to automate tasks that were once performed by humans. For example, in manufacturing, robots can assemble products with precision and consistency, reducing the need for manual labour. Chatbots can handle routine inquiries and problem-solving tasks in customer service, reducing the demand for human customer support agents.

The automation of tasks through AI can lead to workforce displacement, especially in industries where repetitive tasks dominate. It's estimated that millions of jobs may be at risk of automation in the coming years. However, the impact of AI on employment is not solely negative. It also creates new opportunities and job roles. One of the key reasons AI is transformative is its ability to analyze large datasets quickly and accurately. This capability has given rise to data science and analytics jobs, as organizations require professionals who can extract insights and make data-driven decisions. Additionally, AI has opened up new career paths in fields such as machine learning engineering, AI ethics, and AI safety.

The rise of AI has led to a shift in job skills. Soft skills like creativity, emotional intelligence, and problem-solving are becoming more valuable. While AI can perform repetitive tasks efficiently, it often struggles with tasks that require creativity and empathy, such as art, therapy, and counselling. Therefore, jobs that involve these skills are less susceptible to automation. Furthermore, AI has the potential to augment human capabilities rather than replace them. In healthcare, AI can assist doctors in diagnosing diseases more accurately and quickly. In education, AI can provide personalized learning experiences for students. These examples illustrate how AI can enhance human productivity and improve outcomes in various fields.

In conclusion, while AI does pose challenges to the job market by automating certain tasks, it also creates new opportunities and emphasizes the importance of certain skills. The future of work will likely involve a collaboration between humans and AI, with each complementing the other's strengths and weaknesses.

Of course, here are the questions rephrased to align more closely with the CSAT (Civil Services Aptitude Test) style:

1: Which of the following is mentioned as a potential positive consequence of AI on employment?

- A) A surge in demand for routine tasks.
- B) The elimination of millions of job positions.
- C) The emergence of roles in data science and analytics.
- D) A decrease in the significance of soft skills.

2: According to the passage, what category of skills is becoming increasingly valuable due to AI?

- A) Technical competencies such as programming.
- B) Skills related to routine tasks.
- C) Soft skills encompassing creativity and problem-solving.
- D) Physical abilities like manual labor.

3: In terms of jobs that require creativity and empathy, what is suggested by the passage?

- A) AI can efficiently perform these roles.
- B) Such professions face a high risk of automation.



- C) AI has no influence on jobs demanding creativity and empathy.
- D) Jobs associated with creativity and empathy are less prone to automation.

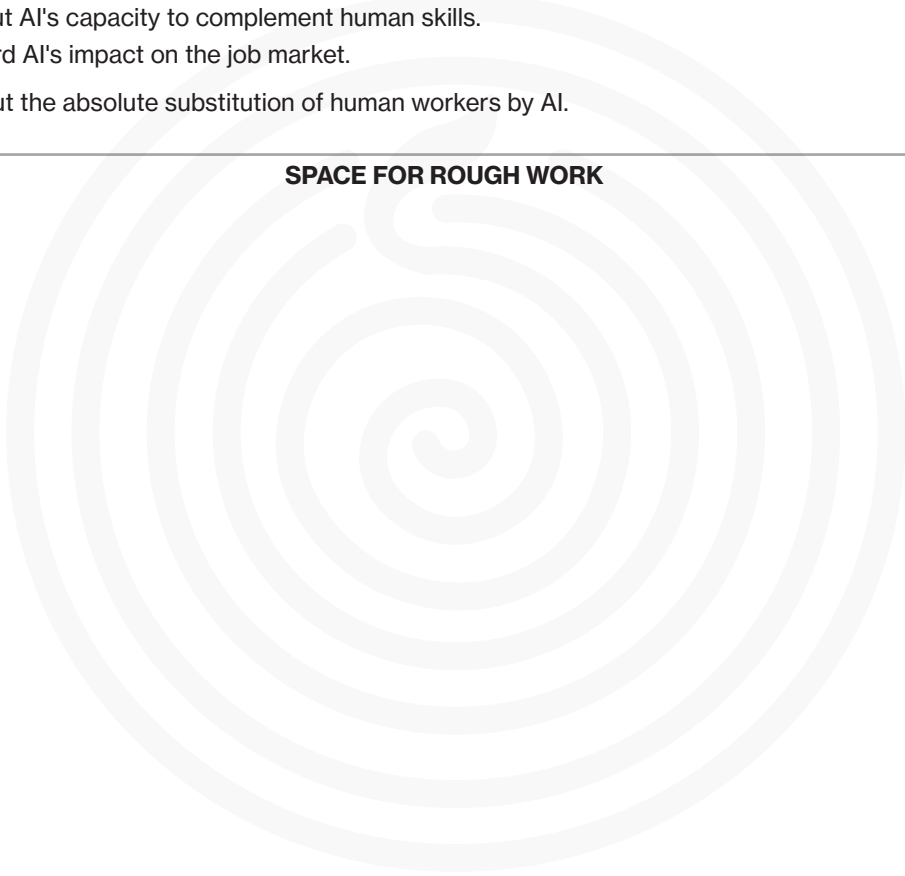
Question 4: What is the central message conveyed in the passage?

- A) AI is on the verge of replacing all human jobs.
- B) AI primarily poses a threat to employment.
- C) AI has both positive and negative repercussions on employment.
- D) The future of work will remain untouched by AI.

5: What is the passage's stance regarding AI's role in the job market?

- A) Optimistic about AI's potential to create fresh job opportunities.
- B) Pessimistic about AI's capacity to complement human skills.
- C) Indifferent toward AI's impact on the job market.
- D) Concerned about the absolute substitution of human workers by AI.

SPACE FOR ROUGH WORK





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ETHICS



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JOURNALISTIC ACCOUNTABILITY



JOURNALISTIC ACCOUNTABILITY

INTRODUCTION

Society works on the basis of many interactions, between individuals, groups, and systems alike. In order to properly manage social life, governments exist and mediate the needs of the many with their availability. People need company, so society has a concept of friends, lovers, and married couples, all of which pertain to their specific set of expectations and interactions. Similarly, a number of people united under a single task in order to make a profit can be called a business. Businesses exist in order to fill a niche, a need from the public that is possible to fulfill only through joined acts of labor. Companies interact with each other, the government, and consumers on the market. However, there is also one connection that businesses take especially seriously, one that has the ability to affect all others – the relationship with media. News media and journalism as its facet play a vital role in the lives of businesses. While journalism cannot be called an irreplaceable part of business operation, it is certainly a large factor in corporate success and failure. The specific relationship between journalists and business entities is complex. Different phases can be identified within the relationship between the two, each leading to a different perception of both entities by the public. Through investigation of multiple sources, it is possible to see a rough outline of the relationship between the subject from the 20th century to the present.

In the 20th century, independent journalism was largely used to promote corporate skepticism, shaping the reputations of many organizations in the eyes of the public. With the advancement in technology and an increase in business's influence, however, many journalistic outlets began to more closely cooperate with companies, which in many cases skewed their reporting to the side of corporations. In more recent years, the tides began to shift once again, with journalism struggling to stay afloat in the age of digital information. The use of outrage culture and scandal, nowadays, gives investigative journalism the necessary attention, while once again portraying businesses in a bad or misinformed light. There are many other potential criticisms companies can weigh on the media industry, many of which have to do with their investigative techniques and reporting quality. Over the course of this paper, a more thorough investigation into the aforementioned historical trends will be performed. As a result, it will be possible to better understand the present realities of business-journalism relations. The present thesis is that the journalism media of today has deteriorated significantly compared to past decades, straying from its social and professional responsibilities. News media of the modern world lacks critical assessment tools, education, and financial backing to perform an in-depth analysis of business trends.

HOW JOURNALISM INTERACTS WITH SOCIETY

Journalism, and news media, plays are an important part of society. Through effective journalism, people are able to learn about current events, form opinions about different facets of life and more thoroughly understand the world around them. More than just a tool to relay information, it is a lens through which the public perception is formed. Framing, narrative storytelling and focus of the news shape the understanding of the majority, including their stances on important events or potential changes. Investigative journalism, as a niche of the bigger whole, strives to provide deeper coverage of specific topics, ranging from government affairs and politics to local affairs. Working to unearth new information, this approach allows journalists

to formulate new knowledge from existing sources. In addition, the news entity is capable of making people know more about a multitude of things, expanding the range of opportunities for a single individual. Information makes it easier to make choices, live a more connected and fulfilled life. Journalism fulfills society's need for a group-wide increase of knowledge. Different types of journalism teach their clients to read and learn. In particular, however, a large portion of investigative journalism covers business-related news. Discussions of emergent companies, new deals, and policies, ethical considerations, and international relations between organizations – all of these topics and more get covered by the news.

HISTORY OF RELATIONS BETWEEN BUSINESS AND NEWS MEDIA REPORTING

Journalism, at its core, is a system designed to deliver information. People gather, sort, and analyze various sources of data in order to present a clear narrative to others, one that can help them better understand the world. Freedom of the press has been among the central concepts in the US, encouraging news outlets to spread truthful and diverse information to the people. Through good reporting, it is possible for common individuals to feel more connected to the global sea of information, as well as make their own impact on the world. Investigative journalism, then, stands at the center of such concerns, delving deeply into its subjects in order to make them easier to digest.

Journalism, as a social concept, can be widely used to keep systems of power in check. Both government and large organizations work primarily for the people, and the people can exert influence on them through public channels. When information is widely available to the public regarding a social structure or business, they gain the ability to either support or change that structure. In the capitalist society of the US, journalism acts as a tool of skepticism, a way for individuals to understand complex business entities and subsequently control them. Therefore, news media is able to keep business in check, by mediating public opinion and subjecting businesses to scrutiny. In the 1970s and onwards, journalism largely served this goal, decreasing the degree of public confidence in business (Dreier, 1982). The priming of businesses' potential consumers against them is what sparked the long-standing antagonism towards investigative journalism. News performed the role of watchdogs, speaking out against many activities performed by corporations (Miller, 2004). This often included investigations of shady business tactics, raising public awareness, and even providing the public with certain safeguards against fraud.

ACCOUNTABILITY, PROBLEMS, AND EVENTUAL DECLINE

However, certain problems were present from the start of the rocky relationship between the two. In particular, a major criticism that can be made towards journalism both from the side of businesses and consumers is the lack of thorough investigation. In their role as watchdogs, journalists often did not properly understand the subjects they were covering, lacking the necessary depth and insight. This trend meant severe consequences for both businesses and regular people. In many cases, shallow reporting could lead to a mischaracterization of a company, while in others, it leads to major problems being unaddressed. A prime example of this trend was the 2008 financial crash (Starkman, 2014). It is presently



known that many investigators stood at the center of an upcoming storm without realizing the scope of the problem, many of which then shifted the responsibility away from themselves (Usher, 2012). As a result, the banking firms and other companies that managed to profit off of the market crash remained afloat, while the public had to suffer the dire consequences of the event. Similarly, the passage of time deteriorated the mechanisms that kept companies in check, making many journalist sources simple accessories to existing corporations. A lack of insightful investigation and the much-needed passion for truth transformed news media from watchdogs to lapdogs. In many cases, poor reporting leads to lesser accountability, which, in turn, meant fewer changes for the better in the business sphere (Bednar, 2012). This problem escalated further, leading to the appearance of badly-researched news articles that relied on propagandistic sources and direct connections to businesses (St. John, 2010). The initial goal of news reporting was sullied, and presented narratives slowly started changing for the worse.

FORMATION OF OUTRAGE CULTURE

With the prominence of social media and other digital platforms, the situation did not change significantly. Attentive journalism of the past was largely replaced by more sloppy reporting, only exacerbated by the slow decline of news as a form of popular media (Carson, 2014). A lack of popularity or financing directly contributed to the deterioration of the medium. Journalism slowly began to focus less on informing people and enacting social change, and more on eliciting strong reactions from its viewers. In particular, a strong focus was made on making people dissatisfied, as anger often elicits the most engagement. The outrage culture, formed by strong competition and a need to grab readers' attention in a global environment, soon took hold (Crockett, 2017). Born from the desire of journalist sources to stay relevant were articles designed to make people upset. Big companies, that grew even more powerful and prominent over time, then became one of the prime targets for news outlets. Stories that sell best are those that get big ratings, while the quality and truthfulness of the material come second (Nemeth, 2021). Much like the previous trend in journalism, this shift brought considerable problems to both consumers and companies. Without the incentive or time to thoroughly research specific topics investigative journalism as a whole mostly attempts to paint businesses, in a bad light, affecting public perception and stakeholder actions.

A DEEPER LOOK AT THE FINANCIAL CRASH

While the topic has already been covered in brief in other sections, a full overview of the journalism's history with the financial crash is important to example. Using this event as a case study provides an opportunity to see how media's involvement interacts with social events, and how journalism can be used in a real world scenario. The financial crash, in many ways, worked to showcase the biggest flaws of the news industry, as well as its continual degradation over the years. By investigating this event, it is possible to more thoroughly understand the implications journalistic malpractice has on society. Furthermore, the many problems showcased during this discussion can serve as a blueprint for future change in the journalistic sphere.

FORESEEING THE COLLAPSE

One of the defining factors in the devastation of the 2008 financial crash was its unexpected nature. The housing boom preceding the period gave many

people opportunities and a false sense of security, while the banking industry used the contemporary economic climate for profit. According to most sources, there were certain signs of an upcoming economic collapse, which, however, were not widely understood. Some political and economic figures raised concerns, but most of them were not properly heard by the public. In particular, banks were often among the organizations that understood the implications of the emerging housing bubble, but did not actively seek to change the outcome. Journalists covered the housing bubble and the increase in cheap mortgages but also failed to fully example the connections between the two. While the fault cannot be solely put on journalists, it is important to hold them accountable for failing to alert the public. Many authors highlight journalism's inability to perform its main role during the financial crash. As outlined by Starkman (2014), the capacity of the print media to act as a watchdog decreased over the years, culminating in a total professional lack of interest in the subject of the housing market problems. Gold (2018) highlights, however, that the issue was multi-faceted and included a failure of many organizations at the same time, not only journalism. Important consideration that this author also touches on is the lack of research. In most cases, journalists were not incentivized or required to "dig deeper" into a subject, leading to surface level reporting and a lack of critical investigation. In the 2008 financial crash, it was necessary to grasp the whole picture of the events to properly discuss them, something that many reporters simply did not have time to attempt. This tendency is further supported by writers like Sethi (1977), who highlights journalism's frequent inability to represent economic complexity in full. An existing trait of news media reporting was directly responsible for the lack of coverage for the 2008 financial crash. Most existing research on the subject, however, does not pin the blame on specific journalists, or news outlets. Instead, this is seen as a systematic failure on the journalism sphere as a whole, and a consequence of the profession's continual decline. With the reduction in funding, considerable staff layoffs, it was difficult for news outlets to fulfill their responsibilities to the public (Starkman, 2014). From the early 2000s, the financial decline of news media became endemic to its most egregious failures.

JOURNALISM AND LEGISLATION

Following the financial collapse, the government found it necessary to change its policies in order to mitigate the effects of disaster and prevent any similar events in the future. One of the most widely covered issues, then, was the bank bailout proposed by the government. Seen as a necessary but unwanted solution, it has introduced much controversy into the public discourse. The media at the time, including journalists, were trying to make sense of the financial crash, and the potential effectiveness of the bailout bill. Examining articles from that time period makes it clear that many reporters were unable to take a hard stance on the subject, or evaluate which of the potentially proposed measures would be beneficial to the economy (Norris, 2008). Similarly, many stories only included the surface-level telling of events, unable to delve deeper into the potential solutions. At the same time, the government was also considering other control measures to change the market for the better. This included stricter business regulation, and more government involvement in market affairs. But not every group favored this change, with both companies and entrepreneurs struggling to find a way of avoiding mistakes of the past. Having to work in a social climate ravaged by an economic disaster, investigative journalists actively covered most news on the subject, including potential policy changes. What is important to note,



however, is that most journalist sources were extremely critical and resistant to legislation aimed at changing the economy. The opposition to regulatory reform could be seen in media framing, as well as the main focus of the post-crash news coverage. According to Adam Cox (2022), most news articles at the time focused on the monetary cost of changing regulations, instead of their potential value as a solution to the crisis. In their position towards the event, print media stood largely to uphold the status quo, pushing for a liberal market approach. In addition, the criticism levied at the news media after the economic crash has brought significant unrest into the sphere, with many publications dedicating their time to either taking or dodging responsibility. Discussions centered on journalism's involvement into the financial collapse both worked to weaken the public's trust in the medium, and took attention away from other considerations.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR CHANGE

In order to improve the currently existing relationship between journalism and business, and stabilize the role of the former in the social sphere, many changes are needed. Throughout the years, the field of news reporting and research has improved its methods significantly, however, it has also grown out of favor compared to other news sources. The combination of medium obsolescence and other problems leads to the degradation of journalism quality. Despite the changing attitudes around investigative journalism, it still remains an important facet of society, being in need of significant change. In addition, the business sphere also requires a more thorough analysis. The below paragraphs will detail some of the possible directions and opportunities for improvement, while also providing justifications for them.

A GLOBAL ENVIRONMENT

Globalization and the emergence of international trade as an important facet of business have affected the news industry. With the appearance of a large network of other news sources, competition increased and public access to information increased tenfold. The trend brought on by globalization can be seen as both a positive and a negative for journalism. The development of international relationship channels gave journalism a bigger potential audience, and a bigger public platform to work with. However, it also increased the number of competitors on the market. With the need to retain and gain news supporters, journalism was forced to focus on appealing news topics and eye-catching discussions. Government support and protection for local news sources may be a suitable way to help news organizations face the competition without compromising the quality of their reporting.

In regards to business, globalization also brought about significant change in the field. Competition, and a rising need for continual profit increase, combined with the desire for constant expansion, oftentimes drive the businesses of today. Stakeholders and investors put their money into businesses hoping to make large profits, while organizations work on their public relations in order to attract new audiences. In this highly capitalist environment, businesses lack the incentive to work in an ethically or environmentally conscious way. With the focus on continuous short-term gain, the relationship between corporations and journalism becomes more antagonistic. Bad reporting leads to changes in customer perception, which is a large contributing factor toward future profits. The investigative and scrutinizing nature of high-quality

reporting, on the other hand, has the potential to show businesses in a bad light, driving down sales. As a result, both good and bad investigative journalism is largely seen negatively by global businesses.

JOURNALIST EDUCATION

As mentioned previously, journalists working in the field are both poorly trained and ill-equipped to work with businesses. Understanding of finance, customer-company relations, or possible intricacies of corporate decision-making is insufficient, leading to surface-level evaluations and untruthful reporting. It is necessary to change investigative journalist education for the better, in order to better equip future professionals for their work. Through better education, it will be possible to improve the relationship between the two entities and also guarantee better reporting. In addition, it may be necessary to reinforce the role of investigative journalists as mediators between people and businesses, and structures of outside control. The role of written news media as a limiting mechanism and a tool of public scrutiny for business needs to be more prominent.

MORE THOROUGH INVESTIGATION

One of the vital problems uncovered through discussion is the inability of news media to properly give attention to the intricacies of business, or the emergent problems of the industry. The problem diminishes the capacity of journalism to act as a tool for the public, while also tarnishing the reputation of companies. In order to combat this problem, better education of journalists in the field of business discussion, and analytics is necessary. Furthermore, it may be required to change the financial incentive structure toward paying news resources more consistently. A number of quality-related problems stem from a lack of funding and attention, therefore better financing of news may be conducive to change.

TRANSPARENCY OF NEWS MEDIA AND BUSINESS

Another possible avenue to change is the promotion of transparency. Many news companies in the modern age have additional incentives, stemming from political or business connections, affecting the way their writing reflects the world. Requiring more transparency about journalistic sources of income, or any potential vested interests can be conducive to encouraging better journalism. In particular, this action would give the public the necessary power to support independent or impactful journalism, distinguishing corporate propaganda from real news. In addition, such an action would incentivize change within news media itself, which would seek to adjust itself according to social expectations. Transparency can also make some of the other emergent problems clearer, and make it easier to enact the necessary change.

For businesses and corporate organizations, transparency is a necessary improvement as well. Presently, many companies do not perform their business operations clearly, with monetary flows being unclear and internal operations purposely obfuscated. This tendency makes it difficult to promote social accountability, detect fraud, enact corporate change, and conduct investigations. As a whole, the lack of transparency in business is detrimental to both organizations and the public, being in large part responsible for the harm done to society. It is necessary to use all possible tools to ensure better accountability and clarity for companies.



FINANCIAL INCENTIVE STRUCTURE

As discussed previously, modern news media often find it difficult to stay afloat, support its staff, getting the necessary outreach and audience. Monetary compensation should be made better for journalists. A balance between good financing and news integrity is necessary, and there are different potential structures for change. Structural changes in financial support for the media, or better systems of information delivery are necessary to improve the quality of investigative journalism. There are a number of potential pathways towards improving news quality – reducing news outlet scope, using pay-to-access structures for audiences, gathering public donations, and other types of charity. Investigative journalism could focus more on local issues, with news media putting emphasis on reporting quality, good wages, and support for their employees. Alternatively, it is possible to create a system of social support for certain media outlets, providing them additional funding or opportunities for work. It is currently unclear which method of gathering funds is most conducive to the necessary change, and more research is needed on the subject.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that the relationship

between business and journalism is especially complicated. Due to a long period of ideological clashes between the two entities, it is difficult for many companies to regard news media highly. In addition, the current news systems display a number of serious problems that require attention. Firstly, the journalists of today are ill-equipped towards keeping companies in check through honest reporting. A lack of financial support and lackluster investigative practices lead to surface-level discussion and systematic misunderstanding of the field. By failing to do proper research, journalists also do not fulfill their socially-assigned role. In addition, the work of news media sources contributes to the potential misrepresentation of companies within the public eye, affecting public relations and sales (Sethi, 1977). The lack of nuance in discussing business issues puts companies and investors under pressure when they are being covered by journalistic sources. Lastly, the present focus of journalism on causing outrage has been especially destructive towards relations between the two entities. The need for public attention forces investigators to cover topics that can create a strong reaction, or represent data in a way that is primed toward certain outcomes. As a result, the people do not get a more balanced view of the issues covered. A focus on negative reaction and engagement also leads to direct issues for company public relations.

SPACE FOR ROUGH WORK

TOPICS OF THE MONTH



**CRONY CAPITALISM – A THREAT TO
DEMOCRACY**

- DR. Alexander Jacob IPS

**EDUCATION IS A PROGRESSIVE
DISCOVERY OF OUR OWN IGNORANCE.
– WILL DURANT**

-DR. Babu Sebastian

**PREPAREDNESS OF OUR SOCIETY FOR
INDIA'S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP ROLE**

-DR. G. Prasanna Kumar

**GEOGRAPHY MAY REMAIN THE SAME;
HISTORY NEED NOT**

**THE RISE OF ASIA AND THE DECLINE OF
AMERICA – ANALYSE.**

-Mr.Solomon John



A ROOM WITHOUT BOOKS IS LIKE A BODY WITHOUT A SOUL - CICERO

Man is a social animal. He needs friends for company and to enrich his life. Still, if a person has books in his room, then he can delve into a world of knowledge entirely on his own. He need not be dependent upon any physical person to spend his time with. Rather, what is written in the books make him aware, keep him busy and give meaning to his life. Infact, a good book may rivet his attention so much, that he may actually prefer reading it than doing other activities for which he may need to depend on his friends! So, books become his close friends- the ones from where he gains knowledge and enriches his life. No wonder it is often very rightly said- "Books are a man's best friends"!

Books have been written since centuries. Every culture in the world has diverse things to be written about and stored for generations ahead. Books capture not just history, geography, politics, culture, science, technology and various subject matter. They also imbibe the essence of life in them by encompassing human emotions, inspiration, motivation, ethics, philosophy and touch the deepest parts of our soul by stirring our emotions. We start thinking in new dimensions or start feeling strongly about issues by reading the right books. Indeed, if our bodies need physical food to survive day after day, our souls need enlightenment, knowledge and the right 'food for thought' to live a fulfilling life.

Maslow's Need-Hierarchy theory talks about fulfilling our basic physiological needs (food, housing, clothes, sex etc.) first. Then we go for fulfilling higher needs like respectability in society and self-actualisation. To climb up this hierarchical ladder successfully, books hold the key as they open the floodgates of possibilities in life. No doubt hard work, practical knowledge and experience play a pivotal role in shaping our life journey. Yet, a well-read person is always wiser and holds the edge compared to vast swathes of people who have not read much. Such a person learns from historical mistakes, from mistakes of others, from other people's inspirational life stories and goes on to not commit such mistakes in his own life, to carve a successful path from the start or to get inspired and achieve greater things in life.

Novels, self-help books, mythologies, biographies, comics, classics, subject books, magazines, journals- each of these enrich people reading them, make them better informed and better assets for growth of economy, society and humanity as a whole. Without books, the world would indeed be in the 'Dark Ages'- for, the light of knowledge would not spread across humanity to improve every human's life. Humanity would not have crossed from the Agricultural Revolution to the Industrial, Medical and Information Revolutions. Even now, there are several tribes in the world which remain isolated and un-exposed to the improvements in the world e.g. primitive tribal groups like Jarawas, Kondhs etc. in India; Bedouins, Eskimos, Pygmies etc. around the world. Lately, medicine and some other modern things/ facilities may have reached them, yet till education reaches them they would be limited within their shells. 'Human Development Index' of countries thus have literacy level as a major component, apart from per capita income and life expectancy in years. Having dwelled upon the importance of books in shaping aware, intelligent, broad-minded, empathetic citizens of the world, it is also necessary to

consider the accessibility of books to all so that all people can equally gain knowledge and develop themselves to their full potential. In this light, vulnerable groups in society such as persons with disabilities, economically weaker sections, educationally and socially backward people etc. must be given special importance. International efforts in this direction such as Marrakesh Agreement are praiseworthy. According to it, member countries can freely get access to books printed in Braille for benefit of blind people, can translate it to local languages and spread such books across borders by joining hands with NGOs working in the field. India has become the first country to ratify it. When nineteen other countries ratify it, then this treaty will become operational and open doors to a world of knowledge for millions of visually impaired people across the world. Also, Government of India is implementing several schemes for building a knowledge society in India such as National Libraries Mission, National Archives Mission, Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (primary education for children between age six to fourteen), National Literacy Mission, Adult education schemes and so on. The aim remains to give basic reading and writing skills, so that people can then use state libraries, internet and so on to get access to more books, e-books and information. The curious mind knows no limits. Once the mind is ignited, it can go on to achieve wonders. Only an initiation to books fuels children in remotest schools to read more and achieve more in life.

Also, as there is no age limit to the gaining of knowledge, many people keep reading books throughout their lives. Age is but a number. A man will finally be judged on the basis of his knowledge, skill, values and ethics- all of which can be continuously improved by reading more and more worthy books. Like a jeweller polishes his diamonds, a person can polish his personality by reading good books. In several cultures, knowledge is held as the top-most priority in life. So also in India, a person's collection of books and his understanding of diverse topics shows him to be an erudite individual of society. Often homes in India have cupboards, shelves and libraries full of books- which have been passed on since generations. Books have been carefully preserved so that future generations can also enrich themselves. When guests visit others' homes, they form an immediate impression about the host based on his collection of books which acts like a signature of his personality.

However, one must also realise that only bookish knowledge will not shape his personality in the best way. He must also be outgoing in life to build a balanced personality by socializing with people, exercising enough for good health and building lasting relationships with family and friends. Books must act not as the centre-stage of life, but as the enabler of a balanced, fulfilling and value-based life. Therefore, an individual must have enough good books which can help him become knowledgeable, form balanced opinions and inculcate good values in life like honesty, integrity, discipline, empathy, humility, never-say-die attitude and so on, in his living space. This will not only help achieve national goals of high GDP growth and socio-economic prosperity of the country, but also help the individual reach the higher personal objectives of realization of the meaning of life and power of the soul, self-actualisation and fullest possible progress of the individual. Through such realization, man can channelize his endless energy for the maximum progress of mankind.



LIVE AS IF YOU WERE TO DIE TOMORROW. LEARN AS IF YOU WERE TO LIVE FOREVER - MAHATMA GANDHI

A basic philosophical question asked by the mankind every now and then is "What is the meaning of life". Looking at this question through the prism of this brilliant quote by Mahatma Gandhi, one can safely say that life just doesn't mean not dead. Life is meant to be lived to the fullest and learn and continuing to learn every day. Simply put, how would one use his energy if he was to die the next day. At the same time this quote warns us about the small things which we ignore in our lives while focusing on bigger and long term goals. But what worth are these goals if there is no tomorrow. As for learning, one can never be complacent with his knowledge if he has to spend an eternity in this universe and this knowledge should be ready to be used whenever the situation demanded, no matter how late such situation comes.

Gandhiji's life is in itself a manifestation of this thought. He had always been an inquisitive learner all through his life. His propensity to self-learning helped him at numerous junctures of his life. With his knowledge of Ayurveda, which he had gained just from books, he was able to cure his ailing son who was on his deathbed. His self-learning and experiments in vegetarianism helped him discover many useful aspects about human body which helped him lead a healthy life even in his old age. His knowledge of Satyagraha, which he used in South Africa, was immensely useful in the struggle for freedom in India. All this had only been possible because the Mahatma never limited himself in learning, and whatever he learnt, he learnt it with an enthusiastic and inquisitive temperament as if his sole motive of learning was to use the knowledge in the future.

Living life, according to what he has tried to convey through his quote, is to do what you have always felt an urge to do and which contributes to the society or to self in a constructive manner. One can't argue with the fact that he dedicated his life to this goal. He made it his life's aim to fight for a better life for his fellow humans, and put his everything into it. Besides, there has also been an instance in his life when he regretted the unexpected death of his father, who had been consistently ill for days. The thought of not being able to be on his side at the time of his death didn't leave him for many days. This excerpt from his life suggests that death is the natural course, but one should always be on his toes for its arrival, so as to avoid any regrets.

Living life to the fullest is always something which we hear from our well-wishers, but what does it actually mean? It means doing what you have always felt a strong passion for. In other words, something you would do if there was no concept of earning money. Something you dreamt to do when you were a kid, but eventually gave up on it as the complications in life grew. Doing what you desire and that too with utmost zeal and vigor constitutes real living, which also has an effective role in advancement of society as a whole. At the same time this quote also provokes a fear of missing something out of a sudden death which we considered relatively insignificant compared to our long term plans. How many instances have been there when the sudden death of a close friend leaves us wondering if we could have shared one last moment together? Gandhiji has just tried to remind us that the things in our life which give us happiness are the ones which we feel the propensity to ignore the most and its best to acknowledge them than regret. Death can't be prevented, but one sure can be ready for it. As been quoted by Ms Rowling in her famous

"Harry Potter" series, "the last enemy to be destroyed is death". Defeating death simply means taking care of all your obligations before going for the final slumber with satisfaction. With many lives dependent on a person within the family system and numerous other moral obligations in life, one can't imagine but with horror and regret of the repercussions of his sudden death for his family members and close ones. Here too, this quote acts a reminder to be ready for the future for no one knows what it has in store.

Learning is a natural prerequisite for living the life to fullest as advocated by Mahatma Gandhi, for how can one work even what he loves if doesn't have any will to learn and gain knowledge in that field. He had always stressed that learning as a part of life should never stop. A person who stops learning is as good as dead. Here, learning doesn't mean just the learning through academics but the whole experience he gains in his life. The quote focuses on the fact that there is no limit to knowledge and neither should we try to limit our learning. In fact, learning is the prerequisite of civilization. The living forever here can be just thought as a symbolism for the eternal life of mankind which is going to use the knowledge gained by each and every stage or generation of mankind. Hence, learning at every stage has to be exhaustive and comprehensive so that mankind can utilize it as it moves along its eternal path. Copernicus's theory of earth's revolution around the sun provided a base for the further space studies. Isaac Newton's work was used by Einstein to carry it further. If we are going to live forever, no knowledge can be enough. It should also be noted that learning just for the sake of a duty to learn is of no use unless you take the knowledge to your heart, or how can you think of using it and a knowledge or experience which can't be used is as good as wasted. In today's situation, there is a great need to give a thought to this quote.

In the world today with increased competition in every field and a busy life for everyone, one hardly seems to be living life as if he might drop dead the next day. Concern for the future has been increasingly making the present miserable. While in schools, we are concerned about the right college to go to. While in College, the right job keeps boggling our mind and when in job, people are having sleepless nights over the right retirement plans. The whole life passes away and the dream to go for an adventure trip or sing in a karaoke just remains dream. Among all these rats in the rat race, there are people who do dare to "live" their life and follow their dream whether it be to be an artist, photographer or cook, but their proportion in the population is minimal. Another aspect is the effect this rat race has on our relationships. It is not uncommon today to have disturbances within families and loved ones. With increasing work pressure, one hardly gets enough time to spend with his loved ones. Gandhi ji, in his autobiography, has clearly talked about the burden one is left with after missing the chance to spend one last moment with his loved one before his death, by giving the excerpt about his father's death.

The learning of mankind, though been increasing since many years, has increasingly been getting materialistic. Education system today lacks the quality to make students "learn". There is more focus on academic learning rather than learning by observation, which formed the base of gaining knowledge by mankind in the stone age. The knowledge people get today might help them in getting a career but it won't help them if they were to live an eternal



life, or to take the mankind on its eternal path, for eternal life demands the knowledge of the art of learning rather than just learning. The reason that civilization reached this far is because of the observational self-learning by great scholars of the past and not due to the lessons given to them in schools. In this context, there can't be a better example than that of Isaac Newton and the fortunate apple which shaped the physics studies for today.

While learning from Bapu's quote, a misunderstanding is highly likely. One might think of this quote as advocating pure materialistic pleasure, when it talks about "living life" every day. While materialism is innocuous up to a limit and this quote does advocate it to an extent, this quote doesn't completely focus on that in context of living life. It focuses more on living a meaningful life which contributes to the society and the self in a healthy manner using one's full potential. And that can only be achieved through gaining knowledge and learning, which is the other objective of life as specified by Gandhi ji. A greater dive than required into materialism can distract one from the objective of gaining knowledge which would eventually lead to his downfall. Even while gaining more and more knowledge, care has to be taken of not becoming the jack of all trades and master of none. A little knowledge of everything can only prove detrimental, while at the same time, it's not going to contribute anything to the advancement of the mankind in any manner.

Gandhi's quotations do have a certain aesthetic quality. Almost everyone has heard of this quote, which may seem dated. Even though this was spoken years ago, the effect of it still fascinates me. Since words may affect how others feel as well as how we feel, that is after all what they are for, right? we will talk about the meaning of both parts of this quote – live as if you were to die tomorrow. Understanding our limitations, worry about the future, and fears about the past are the main topics of this part of the quote. The following part, which is titled "Learning as if You Were Going to Live Forever," discusses humility, acknowledging our biases, and always improving in order to make the world a better place.

We just have the moment at hand, and we only know it to be true. The past is a narrative, and tomorrow holds forth a bright promise. But we can fully experience each minute of every day. We occasionally fail to notice what is directly in front of us. Perhaps we compare ourselves to others to achieve this. Or we could be mired in a cycle of hope, disillusionment, or jealousy. The quotation urges us to consider what we already have. It is about appreciating the present moment and making the most of each day, minute, and second.

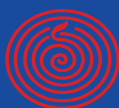
Worry is like a rocking chair; it has no use. However, it has the power to weave a gripping story

and push us to consider issues that are occasionally insignificant. When worry keeps us from taking the actions we know to be required, it becomes strong. Similar to how our failings in the past might make us regret and second-guess appreciating the present. They may prevent us from completely appreciating our accomplishments or engrossing ourselves in the present. They might sometimes give us the impression that we shouldn't be too joyful since things could always go wrong.

The fear of judgement is the final topic I want to discuss on what it means to live as if you were going to die tomorrow. The guts to try something new is necessary. Change forces us to think beyond the box, thus it is only logical that anxiety would accompany it. However, the anxiety just serves as a warning about potential negative outcomes. though we were to live as though we were going to die tomorrow, would our thoughts change? Can that change the way we think and give us greater courage? There is no doubt that it is something to consider. This quote's second part nearly has the opposite effect of "live as if you were going to die tomorrow" in my opinion. However, it causes us to reflect on a crucial theme: development and ongoing improvement. Perfectionism might be overvalued at times. Even though we will never be perfect, we can constantly work to get better. It encourages us to consider humility and to quickly doubt our arrogance.

Our education never stops. In our world, there are countless things to learn. The world is continuously changing due to people, discoveries, and scientific advances, which is what makes it so beautiful. We must preserve students' natural curiosity since it is a beautiful emotion. We are motivated to study in order to improve the quality of our lives by the learning as if we were immortal philosophy. We are all biased by nature. Our education, culture, knowledge, religion, etc., might have a role in some of it. Consider that we are a by-product of our surroundings. Sometimes we pick up the incorrect things as we mature. We might sometimes be more open-minded and sceptical of our own convictions when we adopt a learning mind-set. The sensation of continuing to learn and improve is wonderful. Perhaps we owe it to ourselves to continue developing so that we can improve the quality of life in the globe.

In conclusion, it would be sufficing to say that a meaningful life is characterized by full potential of one's capability to contribute towards the society or self in a constructive manner, which has to be achieved by a continuous learning and gaining knowledge while taking care of your personal obligations at the same time. This can't be proved better than Gandhi ji's own life. These short term objectives of man provide the canvas for painting the story of mankind, for this is the only way mankind can keep learning because mankind has to live forever.



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BE YOURSELF; EVERYONE ELSE IS ALREADY TAKEN. - OSCAR WILDE

The quote captures aptly the importance of individuality. It candidly conveys a very strong reason for being oneself. One should strive to be oneself- for this is the way God intended it to be. There is no second choice. But what does it mean to -be oneself? It means following one's heart, saying out loud what one believes in, following one's own ambition, and so on. One can excel in life only by realizing one's desires, talents, likes and dislikes, personality and above all values. And only then can societies and nations prosper.

Why is it that we increasingly find it difficult to realize the importance of individuality? Why is it that certain societal institutions try to impose their views on people contrary to this ideal? How has this trend impacted the developmental course? In this essay we explore these questions. We would begin by understanding the importance of being oneself. We would then examine in what ways people are moving away from the individuality ideal followed by analysis of reasons responsible for this trend. In the subsequent sections we would see how this is impacting nations and the world at large. We would conclude this by suggesting how this trend can be reversed.

To begin with, let's explore how children are discouraged from pursuing their interests and the impact of this trend. When a child is asked what she / he wants to become in life, one gets a myriad of answers ranging from dancer to singer, from engineer to doctor, from sportsperson to soldier, from architect to pilot and so on. But by the time he has to choose a degree course he finds himself surrounded by just two to three options. The result is students pursuing degrees just for the sake of completing it and getting some job. This is followed by a lifetime of unsatisfactory professional life. Even in the premier institutes such as IITs and IIMs, we see people joining the rat race for hefty pay packages. The percentage of students who choose to pursue studies and later research has gone down drastically.

Not only science, in many other fields we see a decline in excellence. Let's take music for e.g. Hindustani and Carnatic classical music had so many proponents excelling in varied styles of music. Today's contemporary music is reduced to just one kind- the one that gets more likes on YouTube. In the field of sports, our country excels in a handful of sports with the money attracting cricket occupying most of the eyeballs. We have not even been able to maintain our supremacy in our national game Hockey let alone medals in Olympics. Fields may change but the underlying reason remains children not being able to pursue careers in diverse fields. Next, we would look at the reasons that compel children to join the rat race and not pursue what they want to become.

The basic reason is the increased importance given to money and fame- everything else has taken a back seat. The usual thinking of parents is which is the easiest and the least risk prone way to ensure that their ward is able to get high paying jobs. Their child's interest, talent, aptitude; everything takes the back seat. All they are concerned is how much marks their ward is scoring in science and maths. Even 99% seems to be a compromise! Driven by demand, the schools steer their syllabi away from music, sports and crafts in line with parental expectations. Colleges similarly focus their efforts towards placements, as that is what earns them more admissions. In this way the

rat race gets institutionalized!

Children not being allowed to pursue their passions is just one aspect to this issue- if we look around we'll find myriad of other occasions where people trying to be themselves face resistance. The debate on LGBT rights also revolves around the issue of denial of expression of one's individuality. It has been scientifically proven that sexual orientation is biologically determined, yet our society continues to roll eyes upon finding someone being gay. The Supreme Court verdict on article 377 has furthered this disappointing state of affairs. The very court that interpreted article 19 of our constitution (fundamental right to freedom of speech and expression) so liberally missed an opportunity to end the curb placed by this article on individuality of certain people. Imagine the trauma that a person undergoes when he cannot be open about what his sexual orientation is and has to live a pretentious life. These prejudices have forced the transsexual community into living in ghettos and living a life of unending misery. Imagine their grief upon seeing just male/female option in every other form that they need to fill to avail any facility.

It is ironic how the very land that used to take pride in being a tolerant society and gave the concept of 'aham brahmasmi' (core of my being is the ultimate reality) has become so intolerant that it is suffocating those who want to express their individuality beyond the miniscule circumference of normality. Women wearing modern clothes are looked down upon and are blamed for —calling for|| being raped. Government is every now and then forced to ban this book or that movie in the name of —hurting the sentiments|| of some community. Moving beyond personal individuality, nation-states also tend to behave contrary to their traditional world view- often under the influence of more powerful nations. Formations of twin power blocs in the cold war era is one such example when nations mindlessly joined one or the other blocs without realizing how this is a recipe to War. It is fortunate that India stood the ground and paved way for the Non-aligned movement. Even today, while taking a stand on international issues- be it climate change or protection of global commons, countries are compelled to toe the line of other more powerful nations rather than keeping their individual viewpoint for consideration. It is due to this collective apathy that global commons get reduced to properties of few nations (e.g. the Arctic council) and wars are waged by developed nations in the name of one thing or the other (e.g. Afghanistan, Iraq) which becomes the bedrock of the menace of terrorism.

Human life starts from a single pluripotent cell, which eventually gets differentiated to give birth to thousands of types of cells forming various tissues and organs. Individuality of each cell and decision each cell takes (influenced by growth factors) to turn into another cell type is so important to give birth to a normal healthy body. Nature has its own methods. And we continue to put hurdles in the natural course due to the veil of ignorance cast upon by our greed for money, fear of what would people would say and obsolete norms that society has set for normalcy. It is only logical to break these norms to pave way to a more tolerant and vibrant world where every individual has a place for. To conclude, "Be yourself, everyone else is already taken," it explains to be more authentic, by acknowledging and appreciating your real thoughts, feelings, emotions, desires, passions, embarrassments and beliefs.



DON'T LIMIT A CHILD TO YOUR OWN LEARNING, FOR SHE WAS BORN IN ANOTHER TIME.

— RABINDRANATH TAGORE

A common childhood story of the most innovators of the world from Einstein to John Gurdon (2012 noble prize winner) is that they were not very good students in the school, and often ridiculed by the system. This fact shows the inability of the system to appreciate something it does not know. In other words, if someone challenges the existing knowledge, the system has a tendency to suppress that voice. And mostly those voices are of children who do not see the world from the glasses of prejudice which the adults often use. Thus a child is forced to see what has already been seen by others, and in this process the curiosity, and novelty of a child's experience is killed. And the world loses so many to be Einstein, and generates mechanical human beings who just follow the existing norms. The world is not made by these trend followers, but the trend setters. And since the only reality of the world is change, if someone doesn't have a courage to see and recognize these changes, the world will only move towards stagnation.

A child named Siddharth, saw the sufferings of human beings, analysed them and gave the world a religion called Buddhism. Similarly, a child analysed the meaning of truth, became Gandhi and showed the world a path to nonviolence. There are several other stories which show that the world is made by the people who were curious children, trying to learn the surrounding around them. And somehow the prevailing system was not able to kill their inquisitiveness. But the question arises that if one doesn't make a child learn existing norms and culture, how he/she can become a productive member of the society?

The answer to this question is that there is a difference between dictating and teaching. Teaching is not mere dictating the existing norms to a child, but facilitating him/her at discovering with a right guidance. In the process of dictating one kills the creativity of a child. For instance, if a mother scolds a child for playing with the children of particular caste, race, religion etc. she merely transfers her prejudice to the child, and develops a prejudice in his/her psyche without ever giving him/her a chance to look otherwise. This mentality of transferring the fears, prejudice etc. to a child is the assumption that he/she doesn't know anything and therefore must be taught. This assumption in itself is a fallacy.

As Wordsworth's line 'A child is the father of man' suggests that a child knows several things which he can teach a man (human beings). He/she can teach adults the value of belief, curiosity and love which one loses in the process of growing up. But one doesn't want to learn from the children presuming them to be ignorant, and loves to dictate them. Though this problem is ubiquitous, but more persistent in a society like India.

India is highly patriarchal and class conscious society. It has a very rigid bureaucratic orientation. And the social bureaucracy works on the distinction of age. It is believed that if one is elder to oneself, he/she should be always respected, and his opinions must be right. Though this culture has several virtues but the linkage of knowledge with age makes it a very dictatorial. And this is one of the most prominent reasons for the presence of nearly all vices in the country. A child who is born in a globalizing era is also taught the merits of caste, religion etc, and when he/she questions them, he is termed as obstinate and nearly coerced to believe what his parents or grandparents also believed. Similarly, a girl is taught that she has certain dos

and don'ts which do not apply to boys. While dictating these terms to their children parents or elders don't seem to realize that the reality of their time is not reality of the day. Thus it perpetuates a system which should otherwise have been gone long ago.

Similarly, the concept of 'guru brama' establishes that what a teacher says should be seen as sacrosanct. Again this concept has its own merits, but this also prohibits the children from exploring new ways to solve a particular problem other than what a teacher says to them. And one can see the effect of this system. A country with more than a billion population has made discoveries which can be counted on fingers.

The same is the situation in sports, where a child is always discouraged from pursuing its passion and coerced into the norms established by the society. In fact, from corruption, nepotism to red tapism the practice which supports unquestioned approval of the authority is the root cause of all the problems. Thus if one wants to solve these, it is extremely essential that a child is allowed to construct his/her own world. For this, a start should be at home. The child rearing practices in India which are totally autocratic and just based on obedience should be changed to democratic. Thus a child should not be only given instructions but his views should also be given importance. Further the teaching process in the schools should be such that it facilitates the child to come to his own solutions than follow an existing path.

The world needs a new path, and new solutions in changing times. And only the children whose thinking is not restricted can provide such a path and solutions. One never knows if not restricted when a child will come with an innovative idea to solve problems like food security or violence. A child should be allowed to see the true picture of the world and then take decisions. It may be he/she sees something which others were not able to see or report because of their myriad reservations.

Like the story of a child who proclaimed that the King was naked while all others were praising his dress. The world also needs people who can see the reality. But without allowing a child to learn according to his/her own time we would only restrict his/her potential. In a story of ducks and eagle, an eagle who lives with ducks starts thinking itself to be a duck. It always wants to fly but is told that it can't. And thus was never able to fly. Similarly, if a child is restricted by the norms and prejudices of the society. He/she would never know what God intended him/her to do. Thus he/she will never realize his/her real potential and live in a mechanical way. The internal makeup of the brain changes as a result of learning. After that singular experience, new connections are made, neurotransmitters at synaptic junctions discover fresh routes to transfer new information, and the wiring of the cellular jelly of the brain realigns itself. As a result, we grow wiser, more collected, and more sophisticated. And if we are presented with the same clinical situation again, we make wiser judgements. In this regard, Kelly and Richards' Practise Essentials offers us fresh perspective on the lessons we acquire on a daily basis. However, given that the democratisation of information through the Internet has made its dissemination simpler, faster, more practical, and timely, we must be open-minded and responsive to new bits of knowledge in this period of the Fourth Industrial Revolution.



THE BEST OF MANKIND IS A FARMER; THE BEST FOOD IS FRUIT. – ETHIOPIA

Though the destiny of the species homo-sapiens began millions of years ago, the human civilization however is no older than a few thousand years. The credit of which, goes to the development in the field of agriculture. The early human did not know how to grow food. He was a hunter, a gatherer and a wanderer. Leading a nomadic life, he could not settle in one place and hence was not able to form a society - the basis of any civilization. It was during the Neolithic age that the early man started growing food crops. This took care of his basic physiological need of food. Thus began the age of settled way of life as now man was no longer required to wander from place-to-place for the search of food. The settled life gradually paved way for the development of society, which provided basis for the beginning of a civilized human way of life. The scientific inventions and discoveries followed as man had much leisure time at his disposal owing to food security due to beginning of agriculture. The growth in Agriculture led to increase in secondary economic activities which gave fillip to various specializations like: Chariot makers, potters, black smiths, carpenters etc.,. Those who continued to engage in agriculture to provide food for the society were called the farmers. Considering the role played by agriculture in our development from Homo sapiens to human beings, one must not forget the fact that the cultivation of earth is the most important labour of the man. It was only when tillage began, other arts followed.

The farmers are thus the real founders of the human civilization. However, let us not limit the definition of the farmer to only those who engage themselves in agricultural practices. The word 'farmer' can be used as a synonym for 'self-less hard work'. So accordingly, a farmer could be any person who engage himself completely in any endeavour the fruits of which spell benefit for the whole of the society irrespective of the caste, creed, gender, economic standing of an individual. In this regard, would it not be wise to call the likes of Louis Pasteur, Abraham Lincoln, Mahatma Gandhi, and Albert Einstein who worked day and night for the benefit of society as farmers?

The above paragraph would lead us to an argument that while all people work in different capacities as doctors, lawyers, engineers, accountants etc., their works directly or indirectly benefits the society. And while pursuing their respective professions they do not differentiate between men like the above mentioned names. So, why can't they be termed as farmers? While the argument given above holds ground, as according to the broader definition, a farmer is a person that produces. However, in order to understand the above argument one must hold anomaly of the works of above mentioned professionals with that of a farmer pursuing agriculture as profession.

A farmer works day and night in his field, in all weatheric conditions, be it summers, winters or rains following the same routine from dawn to dusk, day in and day out while earning just enough to sustain himself and his family from the meager amount from his produce. He lives a life of poverty and abstinence still he works in his farms day in and day out to fulfil his social obligation to produce more food for the benefits of the unknowns. This, even when he foresees no incentives like money and recognition to continue with the profession. One can easily remember the number of farmers committing suicides because of abject poverty. Now, let us compare this with the people following the above mentioned professions. How many of them do you think work only for the benefit of the society and not for other motivators like money, status, and recognition? The

answer would be a minuscule minority comprising of the names above mentioned, those whose sole motivation was to give something beneficial to the society. The others can well be anomolated with an agricultural labourer who works not for the society, but for himself.

All human beings perform action and all actions produce results in the form of fruits. These may be desirable or undesirable depending upon the expectation of the person performing the task. The fruits can be in the form of money, inducements, recognition etc. But, such inducements are short lived in nature. The fruits that provide real satisfaction are the ones that induce the feeling of self-worth. There is no better feeling than working for the benefit of the society and this is what separates a farmer from the rest. One needs to understand here that the economic incentives do not motivate the works of a farmer as there are none. The question is what does? A farmer working selflessly for the society gets induced by the fruits of the end result of his hard work. This may be the standing crops in the case of a farmer involved in agriculture, an invention for the one involved in sciences or a reformed society in case of a reformist farmer. The feeling of being worthy for the society is what drives the activities of a farmer. A farmer understands the worth of the work he is pursuing, for many this could be a trivial or unimportant activity but a farmer understands the true worth of his actions and also his implications of not doing that work. He does not influence by the social happenings, while the world around him will change, he will still continue the he has assigned to himself for the society. While we work in a secure environment, wherein our efforts are less influenced by the outside variables. However, a farmer striving for something new and innovative gets influenced by a range of variables. He does not know whether his hard work would provide him with the desired result or not. But, he still continues to delve in his endeavors irrespective of the fruits of his actions- whether failure or success. He thus follows what Lord Krishna has said in the Bhagvata Geeta has said:

Karmanye Vadhikaraste, Ma phaleshou kada chana, Ma Karma Phala Hetur Bhurmatey Sangostva Akarmani

This means; one have the right to perform ones' actions, but one is not entitled to the fruits of the actions. Do not let the fruit be the purpose of your actions, and therefore one won't be attached to not doing your duty. These lines best explain the proverb that The best of mankind is a farmer, the best food is fruit

A farmer is a magician who creates wealth out of nothing. These are Amit Kalantri's exact words. India is an agricultural country, and farmers are the heart and spirit of our country. We are all aware that existence is impossible without a soul. According to a saying, "Those too lazy to plough in the right season will not have food at the harvest." In India, farming is never a simple endeavour. To get the best possible yield, farmers need to be well knowledgeable about soil types, climatic fluctuations, air conditions, and other factors. In order to fulfil the demands of an expanding population with rising earnings, India's food security is heavily dependent on the production of cereal crops, fruits, vegetables, and milk.. A competitive production using environmentally friendly farming methods must be put into place to satisfy such demands.

MODEL QUESTION PAPER-MCQ





Q1. With reference to Project tiger often seen in news, consider the following statements.

1. The project was launched in 1973 to conserve tigers and their habitats in India.
2. Project Tiger operated independently of any legal framework.
3. The project focused on habitat preservation and community involvement.

Select the correct statement/s using the code given

- A. Only one
- B. Only Two
- C. All the Three
- D. None of the above

Q2. What is the primary purpose of the Biological Diversity (Amendment) Bill, 2023 sometimes seen in news?

- A. The Bill enforces stricter compliance regulations for domestic companies involved in biodiversity-related activities.
- B. The Bill criminalizes all offenses related to the Biological Diversity Act, 2002, to ensure strict adherence.
- C. The Bill eases compliance for domestic companies, excludes certain activities from benefit sharing, and decriminalizes offenses under the Act.
- D. The Bill aims to regulate research and bio-survey activities in order to protect local communities' rights.

Q3. With reference to Himalayan vulture (*Gyps himalayensis*) often seen in news, consider the following statements.

1. They are protected under the Wildlife Protection Act of 1972 in India, which prohibits hunting, trade, or disturbance of these vultures.
 2. The Himalayan vulture is listed under Appendix II of CITES.
- Identify the correct statement/s.
- A. 1 only
 - B. 2 only
 - C. Both 1 and 2
 - D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q4. The 'Tampara Lake' sometimes seen in news is located in

- A. West Bengal
- B. Odisha
- C. Madhya Pradesh
- D. Goa

Q5. Consider the following.

1. Ocean warming and acidification
2. Coral bleaching
3. Pollution and runoff
4. Overfishing and destructive fishing practices

Which of the above can be considered as threat to the coral reefs?

- A. Only one
- B. Only Two
- C. Only Three
- D. All the four

Q6. With reference to western Hoolock Gibbons often seen in news, consider the following statements.

1. They are classified as 'Endangered' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN).

2. They can be commonly seen in Western Ghats region of India.

3. They are the only ape species found in India.

Select the correct statement/s using the code given

- A. Only one
- B. Only Two
- C. All the Three
- D. None of the above

Q7. The headquarters of International Whaling Commission (IWC) is located in

- A. Paris, France
- B. Geneva, Switzerland
- C. Impington, UK
- D. Vienna, Austria

Q8. What distinguishes Electric Vehicles (EVs) from Hybrid Electric Vehicles (HEVs)?

- A. EVs solely rely on gasoline for propulsion, while HEVs use a combination of electricity and gasoline.
- B. Both EVs and HEVs run on electricity generated from fossil fuels.
- C. EVs use a combination of electricity and gasoline, while HEVs run solely on electric power.
- D. EVs are powered exclusively by electricity stored in batteries, whereas HEVs combine an internal combustion engine with electric power.

Q9. Consider the following statements regarding Ransomware attacks often seen in news.

1. It is malicious software that encrypts files, demanding payment (ransom) for decryption.
2. It often spreads through phishing emails, malicious links, or exploit kits, exploiting software vulnerabilities.
3. All ransomware attackers honour payments

Which of the above statement/s is/ are correct?

- A. 1 and 2 only



- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Q10. What is space debris, also known as 'space junk'?

- A. It refers to natural meteoroids orbiting Earth.
- B. It includes operational satellites and spacecraft.
- C. It encompasses defunct satellites, fragments, and discarded rocket stages, posing collision risks.
- D. It consists of manned space missions; waste materials, enhancing Earth's cosmic environment.

Q11. The chemical 'Aspartame' often seen in news is an example of

- A. Artificial Flavours
- B. Preservative
- C. Artificial Sugar
- D. None of the above

Q12. With reference to deep tech start-ups often seen in news, consider the following statements.

1. These start-ups innovate in cutting-edge areas like AI, biotech, quantum computing, pushing technological boundaries.

2. Deep tech products require extensive research and development, often taking years to reach market readiness. Identify the correct statement/s.

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q13. Consider the following pairs.

(Moon Mission: Country)

- 1. Surveyor: USA
- 2. LUNA: Russia
- 3. Chang'e: Japan

Select the correctly matched pair/s using the code given

- A. One pair only
- B. Two pairs only
- C. All the three pairs
- D. None of the pairs

Q14. What is the purpose of Metagenome Sequencing Technology?

- A. Metagenome sequencing technology is used to clone individual genes.
- B. Metagenome sequencing technology is used to analyze the genetic makeup of an entire ecosystem's microorganisms.
- C. Metagenome sequencing technology exclusively focuses on sequencing human genomes.
- D. Metagenome sequencing technology is used to study the genetic makeup of single organisms.

Q15. With reference to Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 sometimes seen in news, consider the following statements.

- 1. The Act doesn't extend to data processing outside India for local goods/services.
- 2. Consent is mandatory for lawful data processing, excluding voluntary sharing or state processing.
- 3. Government agencies can be exempt for security, public order, and offense prevention purposes.

Select the correct statement/s using the code given

- A. Only one
- B. Only Two
- C. All the Three
- D. None of the above

Q16. Consider the following statements:

1. Babur (1483-1530), the founder of the Mughal dynasty, was the first to designate Delhi as the 'capital of all Hindustan' in the 16th century

2. In 1911, they opted to relocate their capital from Calcutta to Delhi

Which of the above statements are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q17. Consider the following statements:

1. Kanaklata Barua actively participated in the Swadeshi movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in 1942

2. Matangini Hazra played a significant role in the Non-Cooperation Movement launched by Mahatma Gandhi in the 1920s

Which of the above statements are correct?

- a) 1 only
- b) 2 only
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q18. Which major event among the following has raised concerns about nuclear escalation management between major powers, in recent years

- A) The dissolution of the Warsaw Pact
- B) NATO's expansion into Eastern Europe
- C) The Cuban missile crisis
- D) The Cold War proxy wars

Q19. Consider following statements with respect to BRICS

1. The term BRIC was first used by British Economist Jim O'Neill of Goldman Sachs in 2001 to talk about Brazil, Russia, India, and China as emerging economies.

2. The first formal head of states meeting was in June 2009, Yekaterinburg in Russia and India was represented by Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh.



3. The 15th Summit of BRICS was recently held in Brazilia, BRAZIL.

4. The idea for setting up the New Development bank was proposed by India at the 4th BRICS summit in 2012 held in Delhi.

Which of the following is / are true?

- a) Only 1 and 4
- b) 1, 3 and 4
- c) 1,2 and 4
- d) 1,2,3 and 4

Q20. Consider the following statements

- 1. New members to BRICS include Egypt, Iran, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Ethiopia, and Argentina.
- 2. Headquarters of BRICS is at Beijing, China

Which of the above statements is/ are true?

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 2
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q21. Consider the following statements about India and Africa

- 1. 15th BRICS summit took place in South Africa with on August 23 – 24
- 2. India was the fifth largest investor in Africa and has extended over \$12 billion in concessional loans.
- 3. Approximately three million people of Indian origin live in Africa and they constitute Africa's largest non-native ethnicity.

Which of the above statements is / are true?

- a) Only 1 and 2
- b) Only 2 and 3
- c) Only 1 and 3
- d) All the statements are true

Q22. Consider the following statements with respect to India UK relations

- 1. India is the second largest investor in UK, while U.K. is the 18 largest trading partners of India
- 2. The U.K and India share a thriving trade relation worth about 36 billion pound in 2022.

Which of the following is / are true?

- a) Only 1
- b) Only2
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither1 nor 2

Q23. Consider the following statements regarding India – Japan relations

- 1. Malabar naval exercise involve India, Japan and USA.
- 2. India's "Make in India" initiative and Japan's "Society 5.0"

vision share the goal of technological self-reliance and innovation-driven growth.

3.Japan and the Netherlands restricted exports of semiconductor manufacturing materials required in the making of advanced chips to China.

Which of the above statements is/ are true?

- a) Only 1
- b) Only 1 and 3
- c) Only 2
- d) All the three statements are true

Q24. Which country developed the Aadhaar-like platform for 9 countries called 'Modular Open-Source Identity Platform (MOSIP)'?

- a) China
- b) India
- c) Israel
- d) USA

Q25. Which neighbouring country of India partnered with Russia for developing nuclear power?

- a) Afghanistan
- b) Nepal
- c) Myanmar
- d) Bangladesh

Q26.General Brice Oligui is the new leader of which of the following country?

- a) Gabon
- b) Haiti
- c) Solomon Islands
- d) Rwanda

Q27. Consider the following statements

- 1. Singapore has announced a ban on single use plastic shopping bags from 2024
- 2. QUAD had launched a programme called Cyber Challenge to enhance the Cyber security within their individual territories.

Which of the following is / are true?

- a) Only 1
- b) Only2
- c) Both 1 and 2
- d) Neither 1 nor 2

Q28. With reference to the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council, consider the following statements:

- 1. The Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council is chaired by the Union Minister of Finance.
- 2. Any motion introduced in the Goods and Services Tax (GST) Council has to be adopted by simple majority of the total voting strength of the Council.
- 3. All members of the GST Council enjoy the same voting



powers.

Which among the above statement(s) is / are true?

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Q29. With reference to the 'Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI)', consider the following statements:

1. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is published by United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).
2. The Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) use household surveys to estimate multiple deprivations in health, education and standard of living at individual levels.

Which among the above statement(s) is / are true?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q30. With reference to the Financial Action Task Force (FATF), consider the following statements:

1. The Financial Action Task Force (FATF) was constituted as an Inter-Governmental Organisation (IGO) in 1989
2. The secretariat of the OECD Headquarters is located in Paris.
3. India is a member of both Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

Which among the above statement(s) is / are true?

- a. 1 and 2 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Q31. Consider the following statements:

1. Export prohibitions of goods.
2. Imposition of Minimum Export Prices (MEPs).
3. Open sale of goods.

Which among the above statement(s) is / are likely to be pursued by the Government during a period when price of goods increases significantly?

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

Q32. With reference to the 'Vivad se Vishwas II Scheme, consider the following statements:

1. All contractors and suppliers to Union Government, Central Public Sector Undertakings and other agencies can file claims for settlement under the 'Vivad se Vishwas II Scheme.

2. An aggrieved party who has secured an arbitral award or a Court order can file for settlement under the 'Vivad se Vishwas II Scheme.

Which among the above statement(s) is / are true?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Q33 Consider the following:

1. Energy Transition Index
2. Global Competitiveness Report
3. Global Gender Gap Report
4. Global Travel and Tourism Report

Which among the above is / are published by the World Economic Forum?

- a. 1, 3 and 4 only
- b. 1, 2, and 3 only
- c. 2, 3 and 4 only
- d. 1, 2, 3 and 4

Q34 Consider the following:

1. Hike in policy rates by the US Federal Reserves
2. Appreciation of US Dollar against Indian Rupee
3. Rise in yield of US Bonds
4. Higher valuations of Indian financial instruments

Which among the above can be cited as a reason for flight of capital?

- a. 1, 2 and 3 only
- b. 2, 3 and 4 only
- c. 3 and 4 only
- d. All the above



















Q35. With reference to the Public Asset Reconstruction Agency (PARA), consider the following statements:

1. The National Asset Reconstruction Company Limited (NARCL) purchase the Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) of 1000 Cr. and above with proper valuation from both Banking and Non-Banking Financial Institutions.
2. The National Asset Reconstruction Company Limited (NARCL) is a joint initiative of Public and Private sector banks, with majority-stake owned by State-owned banks.
3. The NARCL will acquire assets on a 15:85 ratio of cash and security receipts (SRs).

Which among the above statement(s) is / are correct?

- a. 1 only
- b. 1 and 3 only
- c. 2 and 3 only
- d. 1, 2 and 3

OMR ANSWER SHEET

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