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A collection of historical artifacts is arranged on a surface. On the left is a large, brown leather-bound book with a metal clasp. In the center, a rolled-up scroll is tied with a leather strap. In the foreground, a metal ring and a key are visible. The background features a map with a grid pattern. The text "HISTORY-ARTS AND CULTURE" is overlaid in white, bold, sans-serif font.

HISTORY- ARTS AND CULTURE



**THE INDIAN REBELLION OF 1857: A
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WORLD WAR II



THE INDIAN REBELLION OF 1857: A TURNING POINT IN INDIAN HISTORY

CONTEXT : On 19 July 2022, Prime Minister Narendra Modi paid tribute to freedom fighter Mangal Pandey on his birth anniversary and said, "The great Mangal Pandey is synonymous with courage and determination."

MANGAL PANDEY - FIRST REVOLUTIONARY OF THE INDIAN FREEDOM STRUGGLE

Born: 19 July 1827, Died: 8 April 1857

The Indian Rebellion of 1857, also known as the Sepoy Mutiny or the First War of Indian Independence, was a watershed moment in the history of British India. It was a significant uprising against British colonial rule, fueled by various factors including political, economic, and social grievances. This essay explores the causes, events, and consequences of the 1857 revolt, highlighting its profound impact on the struggle for Indian independence.

CAUSES OF THE REVOLT:

Several factors contributed to the outbreak of the 1857 revolt. British colonial policies such as the annexation of princely states, the introduction of new land revenue systems, and the use of Indian soldiers (sepoys) in distant lands provoked discontent among the Indian population. Religious grievances, cultural clashes, and the introduction of new technology like the Enfield rifle cartridge, which was rumored to be greased with animal fat, further exacerbated tensions.

THE SPARK

The immediate trigger for the revolt was the introduction of the Enfield rifle cartridge. The rumor that sepoys had to bite the cartridge, thereby violating their religious beliefs, created widespread anger and rebellion. The first open rebellion broke out in Meerut in May 1857 when Indian sepoys refused to use the cartridges and were subsequently court-martialed.

SPREAD AND SUPPRESSION:

The revolt quickly spread across northern and central India, with sepoys, civilians, and even some disaffected princely states joining the rebellion. Major centers of resistance emerged in Delhi, Lucknow, Kanpur, Jhansi, and other regions. The rebels were initially successful in capturing key British garrisons, but British forces gradually regained control through a combination of military strategy, reinforcements, and ruthless suppression.

LEADERS:

The rebellion saw the emergence of notable leaders who became symbols of resistance.

- Rani Lakshmibai of Jhansi,
- Tantia Tope,
- Bahadur Shah II
- Mangal Pandey
- Begum Hazrat Mahal
- Khan Bahadur
- Kunwar Singh
- Maulvi Ahmadulla

The story of Mangal Pandey:

In the afternoon of 29 March 1857 at Barrackpore, Lieutenant BH Baugh, an officer in the 34th Bengal Native Infantry then stationed at Barrackpore, was informed that several men in his regiment were in an agitated state.

Further, it was also informed that one of the sepoys, Mangal Pandey, was coming from the parade ground with a loaded musket in front of the regimental guard room and inciting the other sepoys to mutiny. Threatening to gun down the first European who comes before him. As soon as Baugh reached there, Mangal Pandey opened fire on seeing him. Mangal Pandey was hanged on April 8, 1857, for attacking two British soldiers.

The hanging of Mangal Pandey, who was a soldier of the English army, raised such a spark of freedom among the people of the country that after 90 years the British had to leave the country.

Mangal Pandey, a key figure in India's first war of independence in 1857, was born on 19 July 1827 in the Ballia district of Uttar Pradesh. He was the harbinger of the 1857 revolution. He ignited the flame of revolution among the public, whose light and splendor shook the roots of foreign rule. He was a soldier in the 34th Bengal Infantry at Barrackpore.

In 1857, the British Army gave its soldiers a new Enfield rifle, which had to be loaded with the tip of a greased cartridge. It was rumored that either cow or pig fat had been used to lubricate the cartridges. The soldiers were convinced that the British had deliberately used grease on the cartridges. On 29 March 1857, Pandey asked his fellow soldiers to revolt against the British officers. Mangal Pandey attacked two officers and tried to shoot himself on resistance but was arrested by British soldiers.

Immediately the case was heard and Mangal Pandey was sentenced to death. Earlier, the date of hanging of Mangal Pandey was fixed for 18 April. The British felt that this rebellion might not spread to other areas, so they hanged Mangal Pandey ten days in advance on April 8 in Barrackpore. Mangal Pandey was the first Indian to die in the Revolt of 1857. A month after this incident, on 10 May 1857, the sepoys in Meerut mutinied, which gave rise to the First War of Independence of 1857. His patriotism and sacrifice inspired millions of countrymen to participate in the freedom movement and embodied the spirit of freedom among the people through ideological revolution. He ignited the spark of patriotism at a very crucial time in our history and inspired countless others. Remembering him on his birth anniversary." At the beginning of the year 2022 also, Prime Minister Modi paid tribute to Mangal Pandey in his hometown in Meerut

IMPACT OF 1857 REVOLT

The Revolt of 1857, had far-reaching implications for India's history and marked a watershed moment in the relationship between the British rulers and the Indian subjects. The British government responded to the rebellion with a series of reforms and policies that shaped the course of India's governance and society. Let's delve deeper into the changes and consequences brought about by the Revolt of 1857:

1. The End of Company Rule:

The Revolt of 1857 exposed the weaknesses of the British



East India Company's administration in India. As a result, the British Parliament passed the Government of India Act 1858, which ended the rule of the East India Company and transferred the governance of India to the British Crown. Queen Victoria was declared the sovereign of British India.

2. The Queen's Proclamation:

The Queen's Proclamation, issued on November 1, 1858, declared the assumption of the Government of India by Queen Victoria. It made various promises to the Indian people, including an end to annexations, respect for the rights of native princes, freedom of religion, and equal protection under the law for all Indians.

3. Army Reorganization:

To prevent another uprising, the British reorganized their army in India. The recruitment and training policies changed, with a focus on reducing the number of Indian soldiers and increasing the number of European troops. The concept of "divide and rule" was implemented, creating separate units based on caste, community, and region.

4. Conservative Brand of Liberalism:

In response to the revolt, the British adopted a conservative brand of liberalism that emphasized non-interference in the traditional structure of Indian society. This approach stifled the earlier reformist zeal and denied aspirations of educated Indians to share power, ultimately fueling modern nationalism.

5. Divide and Rule Policy:

The British actively implemented a divide and rule policy, pitting one community against another to weaken potential opposition. This tactic further deepened social divisions and sowed seeds of animosity and suspicion among different Indian communities.

6. Economic Exploitation:

While territorial conquest ended, the British began systematic economic exploitation of India. The Indian economy was fully exploited for British benefit without any restraint.

7. Racial Hatred and Contempt:

The revolt intensified racial hatred and suspicion between Indians and the British. Newspapers and journals in Britain depicted Indians as subhuman creatures, reinforcing the notion of the "Whiteman's burden" and justifying the imposition of British rule.

8. Impact on Indian Governance:

The entire structure of Indian governance was remodeled based on the idea of a superior master race. The Indian Civil Service Act of 1861 aimed to project equality under the Queen, but in reality, it maintained racial discrimination and favored British administrators over Indian officers.

9. Emergence of Modern Nationalism:

The denial of political aspirations to the educated Indian middle class and the conservative approach of the British government led to frustration, paving the way for the emergence of modern nationalism in India.

10. Eruption of Political Controversies:

The British policies and actions after the revolt caused eruptions of political controversies, demonstrations, and acts of violence. The gulf between the rulers and the ruled widened, creating a tense and unstable atmosphere in the coming years.

In conclusion, the Revolt of 1857 shook the foundations of British rule in India and led to significant changes in governance, administration, and policies. While the British attempted to strengthen their control through divide and rule tactics, the aftermath of the revolt sowed the seeds of modern nationalism, ultimately setting the stage for India's struggle for independence in the 20th century.

INDIA LODGES PROTEST WITH CANADA OVER KHALISTAN POSTERS

CONTEXT : The Ministry of External Affairs summoned the High Commissioner of Canada, Cameron MacKay, and lodged a protest after campaigners for Khalistan put out posters targeting Indian diplomats in Canada. MANGAL PANDEY -

BACKGROUND

- The word Khalistan originates from two Punjabi words: Khalis and stan. Khalis means pure, and stan means land or place. Khalistan means pure land or the land of the pure.
- The Khalistan movement is a fight for a separate, sovereign Sikh state in present day Punjab (both India and Pakistan).
- It started during the 1970s when a section of Akalis began to demand political autonomy for the region. In 1973, the Anandpur Sahib Resolution also asserted regional autonomy.
- The Khalistan movement officially began on April 12, 1980 through the establishment of Council of Khalistan at Anandpur Sahib. Jagjit Singh Chauhan became the president of the organization.
- Over the years, it has survived in various forms, in various places and amongst different populations.
- The movement was crushed in India following Operation Blue Star (1984) and Operation Black Thunder (1986 and 1988), but it continues to evoke sympathy and support among sections of the Sikh population, especially in the Sikh diaspora in countries such as Canada, the UK, and Australia.



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



BASTILLE DAY CELEBRATIONS

CONTEXT : Prime Minister Narendra Modi was on a two-day visit to France, during which he will attend the French National Day celebrations as the Guest of Honour.

BACKGROUND

- The national day of France is celebrated on 14 July every year. While it is known as Bastille Day in English-speaking nations, in France it is formally called Fête nationale française (French National Celebration).
- The day marks the fall of the Bastille, a military fortress and political prison, considered a symbol of monarchy and armoury in the 18th Century. The attack signalled the beginning of the French Revolution.
- This was the day on which ordinary people stormed Bastille, a 14th century fortress-prison in Paris that was used to incarcerate political prisoners.
- Bastille Day can be said to have set in motion the

decade-long French Revolution, which fundamentally altered French political and social life and influenced the foundational ideas of democracy across the world, popularising slogans such as “Liberté, Egalité, Fraternité” (Liberty, Equality, Fraternity).

- While July 14 is more popularly associated with the storming of the Bastille in 1789, it is also the anniversary of Fête de la Fédération, an event held in 1790 to celebrate the unity of the French people.

INDIA AND BASTILLE DAY

Before PM Modi, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had attended Bastille Day celebrations in 2009. Also in 2009, Indian soldiers were invited to take part in the ceremonies and the military parade.

MACRON GIFTS PROUST NOVELS, REPLICA OF CHARLEMAGNE CHESSMEN

CONTEXT :

- French President Emmanuel Macron has gifted Prime Minister Narendra Modi a framed facsimile of a 1916 photograph of a Parisian presenting flowers to a Sikh officer and a replica of the Charlemagne chessmen, dating back to the 11th Century.
- Macron also gifted Modi a series of novels – *A la recherche du temps perdu (In Search of Lost Time)* – by Marcel Proust published between 1913 and 1927 and considered the most important works of French literature of the early 20th century.

BACKGROUND

- The photograph dating back to 1916 was clicked on the Champs-Élysées during the military parade on July 14 by a photo reporter from the Meurisse news agency. The original is located at the National Library of France.
- The “Charlemagne” chessmen get their name from the legend that they were given as a gift to the Frankish Emperor by the Abbasid Caliph Harun al-Rashid.
- In actuality, they were made at the end of the 11th century, probably in Southern Italy, given the equipment used by the characters and the presence of elephants as bishops.

A FASCINATING FUSION OF ROCK ART IN A.P.’S RUDRAGIRI



Captivating scene: Drawing depicting the intense battle between the Vanara brothers – Vali and Sugriva

Rudragiri hillock, located in the village of Orvakallu, Atchampet mandal, in Guntur district of Andhra Pradesh, boasts a celebrated historical past and remarkable archaeological monuments.

BACKGROUND

This site unveils a fascinating combination of prehistoric rock paintings from the Mesolithic period and exquisite artwork from the Kakatiya dynasty. D. Kanna Babu, former Superintending Archaeologist of the Temple Survey Project (Southern Region) at the Archaeological Survey of India. Rudragiri, nestled amidst the Eastern Ghats, features five naturally formed rock shelters at its foothills, facing westward. These shelters served as living quarters for people during the Mesolithic age around 5000 B.C., and they bear witness to the luminous rock paintings of that era.

Interestingly, two natural caves at the southern end of the hillock also exhibit exceptional murals from the renowned Kakatiya kingdom.

ARTISTIC BRILLIANCE

Mr. Kanna Babu described the physical condition of the Kakatiya artworks.



The Kakatiya dynasty was a Telugu dynasty that ruled most of the eastern Deccan region in present-day India between 12th and 14th centuries. Their territory comprised much of the present day Telangana and Andhra Pradesh, and parts of eastern Karnataka, northern Tamil Nadu, and southern Odisha. Their capital was Orugallu, now known as Warangal.

Early Kakatiya rulers served as feudatories to Rashtrakutas and Western Chalukyas for more than two centuries. They assumed sovereignty under Prataparudra I in 1163 CE by suppressing other Chalukya subordinates in the Telangana region. Ganapati Deva (r. 1199–1262) significantly expanded Kakatiya lands during the 1230s and brought under Kakatiya control the Telugu-speaking lowland delta areas around the Godavari and Krishna rivers. Ganapati Deva was succeeded by Rudrama Devi (r. 1262–1289) who is one of the few queens in Indian history. Marco Polo, who visited India around 1289–1293, made note of Rudrama Devi's rule and nature in flattering terms. She successfully repelled the attacks of Yadavas (Seuna) of Devagiri into the Kakatiyan territory.

“These caves showcase the artistic brilliance of the Kakatiya period. While many have suffered damage over time due to exposure to the elements, some sketches and outlines have managed to survive. The paintings, adorned with a variety of colours derived from white kaolin and different pigments, depict captivating scenes from the epic Ramayana. Despite the impact of nature's wrath, fragments of these paintings offer valuable insights into their creation during the 13th century A.D.,” he said.

Mural paintings are artworks that are painted on the walls of caves and palaces in India. The exquisite frescoes painted on the caves of Ajanta and Ellora, as well as the Bagh caves and Sittanvasal, are the earliest evidence of murals.

In the middle cave, a grand sketch of Hanuman,

accompanied by sacred symbols of the conch (Sankha) and the fire altar (Yagna Vedi), captures visitors' attention. Hanuman is depicted carrying the Sanjivani hill in his hand, symbolising his mission to save Lakshmana's life.

The third cave houses the prehistoric rock paintings from the Mesolithic era. Interestingly, the Kakatiya artist chose the same rock shelter to superimpose the elegant figure of Hanuman, who is portrayed in a unique 'Anjali' posture, folding his hands in a divine offering.

Remarkably, the Ramayana figures neither overshadow the Mesolithic drawings nor diminish their scenic beauty.

Visitors today can marvel at the ancient drawings from two distinct periods, appreciating the artistic techniques employed.

A FOSSIL FOUND IN NORTHEASTERN CHINA SUGGESTS THAT MAMMALS MAY HAVE PREYED ON DINOSAURS SEVERAL TIMES THEIR SIZE.

CONTEXT: A new study published in Scientific Reports reveals a fossil discovery at "China's Pompeii" dating back 125 million years to the Cretaceous period. The fossil depicts evidence of a mammal and a dinosaur living together, suggesting that mammals may have preyed on dinosaurs much larger than themselves multiple times in history.

BACKGROUND: A remarkable fossil discovery at "China's Pompeii" reveals a *Repenomamus robustus*, a small mammal the size of a house cat, perched on a *Psittacosaurus lujiatunensis*, a medium-sized dog-sized dinosaur. This finding suggests that mammals not only scavenged but also actively preyed on dinosaurs much larger than themselves, challenging the notion of dinosaurs' complete dominance over Earth.

ECOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE:

- *Mammalian predation on dinosaurs:* The study provides evidence that mammals were not merely scavengers but were capable predators that targeted and hunted dinosaurs. This challenges the traditional view of dinosaurs as dominant and mammals as subordinate.
- *Ecosystem balance:* The presence of mammalian

predators actively hunting dinosaurs indicates a more complex ecosystem than previously thought. It highlights that the balance of power and ecological interactions between different species in ancient ecosystems might have been more intricate than previously assumed.

- *Mammalian adaptations:* The study sheds light on the predatory capabilities of ancient mammals and their adaptations for hunting larger prey. Understanding such adaptations can provide insights into the evolutionary history of mammals and their ecological roles in the past.
- *Impact on dinosaur dominance narrative:* The discovery challenges the notion that dinosaurs solely ruled the Earth during the Cretaceous period. It emphasizes the importance of considering the ecological interactions between different groups of organisms to form a comprehensive understanding of past ecosystems.
- *Influence on modern ecosystems:* Studying ancient ecological interactions can provide valuable lessons for understanding present-day ecosystems and the potential consequences of predator-prey dynamics on biodiversity and ecosystem stability.



INDIA'S LARGEST ONLINE IAS COACHING ACADEMY



TELLING TIME WITH GEOLOGY

Our planet is more than four billion years old. Hence, experts have divided earth's history into pieces of time. The largest unit is the eon, which is further divided into smaller units such as eras, periods, and epochs.

These divisions in earth's geological timescale demarcate key geologic events and the appearance (or disappearance) of notable forms of life. It all began with the creation of the earth's crust and continued with the appearance of plants, birds and animals, their ceaseless evolution making a mark in some way on their time.

- **The first eon, the Hadean**, lasted from the formation of the Earth until about 4 billion years ago. It was a time of intense volcanic activity and frequent meteor impacts, and it is thought that the first oceans formed during this eon.
- **The next eon, the Archean**, lasted from 4 to 2.5 billion years ago. This was a time of early life on Earth, and the first microorganisms appeared during this eon.
- **The third eon, the Proterozoic**, lasted from 2.5 billion to 541 million years ago. This was a time of the evolution of early life forms and the formation of the first continents.
- **The Phanerozoic eon**, which began 541 million years ago and continues to the present day, is characterized by the evolution of multicellular life forms and the development of the first animals. This eon is divided into three eras: the Paleozoic, the Mesozoic, and the Cenozoic.
- **The Precambrian Era** began 4.6 billion years ago, with the formation of our planet and the emergence of the first life forms.
- **The Palaeozoic Era** lasted from 541 million to 252 million years ago, and was characterised by the evolution of complex life, including fish, plants, insects, and amphibians.
- **The Mesozoic Era** came next, lasting from 252 million years until 66 million years ago. This was the age of dinosaurs, together with the first appearance of birds and flowering plants towards the denouement.
- **Finally came the Cenozoic Era**, which began 66 million years ago and continues to this day, distinguished by the rise of modern animals.

Today, scientists around the world are locked in a debate about whether we are currently in a new geological time period, dubbed the "Anthropocene", marked by the oft-devastating effects of human presence on earth.

Broadly, there are four geological eras.

SAMRAT MIHIR BHOJ STATUE CONTROVERSY

- A controversy erupts in Haryana over the the unveiling of a statue of Samrat Mihir Bhoj, a 9th-century ruler.
- The kingdom of Mihir Bhoj, who ruled parts of northern India for over 50 years, is said to have spread from Multan in the west to Bengal in the east and from Kashmir in the north to Karnataka in the south.
- Mihira Bhoja (c. 836–885 CE) or Bhoja I was a king belonging to the Gurjara-Pratihara Dynasty.
- Mihir Bhoj had made Kannauj his capital. He was a devotee of Vishnu, so in honor of Vishnu, he had assumed titles like AdiVaraha and Prabhas. He is also known as Mihira.
- The achievements of Mihir Bhoj have been described in his Gwalior Prashasti inscription.

SLOW DOCUMENTATION OF ANTIQUITIES

CONTEXT:

- The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture noted in its report submitted in the Rajya Sabha on Monday that the **National Mission on Monuments and Antiquities (NMMA)** could document only 16.8 lakh antiquities out of a total of 58 lakh which is just about 30%.
- It says that the Committee was informed by Director General of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) that the figure of 58 lakh antiquities is only an estimate and there may well be many more.
- The documentation of antiquities is critical in proving ownership and reclaiming stolen heritage items. The government is proactive on securing the repatriation of stolen Indian artefacts from abroad.
- **The NMMA was launched in 2007 to document the country's monuments and antiquities.** This will help in the creation of a database of all antiquities and can be referred to readily in case of fraudulent dealings or theft. It was initially set up for a period of five years from 2007. It was extended for a further five years till 2017 and later merged with the ASI.
- Indian heritage items and cultural repositories all over the country come under the purview of various agencies. Some are protected by the ASI, some are under the State government and some are under trusts, local authorities and private ownership.
- Therefore, the documentation of all such antiquities in the form of digitised records along with maintenance and periodic auditing of inventory is the first step to ensure the safeguarding of India's tangible cultural heritage.

BACKGROUND



U.S. REENTRY INTO UNESCO

CONTEXT : U.S. first lady Jill Biden attended a flag-raising ceremony at UNESCO in Paris on Tuesday, marking Washington's official reentry into the U.N. agency after a controversial five-year hiatus.

BACKGROUND

- The US decision to return to Paris-based UNESCO was based mainly on concerns that China has filled a leadership gap since Washington withdrew during the Trump administration. This development underscores the broader geopolitical dynamics at play, particularly the growing influence of China in international institutions.
- The US exited from UNESCO in 2017 citing an alleged anti-Israel bias within the organization. The decision followed a 2011 move by UNESCO to include Palestine as a member state, which led the US and Israel to cease financing the agency. The US withdrawal became official a year later in 2018.
- The United States had announced its intention to rejoin

UNESCO in June, and the organisation's 193 member states earlier this month voted to approve the U.S. reentry making it the 194th member of UNESCO.

- This is the second time the US has returned to UNESCO after a period of withdrawal. The country previously left the organisation in 1984, citing mismanagement, corruption and perceived advancement of Soviet interests. It rejoined in 2003

ABOUT UNESCO

- The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is a specialized agency of the United Nations aimed at promoting world peace and security through international cooperation in education, arts, sciences and culture.

BHIMA KOREGAON CASE

CONTEXT : Following the Supreme Court bail order, Bhima Koregaon case needs a relook

- The Supreme Court order granting bail to activists Vernon Gonsalves and Arun Ferreira demonstrates how even under a stringent anti-terrorism law, denial of bail need not be the norm, and a preliminary assessment can lay bare the weaknesses of a police case.
- It is difficult for someone arrested under serious provisions of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) to get bail. Under Section 43D(5), no court can grant bail if there are reasonable grounds to believe the accusation is true.

What is Bhima Koregaon Case ?

The Bhima Koregaon case dates back to January 1, 2018, the day of the bicentenary celebrations of the Bhima Koregaon battle. The celebration was marred by violence leading to death of one person and injuries to several others.

Police investigation into the incident led to the arrest of several activists who they alleged had "Maoist links". The police alleged that they funded the Elgar Parishad meeting on December 31, 2017, where inflammatory speeches were made, according to police, leading to the violence. Those arrested on August 28, 2019, included writer and poet Varavara Rao, lawyer and activist Sudha Bhardwaj, academic and activist Vernon Gonsalves, and human rights activists Arun Ferreira and Gautam Navlakha.

What is Bhima-Koregaon Battle ?

A small village in Pune district of Maharashtra, Bhima-Koregaon is associated with an important phase of Maratha history.

On January 1, 1818, a Dalit-dominated British Army had defeated a Peshwa army, led by Peshwa Bajirao II, in Koregaon. The battle attained a legendary stature for Dalits, who consider the win as a victory of the Mahars against the injustices perpetuated by the Peshwas.

A pillar, known as Vijay Sthamb (victory pillar), was installed by the East India Company in memory of those who fought for them in the battle. It is at this pillar that thousands of Dalits come to pay respect every year on January 1.

What happened at Bhima Koregaon on January 1, 2018?

2018 marked the 200th year of battle and hence there was a larger gathering at Bhima Koregaon as compared to previous years. During the celebrations there were violent clashes between Dalit and Maratha groups, resulting in the death of at least one person and injuries to several others.

Tensions had started simmering on December 29, 2017, the day Govind Gopal Mahar's memorial was found desecrated. The incident found mention in the Elgar Parishad, a big public conference organised by Dalit and Bahujan groups on December 31, 2017. Police has alleged that inflammatory speeches were made in the event and that led to the violence next day.



- Apart from this, an apex court judgment in 2019 holds that there cannot be a detailed analysis of the evidence at the bail stage, and bail must be decided only on the “broad probabilities” of the case. In this backdrop, it is quite significant that the Supreme Court has now granted bail to Mr. Gonsalves and Mr. Ferreira on merits.
- In the Court’s analysis, there is a clear debunking of the case. Apart from the absence of any evidence that the accused were part of a conspiracy, the Court has noted that the letters in which they were mentioned contained only third-party responses and none was recovered from them.
- In a telling comment, the order says, “Mere participation in seminars by itself cannot constitute an offence under the bail-restricting Sections of the 1967 Act (UAPA), with which they have been charged.”
- This is the first time in the Bhima Koregaon violence case, in which activists and lawyers were arrested in 2018 on the charge of being part of a Maoist conspiracy, a court has recorded a finding that the accusations may not be true. Among those arrested in this case, lawyer Sudha Bharadwaj was released on “default bail”, that is due to the charge sheet against her not being filed within the stipulated time, and Telugu poet Varavara Rao got the benefit of bail on medical grounds.
- Writer and scholar Anand Teltumbde was released by the Bombay High Court, holding that it could not be presumed that he had received funds from a co-accused, while Father Stan Swamy died in prison. In the latest order, a two-judge Bench has now found that the letters and witness statements, relied on by the NIA to claim that Mr. Gonsalves and Mr. Ferreira were part of a conspiracy and recruitment of persons to commit terrorist acts, are of weak probative value and quality.
- It is no surprise that many sweeping claims by the prosecution in this case wilt under judicial scrutiny. There are also reports that some of the purported evidence may have been remotely planted on computers used by the accused. The time has come for a comprehensive evaluation of the merits of this whole case.

WORLD WAR II

CONTEXT : RELEASE OF THE FILM OPPENHEIMER

BACKGROUND

World War-II began in 1939 with German aggression on Poland on September 1

CAUSES AND OUTBREAK OF WORLD WAR II

- Treaty of Versailles
- Failure of Collective Security System
- Failure of Disarmament (League of Nations)
- World Economic Crisis

The world plunged into an economic crisis in 1929 when American financial houses abruptly halted loans to European countries. Many European nations, especially Germany, were heavily reliant on borrowed American funds for their rapid industrial progress. The impact of this crisis was most severe between 1930 and 1932, adversely affecting economies worldwide, either directly or indirectly.

Germany was hit particularly hard, with nearly 700,000 people losing their jobs. As a result, Germany declared its inability to make further reparation payments. This economic turmoil in Germany paved the way for the rise of Adolf Hitler's Nazi dictatorship. He assumed the role of Chancellor in 1933 but quickly dismantled democracy and established his dictatorship.

Even England faced economic challenges and had to take harsh measures, such as abandoning the gold standard. Taking advantage of the global economic crisis, Germany, Japan, and Italy pursued aggressive ambitions. They formed the Fascist Bloc, which played a significant role in triggering the Second World War.

- Rise of Nazism in Germany and Fascism in Italy
- Rome-Berlin-Tokyo Axis



- The Problem of National Minorities
- Appeasement by Britain and France
- German Attack on Poland

CONSEQUENCES OF WORLD WAR II

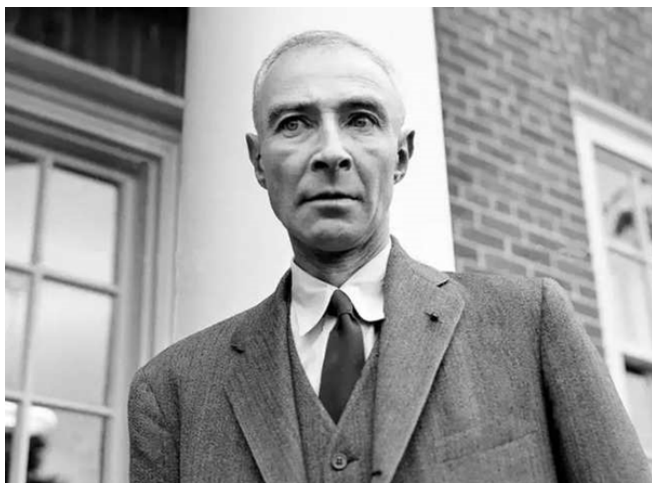
- Defeat of Italy and Germany
- Defeat of Japan

USE OF ATOM BOMB

In order to secure Japan's unconditional surrender, America made the decision to utilize the atom bomb. The first-ever atom bomb was dropped on the important Japanese city of Hiroshima on August 6, 1945, resulting in the destruction of over half the target area. Just two days later, on August 8, the Soviet Union declared war on Japan



and launched an offensive in Manchuria and Southern Sakhalin, both of which were then under Japanese control. The Soviet troops advanced rapidly. Subsequently, on August 9, 1945, a second atom bomb was dropped on Nagasaki, causing unprecedented devastation. The following day, Japan sought peace negotiations. Although the fighting ceased, the formal surrender documents were signed on September 2, 1945, aboard the US battleship Missouri. This marked the end of the Second World War, with Japan ultimately coming under American occupation.



J. ROBERT OPPENHEIMER

J. Robert Oppenheimer, born on April 22, 1904, was an American theoretical physicist and one of the key figures in the development of the atomic bomb during World War II. He is often referred to as the "father of the atomic bomb."

During World War II, Oppenheimer was appointed as the scientific director of the Manhattan Project, a top-secret U.S. government initiative aimed at

AFTERMATH

After the war, achieving peace proved to be an immensely challenging task. The Allies organized the Potsdam Conference in 1945 to work on a peace treaty with Germany. However, no immediate peace treaty could be reached with any of the defeated countries right after the war. It took prolonged diplomatic efforts, but eventually, peace treaties were concluded with Italy, Romania, Hungary, and Finland. Later, peace treaties were also established with Austria and Japan.

Germany remained under occupation for several years, which naturally delayed the possibility of a peace treaty. One of the most significant outcomes of the war was the partitioning of Germany into four occupation zones. Subsequently, the three Western Zones united to form a sovereign country, while in the East, a government backed by the Soviet Union was established. As the Soviet army liberated East European countries, communist governments were installed in those regions. This period marked the beginning of the Cold War between the two power blocs into which the world was divided.

The United States was fortunate that no battles took place on its territory, resulting in minimal civilian losses. Additionally, it was the first country to develop and employ the atomic bomb. The Soviet Union acquired this capability five years later. With other major powers having suffered significant losses, both the US and USSR emerged as Super Powers, leading the two power blocs in the post-war era.

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GEOGRAPHY

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a sole tempore solstitii aestivi
illuminatum*



FLASH FLOODS IN NORTH INDIA

**WORLD REGISTERS HOTTEST DAY
SINCE RECORDS BEGAN**

TRENDS IN HEATWAVES IN INDIA

**99% OF HUMANS EXPERIENCE
DAYLIGHT AT THE SAME TIME**

**ALARMING GLACIER MELT IN HINDU
KUSH HIMALAYAS**

KAAS PLATEAU



FLASH FLOODS IN NORTH INDIA

CONTEXT : *In the beginning of the July month, sudden extreme monsoonal rainfall caused flash floods in Northern India.*

JULY FLASH FLOODS OF NORTH INDIA

- Heavy rainfall during the 2023 monsoon season resulted in severe flooding and landslides across Northern India, primarily affecting population in Himachal Pradesh, Punjab, Chandigarh, Uttarakhand, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Rajasthan and Delhi.
- A monsoon surge, coupled with a western disturbance has led to the highest rainfall in decades in some parts of the region, causing nearby rivers to overflow, with flooding and landslides washing away vehicles, destroying bridges and roads, and disrupting power and electricity.
- Over 100 individuals across Himachal Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi, have died over a two-week period of intense rain and flooding, with thousands of others evacuated to relief camps.
- The floods have led to closure of schools, disruption of flights and train operations in various parts of North India.

WHAT ARE FLASH FLOODS AND HOW ARE THEY DIFFERENT FROM FLOODS IN GENERAL?

- Excessive or continuous rainfall over a period of days, or during particular seasons, can lead to stagnation of water and cause flooding.
- Flash floods refer to such a flooding situation, but it occurs in a much shorter span of time, and are highly localised.
- Flash floods are sudden and rapid flooding events that happen within a short period of time. The National Weather Service of the US says flash floods are caused when rainfall creates flooding in less than 6 hours.
- Flash floods can also be caused by factors apart from rainfall, like when water goes beyond the levels of a dam.
- They are characterised by swift and powerful flows of water that can quickly inundate low-lying areas, such as riverbeds, canyons, and urban areas with poor drainage systems.

WHAT MAKES FLASH FLOODS DANGEROUS?

The defining feature of flash floods is their speed and unpredictability. They can occur without warning, catching people off guard and leaving little time for preparation and evacuation.

The rapid rise in water levels can reach several feet in just a few minutes, destroying property, and the force of the water can be powerful enough to uproot trees, carry away vehicles, and damage buildings.

□The fast-moving water can also erode the ground, leading to landslides that further exacerbate the damage.

□Frequently, flash floods are accompanied by landslides, which are sudden movements of rock, boulders, earth or debris down a slope. It is common in mountainous terrains, where there are conditions created for it in terms of the soil, rock, geology and slope.

CAUSES OF FLASH FLOODS

- A flash flood is often the result of a heavy or excessive rainfall. Whenever it rains, the soil acts as an absorber, and absorbs the precipitation. However, in cases of heavy rain, the soil may be saturated to capacity and unable to absorb any more water.
 - Flooding can also occur after a drought, when the soil is too dry and hardened to absorb the precipitation. This is why flash floods are a common scene in desert landscapes after heavy rainfalls.
 - Himalayan states further face the challenge of overflowing glacial lakes, formed due to the melting of glaciers, and their numbers have been increasing in the last few years.
 - Depression and cyclonic storms in the coastal areas of Orissa, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu also cause flash floods.
 - Further, the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Orissa, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, the Western Ghats in Maharashtra and Kerala are more vulnerable to flash floods caused by cloudbursts
- sudden, intense rainfall in a short period of time.

In addition to these, sudden release of waters from upstream reservoirs, breaches in landslide dams and embankments on the banks of the rivers can also lead to disastrous floods. The severe floods in Himachal Pradesh in August 2000 and June 2005, and in Arunachal Pradesh in 2000 are a few examples of flash floods caused by breaches in landslide dams.

HOW COMMON ARE FLASH FLOODS AND FLOODS?

- According to government data, India is the worst flood-affected country in the world, after Bangladesh. India accounts for one-fifth of the global death count due to floods.
- Flash floods have been commonly witnessed in cities like Chennai and Mumbai.
- Further, data from the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) states that one of the reasons for flood situations occurring so frequently is that more than 70 per cent of the total Indian rainfall is concentrated over a short monsoon season of four months (June to September). As a result, the rivers witness a heavy discharge during these months.
- About 40 million hectares of land in the country are liable to floods according to the National Flood Commission, and an average of 18.6 million hectares of land is affected annually.

PREDICTIONS ON FLASH FLOODS

- According to the 'Climate change and India: A 4X4 assessment a sectoral and regional analysis for 2030s floods report', temperature rise in India would increase the frequency of flood events in India during the end of the 21st century (2071-2100).
- Further, the Himalayan belt is also projected to witness a significant rise in temperature up to 2.6 degrees



Celsius. By the 2030s, the intensity is expected to increase by 2-12%.

- The report further stated that the temperature rise will result in multiplication of flash flood incidents leading to extensive landslides, which would bring extreme damage to the agricultural area thereby threatening the food security of the country.

SOLUTIONS AND WAY FORWARD

To mitigate floods, we need a multi-pronged approach that includes both proactive measures and reactive strategies. These include:

1. A robust early warning system that alerts people about heavy rains and possible flash floods.
2. Continuous monitoring of rainfall patterns, river levels and an advanced flood warning system.
3. Flood risk maps that take into account factors such

as topography, historical flood data and hydrological modelling to assess vulnerability, identify high-risk zones and target actions.

4. Improving and maintaining climate-resilient infrastructure, such as drainage systems and channels to prevent waterlogging.
5. Proper implementation of land use planning and zoning regulations. For example, areas prone to flash floods can be designated as non-residential or restricted areas.
6. The protection and restoration of natural ecosystems, such as forests and wetlands. Vegetation acts as a natural buffer, absorbing rainfall and reducing runoff.
7. Awareness campaigns can influence people to take the right actions during floods, including arranging evacuation, providing first aid and getting information from reliable sources.

WORLD REGISTERS HOTTEST DAY SINCE RECORDS BEGAN

CONTEXT : The world recorded its hottest day ever on 6th July (Thursday) with average global temperature hitting 17.23 degrees Celsius.

More details on the news

- The temperature first started reaching to high record levels on Monday (July 3) with 17.01 degrees Celsius, surpassing 17 degrees Celsius for the first time in 44 years – since 1979 when the data was first collected.
- The record was broken again on Tuesday (July 4), notching
- 17.18 degrees Celsius and remained at this record high level on Wednesday (July 5).
- The previous record high came in 2016, the hottest year ever recorded, when in August of that year the global average temperature reached 16.92 degrees Celsius.
- This record heat streak came in backdrop of the European Union's finding that June was the hottest month ever, smashing the previous June record in 2019 by a substantial margin.
- This record breaking heat also follows a series of mind-bending extreme weather events in recent months, with climate-fueled heat waves recorded in China, northern Africa, the western Mediterranean, Mexico and the southern U.S.

While these temperatures may not seem particularly high, they represent the global average, which combines measurements from both the Northern Hemisphere and the Southern Hemisphere, where it is currently winter.

But 17 degree Celsius is not hot

A 17 degree Celsius temperature may not appear to be particularly warm. But this temperature was not over any one place or region. Instead, this is a measure of the global average temperature for the day, the average over both land and ocean, including the ice sheets in the polar region and the snow of the high mountains where surface temperatures are well below zero degree Celsius.

Average temperatures over oceans are around 21 degree Celsius, and oceans occupy nearly 70% of the earth's surface.

The Antarctic Ice Sheet, where temperatures can easily drop to

-50 degree Celsius, covers about 8.3% of earth's surface while the Greenland Ice Sheet, which includes the Arctic region and North Pole, constitutes about 1.2%.

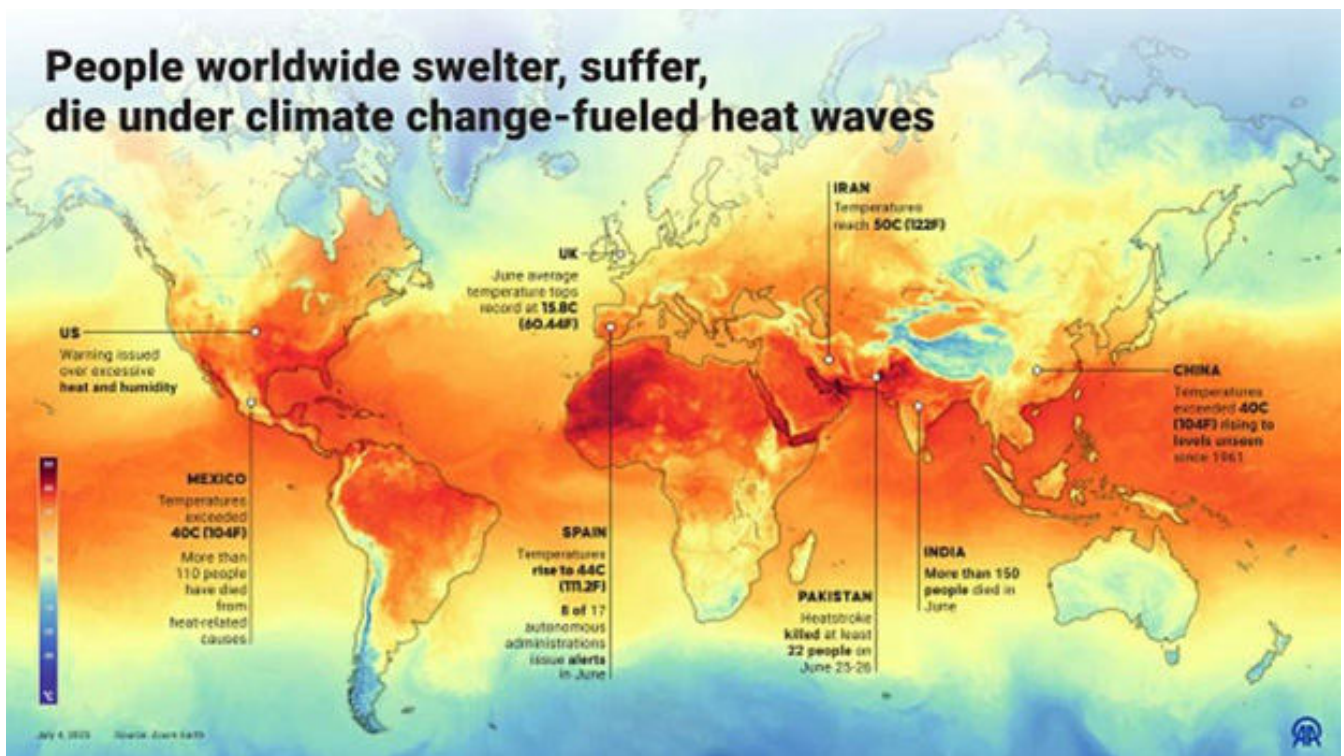
The glaciers and ice caps in the mountain are estimated to account for about another 0.5% of the surface.



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REASONS

- This hot streak was likely fueled by climate change, as well as the arrival of El Niño.
- El Niño is a climate pattern characterized by warm sea-surface temperatures around the equator toward the Pacific coast of South America. El Niño events can change atmospheric conditions enough to boost heat waves around the world.
- The development of the warmer-than-average equatorial Pacific waters after a 4 year hiatus (La Niña phase) is now releasing enormous amounts of heat stored in the oceans back into the atmosphere.
- This coupled with extremely warm Atlantic Ocean

- temperatures and record-low Antarctic ice coverage is several severe warning signs of a warming climate.
- The final ingredient is a warmer climate due to human-caused emissions of greenhouse gases. Data over the past several decades shows an increase of CO2 of nearly 50% and an increase in methane (another greenhouse gas) concentrations of around 150%.

CONCLUSION

According to a May report by the World Meteorological Organization, facing the combined threats of climate change and El Niño, the world is now more likely to breach 1.5 degrees Celsius of temperature rise within the next five years. It is the target established under the 2015 Paris Agreement to avoid the worst impacts of climate change.

TRENDS IN HEATWAVES IN INDIA

CONTEXT : A recent report from the India Meteorological Department (IMD) indicated an increasing trend in the number and duration of heatwaves, based on data from March to June from 1961 to 2020.

- This year, heatwaves started as early as on March 3, and many areas reported temperatures that were higher than average.
- The number of days with temperatures exceeding 30 degrees Celsius has also increased.
- While a temperature of 33 degrees Celsius was recorded between 1961 and 1990 for around 70 days every year, from 1991 to 2022, this temperature was recorded for 89 days a year. It thus became the new normal.
- The concept of the 'new normal' vis-à-vis climate change refers to long-term changes in weather patterns and climatic conditions that are expected to, or have, become more frequent because of climate change.

When maximum temperature reaches 40°C in plains and at least 30°C in hilly Regions.
i) Based on Departure from Normal
➤ Heat Wave: Departure from normal is 4.5°C to 6.4°C.
➤ Severe Heat Wave: Departure from normal is >6.4°C or more.
ii) Based on Actual Maximum Temperature
➤ Heat Wave: When actual maximum temperature ≥ 45°C.
➤ Severe Heat Wave: When actual maximum temperature ≥ 47°C.
iii) Criteria for describing Heat Wave for coastal stations
When maximum temperature departure is 4.5°C or more from normal, Heat Wave may be described provided actual maximum temperature is 37°C or more.



WHAT IS HEAT WAVE?

- A heatwave is defined as a period of unusually hot weather with above-normal temperatures that typically last three or more days.
- Qualitatively, heat wave is a condition of air temperature which becomes fatal to human body when exposed.
- Quantitatively, it is defined based on the temperature thresholds over a region in terms of actual temperature or its departure from normal.
- As per India Meteorological Department (IMD) for heat wave to be declared, following criteria to be met:

CHANGING WEATHER PATTERNS AND HEATWAVE CONDITIONS

- In India, heatwaves are generally experienced during the March-June period and on average, two or three heatwave event occurs every season.
- Heatwaves are predominantly observed over two areas – central and northwest India and coastal Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.
- Climate change and global warming, current research suggests, have increased the probability of heatwaves in the past three decades.
- Climate change is increasing both the frequency and the intensity of extreme weather events.
- An October 2017 study conducted by the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), Pune, reported that there was a three-fold increase in widespread extreme events from 1950 to 2015.
- From June to September 2022, there were variations in rainfall in different parts of India:
 - A significant increase was recorded in central and south India whereas parts of Kerala, Karnataka, and Madhya Pradesh flooded many times.
 - A significant shortfall was also recorded in many parts of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Odisha, and the northeast.
- High monsoon rainfall variability and continuous warming raise the probability of dry and hot extremes, with profound implications for agriculture, water resources, and India's overall economy.

ROLE OF MARINE HEATWAVES

- Marine heatwaves are periods of temperature much higher than the average seasonal temperature in that region.
- The Indian Ocean recorded six marine heatwaves over a period of 52 days in 2021. They used to be rare in this water-body but today are an annual occurrence.
- A low pressure develops over the Indian subcontinent when the land heats up during the summer. The moisture for monsoon rains is thus carried by the winds as they blow in from the Indian Ocean.
- However, rainfall over the land decreases when ocean heatwaves occur, as the winds are drawn to areas over the ocean instead of land. This affects the delay in monsoon arrival thus prolongs the drier heatwaves conditions over India.

- In 2022, IITM found that from 1982 to 2018, the western Indian Ocean region had a four-fold increase in marine heatwaves (an increase of 1.2 to 1.5 events per decade); the northern Bay of Bengal region followed with a two- or three-fold rise (an increase of 0.4 to 0.5 events per decade).

IMPACTS OF HEATWAVES

- As per a research, nearly 90% of India is in a “danger zone” from heatwave impact.
- A recent study by the World Weather Attribution Network has revealed that the early and abnormal heatwaves that swept across India and Pakistan in 2022 were made 30 times more probable by the direct impact of climate change.
- India has already been significantly affected by heat waves, resulting in power shortages, elevated levels of dust and air pollution, and accelerated melting of glaciers in the northern regions of India.
- During extreme heat, certain groups of people who are more vulnerable, including older adults, children, pregnant women, outdoor workers, individuals with chronic illnesses, socially or geographically isolated people, and some racial and ethnic subgroups (especially those with low socioeconomic status), experience higher rates of illness and death.
- National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) report points out that heat-wave victims are mostly the poor and vulnerable population in the unorganised sectors, including daily-wage labourers, street vendors, brickmaking workers, construction workers, rickshaw pullers, delivery executives, gig workers, etc. These individuals are compelled to work outdoors due to their economic circumstances and earn a livelihood.
- Heatwaves can cause acute impacts on large populations for short periods, triggering public health emergencies, leading to excess mortality and resulting in a domino effect of socioeconomic impacts, such as decreased work capacity and labour productivity.
- As per International Labour Organization (ILO) (2019) report, India experienced a loss of approximately 4.3 percent of working hours in 1995 due to heat stress, and it is anticipated to increase to 5.8 percent by 2030.
- Such conditions of heatwaves affect water availability, soil moisture, and crop output while increasing food prices and lowering incomes. The co-occurrence of heatwaves and droughts can also lead to wildfires, tree mortality, and a higher risk of thermal power-plant failures.

MITIGATION MEASURES

- Recognising the likely impact of heatwave, the Government of India has taken several measures to mitigate the impact of heat waves.
- For instance, the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) has developed National Guidelines on Heat Wave Management to guide state governments and other stakeholders in developing heat wave management plans.
- The Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has issued advisories to all states and union territories on the need for preparedness and response measures during



heat waves.

- The government has also launched a Heat Health Action Plan (HHAP) in some cities.
- The Ministry of Labour and Employment urged all states and UTs to take necessary steps towards preparedness and effective management of the ensuing heatwave conditions for workers and labourers employed in various sectors.
- For instance, the Centre issued an advisory asking for rescheduling working hours for workers and labourers across different sectors.
- These measures are critical in ensuring that the impact of heat waves on public health is minimised, and the population is prepared to deal with the adverse effects of climate change.
- Use solar-powered appliances such as fans and air conditioners to stay cool and comfortable.

- Using heat-resistant building materials such as cool roofs and thermal insulation to reduce the indoor temperature of their homes.
- Planting more trees and vegetation in neighbourhoods to create a cooler and more pleasant environment.
- Some cities in India have set up public cooling centres during heatwaves, where people can go to cool off and avoid heat-related illnesses.
- In some workplaces, employers are adjusting work schedules to avoid the hottest part of the day, by starting work earlier.

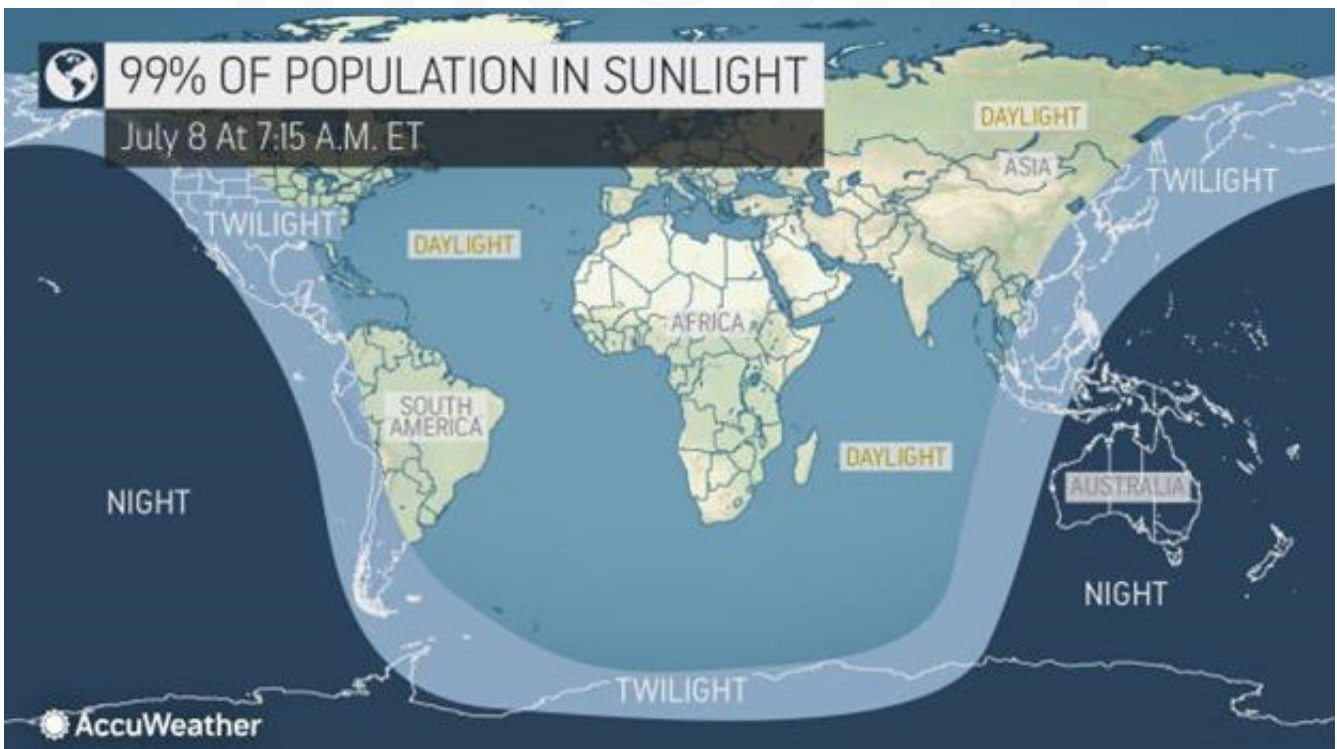
CONCLUSION: The current heat wave situation in India is a wake-up call for the need to address the impact of changing climate on public health. The increasing frequency and severity of heat waves are posing significant challenges to the most vulnerable populations, and it is crucial for the government and relevant stakeholders to take action for preparedness and mitigation to reduce the impact of heat waves.

99% OF HUMANS EXPERIENCE DAYLIGHT AT THE SAME TIME

CONTEXT : On July 8, a majority of the Earth's population was able to glimpse the sun's rays.

MORE DETAILS

- Every year on July 8 at 11:15 UTC, 99% of the world's population receives some degree of sunlight. At that moment, most populated areas are on the day side of Earth or in one of the twilight zones. During twilight, it appears dark at ground level, but traces of sunlight can still be seen in the sky.
- The only large landmasses on the night side are Australia, New Zealand, and parts of Southeast Asia and Antarctica.



- That means over 6.4 billion people on the Earth were in daylight, whereas, 1.2 billion of them were experiencing twilight. In other words, 83% of the entire population got direct sunlight, while 16% of it was under indirect sunlight. The part that experienced actual night is just 79.7 million, which makes up for roughly one percent of the total world population.
- When the Sun is close to 11 degrees below the horizon, the indirect sunlight is so scant, that twilight and actual night are indistinguishable to the naked eye. This is called the astronomical twilight, the darkest of all the twilight phases. Beyond it is considered an actual night.



IS JULY 8 THE ONLY SUCH DAY?

- As the chart shows, July 8 is not the only date when sunlight reaches to 99% people on Earth.
- The curve approaches the 99% threshold as early as May, then plateaus for nearly all of June, and eventually drops back toward the 98% line in mid-July.
- This period begins around May 18 and ends around July 17. In other words, there are about 60 days around the June solstice when, for a few minutes every day, 99% of humans on Earth get daylight or twilight.
- On average, the daily peak occurs closer to 11:00. On all of the 30 days with the largest amount of people experiencing sunlight, the peak moment occurs between 11:00 and 11:03 UTC. Among the top 60 days, it falls a minute or two later in just a handful of cases.
- July 8 is indeed one of the few dates when the peak happens a little later: at 11:10 UTC.



there is a period of a few weeks centered around the December solstice when about the same amount of people worldwide experience darkness, with the number fluctuating slightly each day through the end of December and into the start of January.

WHAT ABOUT WINTER SEASON?

- Similar to the summertime sunshine phenomenon,

- On December 6, roughly 86% of the global population will experience darkness simultaneously with the sun appearing below the horizon across all of Africa, Europe and Asia. For people across the United States, the moment of darkness happens during the afternoon.

ALARMING GLACIER MELT IN HINDU KUSH HIMALAYAS

CONTEXT : As per a recent report by International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD), the entire Hindu Kush Himalayas could face massive floods year after year due to heavy glacial melt till the region reaches its water peak by mid-century.

PREDICTIONS ABOUT THE MONUMENTAL MELT

- Glaciers could lose up to 80% of their current volume by 2100.
- Himalayan glaciers disappeared 65% faster between 2011-2020 than in the previous decade.
- The glaciers lost a mass of 0.28 metres of water equivalent (mwe) per year between 2010 and 2019 compared to 0.17 mwe per year between 2000 and 2009. Water will reach its peak by mid-century i.e. 2050.
- The Karakoram Range, which was known to be stable, has also started showing a decline in glacier mass, losing 0.09 mwe per year during 2010-2019.
- 200 glacier lakes are prone to Glacier Lake outburst floods.
- Snow cover is predicted to fall by up to a quarter.
- After peaking in 2050, the river waters would start tapering as glaciers would have thinned, challenging human sustenance. The worrisome fact is that this melt is irreversible.
- The average temperature in the region has increased by 0.28°C per decade between 1951 and 2020.
- Nine out of 12 river basins have witnessed increased warming rates at higher elevations. The strongest

impacts are being felt in the Brahmaputra, Ganges, Yangtze, and Indus Basins.

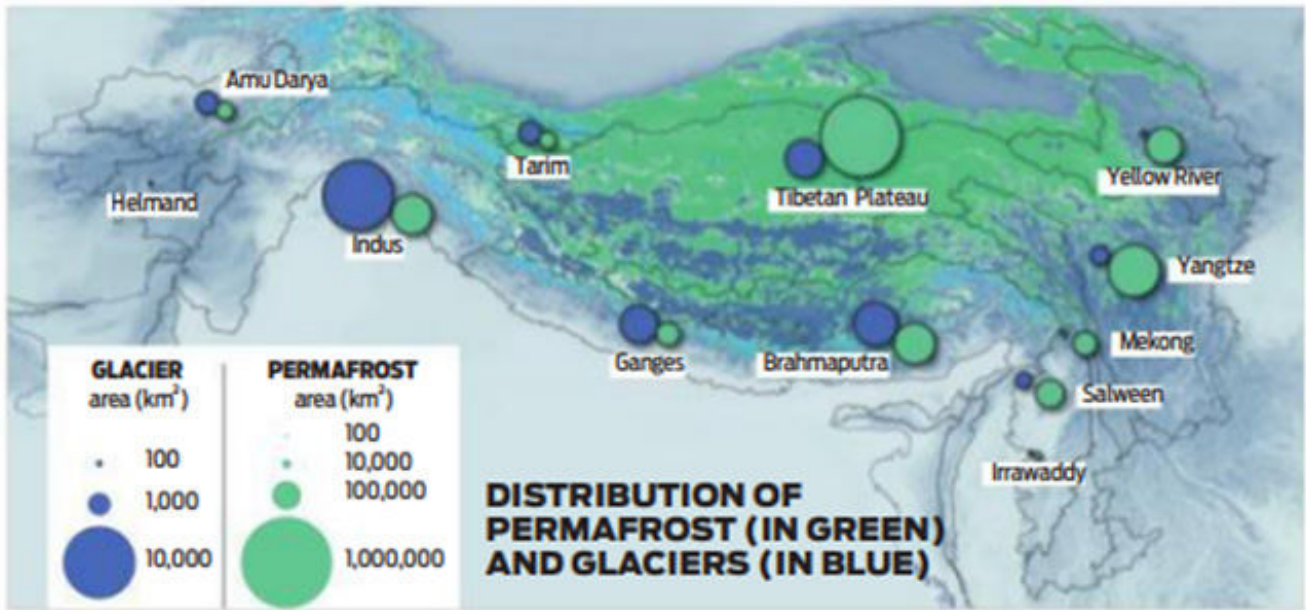
- The report quoted a study that predicted a decline in snowfall by 30-50 per cent in the Indus Basin, 50-60 per cent in the Ganges, and 50-70 per cent in the Brahmaputra between 2070 and 2100 compared to the average snowfall between 1971 and 2000.
- Western Himalaya lost 8,340 square km of permafrost area between 2002 and 2004 and 2018 and 2020, and about 965 square km of area disappeared in Uttarakhand Himalaya between 1970 and 2000 and 2001 and 2017.

SIGNIFICANCE OF HINDU-KUSH HIMALAYAS (HKH)

- The HKH region spans roughly 2,175 miles, from Afghanistan to Myanmar, and is home to the highest mountains in the world, including Mount Everest. It contains the largest volume of ice on Earth outside the two polar regions
- Glaciers occupy an area of approximately 73,173 square kilometres (km²) in the HKH.
- Ice and snow in the HKH, according to the report, are an important source of water for 12 rivers like the Brahmaputra, Ganga etc. that flow through 16 countries in Asia.
- About 240 million people are in the mountains and 1.65 billion downstream are dependent on them.



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IMPACT OF MELTING GLACIERS

- Climate change propelled due to human activities has had drastic effects on various ecosystems. However, the cryosphere (ice covered regions) is most affected by it.
- The volume of water in the rivers is regulated by the cryosphere. Melting of snow and glaciers keep the water bodies alive. But an excess of water can lead to natural calamities.
- During water peak, landslides and floods will become a frequent occurrence. Because of rampant commercialisation, more people have settled down around vulnerable areas. This puts a larger chunk of population in harm's way.
- The loss of permafrost could lead to infrastructure damage, costing the world several billion dollars. If permafrost thaws, the ground becomes much less stable. We are already seeing the effects of this, for example in landslides caused by thawing permafrost.
- The biodiversity of the region – 40 per cent of which is under protected areas – is dependent on the cryosphere as it is an important source of water for maintaining ecosystem health, supporting biological diversity, and providing ecosystem services.
- When the glaciers in the Himalayas melt, the ice sheets in Greenland, Arctic and Antarctic are also melting. This means there will be sea level rise, there will be quite dramatic changes in ocean circulation as a result of increase in fresh water into oceans, and this will have huge impacts on us.
- With climate change driving glacier mass loss, reduction in snow cover, shrinking of permafrost area, changes in hydrology, and increased natural hazards and disasters, cascading impacts on the ecosystem can be seen.

KAAS PLATEAU

CONTEXT : A new study of the sediments from a seasonal lake in the Kaas Plateau indicates it had freshwater accumulation almost for 8000 years before the present (BP) and probably dried up sometimes less than 2000 years ago.

MORE FROM THE STUDY

- The study of the lake has indicated a major shift in the Indian Summer Monsoons towards dry and stressed conditions with low rainfall during the Early-Mid-Holocene, around 8664 years BP.
- The observations of the scientists showed a decrease in rainfall and a weakened southwest Monsoon during the late Holocene (around 2827 years BP).
- However, during the recent past (around last 1000 years), pollen, as well as the presence of a high number of planktonic and pollution-tolerant diatom taxa indicated lake eutrophication, possibly due to human impact and cattle/livestock farming in the catchment.
- The study strongly suggests that the 'Flower Wonder' might have existed for a longer duration, up to March-April, during the early-mid-Holocene (8000–5000 years), when the monsoon rainfall (more than 100 rainy

days) was undoubtedly better than today.

ABOUT KAAS PLATEAU

- Kaas Pathar is a plateau made from volcanic rocks (igneous rock) in the Satara district of Maharashtra. It is part of the Western Ghats range.
- Unlike other plateaus or tablelands in the region, Kaas has a relatively thinner layer of soil.
- This region has a hot-semi arid climate year-round with an average temperature between 19-33 degrees Celsius.
- It is locally called as 'Kas Pathar' or 'Plateau of Flowers'.
- Kaas Plateau was included in the UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site in 2012.
- Known as Kaas Pathar in Marathi, its name is derived from the Kaasa tree, botanically known as *Elaeocarpus*



glandulosus (rudraksha family).

- Kaas Pathar is home to 1500 plant species, 450 wildflower species out of which 33 are endangered.
- The flowers, for which the plaque is known, bloom here after the July rains.
- With a variety of different flowering plants, several species of insects especially butterflies are seen in abundance.
- In the month of September, some of the most common flowering plants that we can see are Eriocaulon Manoharanii, Pogostemon deccanensis, Seneciograhamii, Impatiens oppositifolia and Dipcadi montanum etc.

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POLITY AND GOVERNANCE





DATA PROTECTION BILL

**THE COLLEGIUM SYSTEM : ENSURING
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WHY IT IS REGISTERED**

**UNDERSTANDING ARTICLE 370 : BEFORE &
AFTER 2019**



DATA PROTECTION BILL

CONTEXT : The Bill outlines practices for entities on how personal data should be stored and processed to ensure there is no breach.

Legislation will be introduced in Parliament in the Monsoon Session;

- It specifies norms on management of personal data of Indian residents;
- Activists have raised concerns on an amendment to the RTI Act, 2005 that would prohibit government departments from sharing personal information

The official said that over 20,000 comments were received on the draft Bill though these would not be put out in the public domain.

The government has refused to provide copies of comments from industry, civil society, and government bodies on the Bills in response to Right to Information (RTI) queries.

The Bill essentially allows laypersons to complain to a Data Protection Board, consisting of technical experts, constituted by the government, if they have reason to believe that their personal data has been used without their consent (for example, mobile phone numbers or Aadhaar details). The Board will institute an investigation into the breach.

It is not clear what changes, if any, have been made to the DPDP and telecom Bills following the consultation processes.

The DPDP Bill also outlines practices for entities that collect personal data on how that data should be stored and processed to ensure there is no breach, as well

as rights of persons whose data is being used.

EU LAW

The Bill draws from an EU law – The General Data Protection Regulation – and benchmarks 23 instances in which taking consent for recording data is not possible. “These are special circumstances like golden hour during an accident or natural disasters and so on,” the official said.

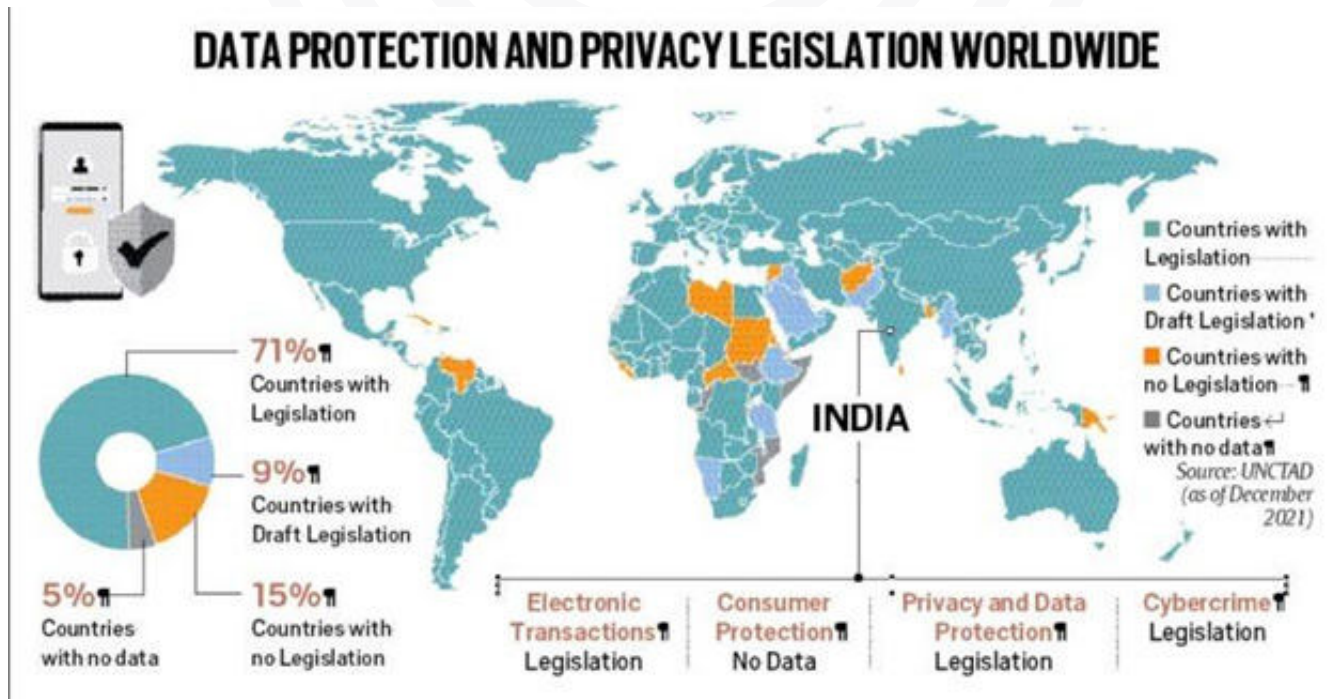
The official said that the Bill has a clause for offering voluntary undertaking in case an entity wants to admit that a breach has occurred and pay penalty as mitigation measure to avoid court litigation. “Penalties can even reach up to ₹250 crore for each instance of breach ranging up to ₹250 crores and an upward revision of ₹500 crore can be made,” the official said.

As per the draft, the Data Protection Board of India could fine firms which do not protect user data with fines for individual offences ranging from ₹10,000 to ₹500 crore, which may apply in case of data breaches.

GLOBAL EXPERIENCE

In global experience, about 90% to 95% cases were settled at the grievance redressal stage. “In the EU, this law took 10 to 12 years to evolve, we believe evolution in India will also take time.

However, if the aggrieved party (individual whose data is breached) wants to seek compensation they will have to move the courts and resort to the judicial process.



In an eco-system where artificial intelligence is rapidly evolving and applications such as ChatGPT is scraping data from social media platforms to test its models, the upcoming Bill was “tech agnostic”, and “would cater to the world we are in today”.



NOT APPLICABLE TO CERTAIN CASES

As per the latest draft, courts and law enforcement agencies enjoy wide exemptions from key requirements, as the Bill's requirements do not apply when

- Personal data is processed in the interest of prevention, detection, investigation or prosecution of any offence or contravention of any law
- Any court or tribunal or any other body in India is necessary for the performance of any judicial or quasi-judicial function”.

RTI Act

Right to Information activists have raised concerns on an amendment to the RTI Act, 2005 in the DPDP Bill that would prohibit government departments from sharing personal information, arguing government departments may refuse to share information that could hold public officeholders accountable.

“Any personal data will not be shared with a third party, however a person whose data has been breached can ask for their own information through RTI,” said the official.

PUTTASWAMY CASE

The Bill comes after multiple versions floated by the Union government, a process that was started way back in 2017 with the K.S. Puttaswamy v Union of India judgment, where privacy was declared as key to the fundamental right to life and personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution.

OBSERVATION BY JUSTICE B. N. SRIKRISHNA

The Committee of Experts on a Data Protection Framework for India led Justice B. N. Srikrishna submitted its report and draft Bill in 2018. The following are the observation of the committee

- Regulatory framework has to balance the interests of the individual with regard to his personal data and the interests of the entity such as a service provider who has access to this data.
- To prevent abuse of power by service providers, the law should establish basic obligations on all stakeholders
- It is important to define what constitutes personal information.

- Consent must be treated as a pre-condition for processing personal data. Such consent should be informed or meaningful.
- It is not possible to obtain consent of the individual in all circumstances.
- The rights of the individual are based on the principles of autonomy, self-determination, transparency and accountability to give individuals control over their data.
- Recommended setting up a regulator to enforce the regulatory framework.
- Various allied laws are relevant in the context of data protection because they either require or authorise the processing of personal data

WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF A PRIVACY LAW?

The Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, 2022, is a crucial pillar of the overarching framework of technology regulations the Centre is building, which also includes the Digital India Bill – the proposed successor to the Information Technology Act, 2000, the draft Indian Telecommunication Bill, 2022, and a policy for non-personal data governance.

Last August, the government withdrew from Parliament an earlier version of the data protection Bill that had been almost four years in the making, after it had gone through multiple iterations and a review by a Joint Committee of Parliament, and faced pushback from a range of stakeholders including tech companies and privacy activists.

The proposed law will apply to processing of digital personal data within India; and to data processing outside the country if it is done for offering goods or services, or for profiling individuals in India.

It requires entities that collect personal data – called data fiduciaries – to maintain the accuracy of data, keep data secure, and delete data once their purpose has been met.

A senior government official said the Bill is expected to allow “voluntary undertaking” – meaning that entities violating its provisions can bring it up with the data protection board, which can decide to bar proceedings against the entity by accepting settlement fees. Repeat offences of the same nature could attract higher financial penalties, the official said.

THE COLLEGIUM SYSTEM : ENSURING INDEPENDENCE AND TRANSPARENCY

INTRODUCTION: The appointment of judges holds immense significance in ensuring an independent and impartial judiciary. In India, the Collegium system, introduced through judicial interpretations, has emerged as a vital mechanism for the selection and appointment of judges to higher courts. This system, which involves a collegial decision-making process, has played a crucial role in safeguarding the independence of the judiciary and maintaining transparency in the appointment process

WHAT DOES THE CONSTITUTION SAY?

Articles 124(2) and 217 of the Indian Constitution deal with the appointment of judges to the Supreme Court

and High Courts .There is no mention of the Collegium either in the original Constitution of India or in successive amendments.

The Evolution of the Collegium System:

The Collegium system traces its roots back to the 1990s when the Supreme Court, through a series of judgments, brought about a shift in the appointment process. Prior to this, appointments were made primarily by the executive branch of the government. However, concerns were raised regarding the potential for political interference and favoritism in the appointment of judges.



EVOLUTION

First judges case (1982): The court held that consultation does not mean concurrence and it only implies exchange of views

Second judges case (1993): The court reversed its earlier ruling changed the meaning of the word consultation to concurrence. Hence, it ruled that the advice tendered by the CJI is binding on the President in matters of appointment of SC judges. But any such advice would be tendered after CJI consults with two of his most senior-judges.

It was also decided in the case that President should appoint the senior-most judge in the SC as the CJI.

Third judges case (1998): The consultation process to be employed should be based on plurality of judges. He should consult a collegium of four senior-most judges before making a recommendation to the President and even if two judges give an adverse opinion, he should not send the recommendation to the President

To address these concerns, the Supreme Court, in the case of the Supreme Court Advocates-on-Record Association v. Union of India (1993), introduced the Collegium system, whereby a group of senior judges would participate in the appointment process. Over the years, this system has undergone further refinement and has become the primary method for appointing judges to the higher judiciary.

Under the Collegium system, the Chief Justice of India (CJI) and a collegium of the four senior-most judges of the Supreme Court are involved in the appointment and transfer of judges. This collegial decision-making process ensures that appointments are made through a collective and consultative approach.

KEY FEATURES OF THE COLLEGIUM SYSTEM:

The following are the key features of the collegium system

Transparency and Accountability:

One of the key advantages of the Collegium system is the enhanced transparency it brings to the appointment process. The collegium's recommendations are generally made public, allowing for scrutiny and evaluation by various stakeholders, including the government and the legal fraternity. This transparency helps maintain public trust in the judiciary and ensures accountability in the appointment process.

Maintaining Judicial Independence:

The Collegium system serves as a crucial safeguard for maintaining the independence of the judiciary. By vesting the power to appoint judges in the judiciary itself, the system minimizes the risk of political interference. It allows judges, who are best equipped to assess the suitability and merit of potential appointees, to have the final say in the selection process. This independence is essential for upholding the principles of justice, fairness, and impartiality.

Critiques and Challenges:

While the Collegium system has been lauded for its emphasis on independence and transparency, it is not without its critics. Some argue that the system lacks checks and balances, as the executive branch has limited influence in the process. There have been calls for a more participatory and inclusive approach, involving both the judiciary and the executive, to strike a balance between the two branches of government.

Another challenge is the need for greater diversity in the

judiciary. Critics argue that the Collegium system has not done enough to address the underrepresentation of marginalized groups and women on the bench. Efforts are being made to address this issue by advocating for a more inclusive approach in the appointment process.

Recent Changes

The Supreme Court Collegium under Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud has quietly and transparently streamlined the appointment process of judges to the constitutional courts while adding a deft mix of merit and seniority in the judicial ranks through a selection procedure which involves "meaningful discussion on and assessment of candidates' judicial acumen".

The once-constant tide of barbs from the government about the "opacity" of the collegium system has died off with the change of guard at the top in the Law Ministry. Recommendations made by the collegium for judicial appointment are now notified within days by the government.

Since early this year, the collegium's resolutions have embraced transparency. They have publicly laid bare the requirements for candidates in the zone of consideration for appointments to the top court and the High Courts.

Quality of judgments

Of primary concern for the collegium is the quality of judgments of the candidates. For this, their judgments are circulated among the members of the collegium, well in advance. The Centre for Research & Planning of the court also prepares a compilation of "relevant background material to assist the collegium".

Judgment Evaluation Committee

There is also a Judgment Evaluation Committee which goes through the judicial work of the candidates with a fine-tooth comb. The judgments are graded, with the very best receiving an "outstanding" grade. This procedure of circulating the judgments of prospective candidates and making an objective assessment of their relative merit was introduced for the first time at a collegium meeting held on September 26 last year.

While proposing Justices Ujjal Bhuyan and S. Venkatanarayana Bhatti for Supreme Court appointments on July 5, the collegium listed out the three basic criteria which guide its selection process to the top court.



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Qualifications for Appointment as a Judge:

- According to Article 124(3) of the Constitution, a person can be appointed as a judge of the Supreme Court if he or she:
- A person must be a citizen of India.
- Must have served as a judge of a High Court for at least five years or two such courts in succession.
- Alternatively, must have been an advocate of a High Court for at least ten years or two or more such courts in succession.
- Must be a distinguished jurist in the opinion of the president.

July 5 resolution

While recommending appointments to the Supreme Court, the collegium has taken into consideration the following aspects:

- The seniority of Chief Justices and senior puisne Judges in their respective parent High Courts as well as overall seniority of the High Court judges;
- The merit, performance and integrity of the judges under consideration;
- The need to ensure diversity and inclusion in the Supreme Court," the July 5 resolution said.

Expansion of diversity and inclusion

The collegium further explained that "diversity and inclusion" referred to the "representation of High Courts, which are not represented or are inadequately represented, in the Supreme Court; appointment of persons from marginalised and backward segments of society; gender diversity; and representation of minorities".

The same criteria were followed recently while proposing Chief Justices to the High Courts of Kerala, Orissa, Manipur, Andhra Pradesh, Bombay, Telangana and Gujarat.

Fair Representation

The Collegium made it clear that its selection of Chief Justices to these High Courts was purely based on the objective criteria in Paragraph 3 of the Memorandum of Procedure (MoP) relating to appointment of Chief Justices of High Courts. "A fair representation shall be given to various High Courts for selection of Chief Justices. For purposes of such selection, inter-se seniority of puisne Judges will be reckoned on the basis of their seniority in their own High Court. The consideration for appointment of Chief Justices shall be based on the criterion of seniority subject to merit and integrity," the MoP provided.

Gender diversity

The Collegium's proposal to appoint Allahabad High Court judge Justice Sunita Agarwal as the Chief Justice of the High Court of Gujarat was a step towards the goal of gender diversity in the High Courts. "She would be the only woman Chief Justice of a High Court as presently there is no woman among the Chief Justices of the High Courts,"

it noted.

The objectivity was also apparent in its decision not to bow to the request made by three High Court judges – Justices Guarang Kanth, Dinesh Kumar Singh and Manoj Bajaj – against their out-of-State transfers.

All three were told that their transfers were proposed to ensure the "better administration of justice". The government too backed the Collegium by notifying the transfer of the three judges within days.

Short Lived 99th amendment

The National Judicial Appointments Commission (NJAC) was a proposed body which would have been responsible for the recruitment, appointment and transfer of judicial officers, legal officers and legal employees under the government of India and in all state governments of India.

The commission was established by amending the Constitution of India through the 99th constitution amendment with the Constitution (Ninety-Ninth Amendment) Act, 2014

The NJAC would have replaced the collegium system for the appointment of judges as invoked by the Supreme court via judicial fiat by a new system.

The NJAC Bill and the Constitutional Amendment Bill, was ratified by 16 of the state legislatures in India

On 16 October 2015, the Constitution Bench of Supreme Court by a 4:1 majority upheld the collegium system and struck down the NJAC as unconstitutional.

CONCLUSION:

The Collegium system in the appointment of judges has significantly contributed to the preservation of judicial independence and transparency in India. It has evolved as a response to the need for a more objective and impartial mechanism for selecting judges. While there are valid concerns and ongoing debates about its effectiveness and inclusivity, the Collegium system remains an essential component of India's judicial framework, ensuring the continued integrity and credibility of the judiciary. It is crucial to strike a balance between preserving judicial independence and incorporating necessary reforms to make the system more representative and accountable. With recent changes we can assure ourself with the words of our former CJI said Collegium system is "Near Perfect"

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

- WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE





ORDINANCE BY PRESIDENT : A BALANCING ACT OF GOVERNANCE

Introduction:

The President of India, as the head of the state, possesses significant executive powers. One such power is the ability to promulgate ordinances, which allow for the temporary enactment of laws in certain circumstances when Parliament is not in session. The ordinance-making power of the President plays a crucial role in maintaining the efficient functioning of the government and addressing urgent matters. However, it is important to strike a balance between the need for expediency and the principles of democratic governance.

Understanding the Ordinance Making Power:

Under Article 123 of the Constitution of India, the President has the authority to issue ordinances, acting on the advice of the Council of Ministers. An ordinance has the same force and effect as an Act of Parliament and must be laid before both houses of Parliament for approval within a six months after its promulgation. If not approved, the ordinance ceases to have effect.

The Need for Ordinances:

The power to promulgate ordinances allows the government to address urgent matters that cannot wait for the regular legislative process. Emergencies, such as natural disasters, security threats, or unforeseen circumstances, may require immediate legislative action. Ordinances enable the government to respond swiftly to these situations and provide necessary measures for the welfare of the nation.

Checks and Balances:

While the ordinance-making power grants flexibility to the executive, it is subject to certain checks and balances to prevent abuse or misuse. First, an ordinance must meet the requirements of "immediate action" and "unavoidable necessity." It must fulfill the criteria of urgency and necessity, justifying its promulgation when Parliament is not in session.

Second, ordinances are temporary in nature and must be approved by Parliament within a specified time. This ensures that the legislature exercises its oversight role and decides whether the ordinance should be continued as a permanent law.

Third, the President is bound by the principle of Constitutional morality and must act in accordance with the advice of the Council of Ministers. The President cannot exercise the ordinance-making power in a whimsical or arbitrary manner but must adhere to the principles of democratic governance and constitutional norms.

The Significance of Parliamentary Approval:

Parliamentary scrutiny is crucial in upholding the principles of democratic governance. The requirement for ordinances to be approved by both houses of Parliament provides an opportunity for legislators to debate and deliberate on the provisions of the ordinance. This ensures democratic accountability and prevents the executive from bypassing the legislative process for an extended period.

The GNCTD (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023

- The government has listed the Bill to replace the contentious ordinance on Delhi services for the

upcoming Monsoon Session of Parliament, that begins on July 20.

Background

The National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023 which aims to affect the powers of the elected State government of Delhi and restore certain powers to the Lieutenant Governor (LG).

- The Ordinance amending the Government of National Capital Territory (NCT) of Delhi Act, 1991 curtails Delhi government's powers over bureaucracy.
- Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal met the heads of various Opposition parties over the last one month garnering support for AAP's campaign against the Bill.
- The Congress, despite pressure from the AAP, has not taken a stand publicly on the Bill, though the party's president Mallikarjun Kharge promised support to Mr. Kejriwal during the Opposition strategy meeting in Patna last month.
- The AAP wants the Bill to be defeated in Rajya Sabha where the Opposition is numerically in a better position, but without the support of Biju Janata Dal (BJD) and YSR Congress.

Article 239AA - 69th Amendment

- Article 239AA was inserted in the Constitution by the 69th Amendment Act 1991. The Article provides for a special status to the National Capital Territory of Delhi (NCT).
- The article states that the NCT shall have a Legislative Assembly and a Council of Ministers headed by a Chief Minister. The Legislative Assembly shall have the power to make laws on all matters in the State List and the Concurrent List, except for those matters that are specifically excluded by the Constitution.
- The Council of Ministers shall be responsible to the Legislative Assembly.

What are interpretations of Article 239AA by the Supreme Court?

- Supreme Court held that the Delhi government has the power to make laws and administer civil services in the national capital.
- The court limited the role of the Lieutenant Governor (LG) over bureaucrats in the capital to three specific areas such as public order, police and land.
- It emphasized the importance of federal cooperation and acknowledged the special status of Delhi as reflected in Article 239AA and other articles.

Judicial scrutiny of The GNCTD (Amendment) Ordinance, 2023, might throw up questions of political legitimacy despite clarity on the legal front. It will likely sharpen the debate on who, between constitutional courts and Parliament, has the authority to make decisions in a democratic polity. Just as in the cases on same-sex marriage, personal laws, Sabarimala, and the power over services in Delhi, we will witness arguments on the legitimacy of courts, with Parliament assuming democracy as an argument exclusively available to itself. That



assumption is incorrect. In fact, if legal positions are clear, a decision by a court is equally, if not more, democratic than one by Parliament. Constitutional actors must pay attention to this seemingly counterintuitive stand.

Legal questions surrounding the ordinance already present much clarity. The ordinance aims to do what only a constitutional amendment can do: Take away the power over services available to the Delhi Government under Article 239AA. Since the Article does not make any exception for any entry in List II and III of Schedule VII, apart from public order, police, and land, it is unclear how a quasi-legislative device like an ordinance can take away a constitutionally-conferred power over services. Even a constitutional amendment would have to pass the muster of the basic structure test that identifies democracy and federalism as features of the Constitution.

The argument that Parliament can divest the Delhi government of power over services because it has overriding powers to legislate on a concurrent item under Article 239AA is also flawed. A constitutionally vested power cannot be divested through ordinary law-making power. Article 239AA does not confer amending powers. Thus, Parliament may “occupy a field” under services by law but it cannot revoke a law-making power. To do so with amending power is improbable as the Supreme Court’s decision on services located the Delhi Government’s power not merely in Article 239AA but in the basic features of the Constitution.

Constitutional limitations

Any parliamentary law on services in Delhi will have constitutional limitations. The ordinance’s objective of setting up a National Capital Civil Service Authority with ultimate power in the hands of the Lieutenant Governor has weak constitutional moorings. It runs contrary to the principle of representative democracy that is founded on self-determination through participation: That citizens have a say in matters that affect them. Water, electricity, education, etc., are services that affect Delhi’s residents. They, therefore, must have a say in these matters through their elected representatives. Those representing other parts of the country have a negligible stake in these matters. That is the principle on which federalism in India and subsidiarity in the EU are based: Those affected by a decision must have the largest say. Federalism is a democracy-complementing principle allowing for the relevant populace to self-determine. M K Gandhi’s principle of Swaraj is based on the same moral foundations.

Despite clarity on these legal questions, the underlying question of democratic legitimacy will influence constitutional interpretation. After all, Parliament chose to lay a second claim to the issue despite an existing SC ruling. Though questions of political legitimacy do not directly feature in legal disputes, they do affect how constitutional actors view their roles. If a court believes that democratic legitimacy largely lies with the legislature, it will interpret the separation of powers in a way that limits judicial reach. If it views judicial processes as rooted in democratic principles,

it will interpret the separation of powers without curtailing legitimate judicial authority.

Presently, courts rely on the supremacy of the Constitution and the protection of rights as sources of judicial legitimacy. But democracy must also be counted as one. Broadly, democracy is classified into thick and thin conceptions. Thick democracy includes virtues such as the rule of law, free expression, and human rights within the meaning of democracy. Thin democracy implies that democracy is essentially about political representation, specifically elections. Even on the thin front, elections are justified because they are a form of participation and expression. The quality of participation and expression are the metrics of democratic credentials, and courts score highly on this count.

Consider legislative processes in contemporary India now. There is incontrovertible data that debates rarely take place on important issues. Neither do citizens get to participate in these decisions. MPs are under no obligation to have open hearings and give constitutional reasons for decisions. Electoral computations cloud most decisions. On participation and expression, therefore, Parliament scores low. These democracy-defeating features get compounded by the fact that our Parliament does not represent our population proportionately. To improve, Parliament must become more like courts by taking on reason-giving and participative obligations. As such, it is Parliament that should be on the back foot when it comes to claiming democratic legitimacy.

In the forthcoming tussle over democracy in Delhi, courts should count democracy in their armour and not as a hindrance in presenting the best interpretation of our Constitution.

Critics argue that the ordinance-making power can undermine the spirit of separation of powers and legislative supremacy. They assert that the government may use ordinances as a shortcut to avoid parliamentary scrutiny or to push through controversial measures without adequate debate.

Another criticism is that ordinances bypass the public consultation process, limiting the opportunity for citizen participation and input. Additionally, the frequent use of ordinances may create confusion and uncertainty in the legal framework.

The ordinance-making power of the President of India is a vital tool in addressing urgent matters and ensuring effective governance. It strikes a balance between the need for expediency and the principles of democratic governance through various checks and balances. However, it is essential to exercise this power judiciously, respecting the principles of Constitutional morality and upholding the supremacy of Parliament. Public scrutiny, parliamentary approval, and adherence to constitutional norms are essential to maintain the legitimacy and effectiveness of ordinances in the Indian democratic framework.



PANCHAYATI RAJ IN INDIA: EMPOWERING GRASSROOTS DEMOCRACY

CONTEXT : West Bengal Local election completed with violence, TMC won majors seats

Panchayati Raj, which translates to "Rural Local Self-Governance," is a system of decentralized governance in India that aims to bring democracy to the grassroots level. It provides a platform for rural communities to participate in decision-making, planning, and implementation of development initiatives. Enshrined in the 73rd Amendment Act of the Indian Constitution, the Panchayati Raj system has played a vital role in empowering local communities and fostering inclusive development. This article explores the significance, structure, and impact of Panchayati Raj in India.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT:

Panchayati Raj has its roots in ancient India's village councils, where local communities gathered to discuss and resolve issues collectively.

However, it wasn't until the 1990s that Panchayati Raj gained constitutional recognition as a means to decentralize power and ensure community participation in the democratic process. The 73rd Amendment Act, passed in 1992, marked a significant milestone in the evolution of Panchayati Raj, making it a constitutional right for citizens to self-govern at the grassroots level.

IMPORTANT ARTICLES

- 243. Definitions
- 243A. Gram sabha
- 243B. Constitution of panchayats
- 243C. Composition of panchayats
- 243D. Reservation of seats
- 243E. Duration of panchayats, etc.
- 243F. Disqualifications for membership
- 243G. Powers, authority and responsibilities of panchayats
- 243H. Powers to impose taxes by, and funds of, the panchayats
- 243I. Constitution of finance commission to review financial position
- 243J. Audit of accounts of panchayats
- 243K. Elections to the panchayats
- 243L. Application to union territories
- 243M. Part not to apply to certain areas
- 243N. Continuance of existing laws and panchayats
- 243O. Bar to interference by courts in electoral matters



Balwant Rai Mehta Committee (1957)

Three-tier Panchayati Raj system – gram panchayat at village level (direct election), panchayat Samiti at the block level and Zila Parishad at the district level (indirect election).

Ashok Mehta Committee (1977-1978)

Two-tier system and political parties should participate at all levels in the elections.



G V K Rao Committee (1985)

Appointed by the Planning Commission, the committee concluded that the developmental procedures were gradually being taken away from the local self-government institutions, resulting in a system comparable to 'grass without roots'.



L M Singhvi Committee (1986)

73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendment Acts, 1992.



STRUCTURE AND FUNCTIONING:

The Panchayati Raj system consists of three tiers: the village level (Gram Panchayat), intermediate level (Block Panchayat), and district level (Zilla Panchayat). Each tier has elected representatives who serve as the voice of the people and oversee local governance. The Gram Sabha, comprising all adult residents in a village, acts as the primary decision-making body. It elects the Gram Panchayat, which is responsible for local administration, infrastructure development, and the implementation of welfare schemes. The Block Panchayat and Zilla Panchayat provide guidance and coordination across multiple villages, focusing on broader developmental plans and resource allocation.

EMPOWERING LOCAL COMMUNITIES:

Panchayati Raj has empowered marginalized sections of society, including women, scheduled castes, and scheduled tribes, by providing them with a platform to participate in decision-making processes. The 73rd Amendment



Act introduced reserved seats for these communities, ensuring their representation and giving them a voice in matters that directly affect their lives. This inclusive approach has helped address social inequities and promote social justice, promoting a more inclusive and democratic society.

DEVELOPMENTAL IMPACT:

Panchayati Raj has been instrumental in channeling resources and initiatives towards grassroots development. It has facilitated the implementation of various welfare programs, such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS), rural healthcare, education, and sanitation projects. By involving local communities in the planning and execution of these initiatives, Panchayati Raj ensures that development projects are aligned with the specific needs and aspirations of the people. This localized approach promotes sustainable and holistic development, reducing the gap between policy formulation and on-ground implementation.

CHALLENGES AND THE WAY FORWARD:

While Panchayati Raj has made significant strides in empowering local communities, several challenges remain. Inadequate financial resources, bureaucratic hurdles, and limited capacity at the grassroots level can hinder effective implementation. Furthermore, gender disparities and power dynamics within local bodies require continued attention to ensure equal participation and decision-making.

To address these challenges, there is a need to strengthen institutional capacities, provide training and support to elected representatives, and increase financial allocations for Panchayati Raj institutions. Emphasizing the use of technology and promoting transparency can enhance accountability and facilitate citizen engagement.

Panchayati Raj in India has transformed the landscape of local governance, empowering communities, and fostering inclusive development. By providing a platform for grassroots democracy, it has enabled marginalized sections of society to participate in decision-making and shape their own destinies. While challenges persist, the commitment to strengthening Panchayati Raj and ensuring its effectiveness will be crucial in advancing the democratic fabric of India and creating a more equitable and prosperous nation.

DELIMITATION - UNIQUE IN ASSAM

The Election Commission (EC) released a draft delimitation document for Assam, proposing a change in boundaries of several Lok Sabha and Assembly constituencies of the state.

The proposal has run into controversy in Assam. While the ruling BJP has welcomed it for “protecting indigenous interests”, Opposition parties like the AIUDF, which represents the state’s Bengali-origin Muslims, are unhappy, alleging that the draft divides voters on religious lines.

Unlike other States, the ECI, and not the Delimitation Commission, have to conduct the delimitation exercise in the states of Manipur, Assam, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh

The proposed boundaries also threaten the electoral futures of some sitting legislators and parliamentarians, who now may lose their constituencies.

WHAT IS DELIMITATION ?

Delimitation is the act of redrawing boundaries of Lok Sabha and Assembly seats to represent changes in population. Its aim is to provide equal representation for equal population segments, to ensure that no political party has an advantage. Delimitation is a constitutional exercise carried out based on preceding Census figures (year 2001 in this case).

WHY IS IT BEING DONE IN ASSAM?

While the slated delimitation process was done in the rest of the country in 2008, it was deferred in Assam (as well as some other Northeastern states) citing security concerns of the time. A 2020 notification from the Law Ministry officially revived the exercise in Assam. Following that, in December 2022 the EC announced that it would initiate the exercise.

WHY WAS DELIMITATION IN ASSAM PUT ON HOLD?

Delimitation panels were set up thrice (1952, 1962 and 1972) regularly before the exercise was suspended in 1976 in view of the family planning programmes in the States. The last Commission was set up in 2002 but before

its exercise was completed in 2008, the delimitation of four north-eastern States – Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur and Nagaland – was deferred due to “security risks” through separate presidential orders. Jammu and Kashmir was also left out of that delimitation exercise for similar reasons. Apart from law-and-order, various organisations in Assam, including the BJP, were opposed to delimitation in 2008 as they wanted it to be done only after the updating of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) to weed out “illegal immigrants”.

WHAT ARE THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE PROPOSAL?

While the number of seats (126 Assembly and 14 Lok Sabha) are being retained, the EC has proposed not just changes in geographical boundaries, but also an increase in the number of reserved constituencies for Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Scheduled Castes (SC).

HIGHLIGHTS OF ASSAM DELIMITATIONS

Reserved seats increased: SC assembly seats have increased from 8 to 9; ST assembly seats have increased from 16 to 19

Districts with autonomous councils (administered under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution) get more seats: one assembly seat increased in West Karbi Anglong District; three assembly seats increased in the Bodo Territorial Region



HOW WAS THE PROCESS CARRIED OUT?

While the constituencies were delimited on the basis of census figures of 2001, the EC also took in the views and suggestions of 11 political parties and 71 organisations they had met during their visit to Assam in March.

Chief among the representations made by these parties included using 2001 census as the basis (the EC noted that some parties were for it and some against), protection of the rights of the “indigenous” people in Assam, and accounting for the “change in demographic pattern”, among others.

The poll body said suggestions and objections to the draft proposal were open till July 11. Following that, the commission would conduct a public hearing in Assam.

WHY HAS IT RUN INTO CONTROVERSY?

Different political parties and groups have alleged that the draft is partisan. Chief among them are the representatives of the state’s Bengali-origin Muslim community, who allege that the draft “deprives them politically” and “favours the agenda” of the ruling BJP.

A leader from the All Assam Minority Students’ Union (AAMSU), which represents the community, alleged that if the proposal was implemented in its current form, the minority community would “suffer major losses politically”, especially in the Assembly seats (the Bengali Muslim community, often labelled as “outsiders” and non-indigenous to the state, play a role in at least 35 of the 126 Assembly constituencies).

“Constituencies have been shaped in such a manner that minority areas have been mixed with majority [Hindu] populations. Several seats – with significant Muslim population – have been done away with,” the leader alleged, adding that it was most stark in districts such as Barpeta and south Assam’s Barak Valley area.

Barpeta district currently has eight constituencies (though some spill over to neighbouring districts). As per the draft proposal, these have now been reduced to six. One among them (Barpeta) is now reserved for SC candidates.

A sitting legislator from the Bengali Muslim community, who did not want to be named, pointed out that in the eight constituencies in Barpeta, about six or seven would invariably elect Muslim legislators. “But now they have not only reduced the number of constituencies but carved them in such a manner that only three Muslim legislators can win from the Barpeta area,” he alleged, adding that the Barpeta Assembly constituency was now reserved for SCs. “This means a Muslim legislator cannot contest at all.”

On the other hand, in Karimganj and Hailakandi – two districts of south Assam’s Bengali-dominated Barak Valley – the draft suggests doing away with two assembly seats (Katlicherra in Hailakandi district and Patharkandi in Karimganj district). These again, the legislator claims, were dependent on Muslim votes, and would elect representatives from the community. “These examples stand out, but there are many more examples in lower Assam (stronghold of the Bengali Muslims) that make it obvious that Hindu seats have been increased,” he alleged.

Congress parliamentarian Abdul Khaleque, who represents the Barpeta Lok Sabha seat, called it an “unscientific and unconstitutional draft”. “This [the proposal] has been drafted by Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, and signed off by the EC. It panders only to his political gains,” he said.

WILL IT AFFECT ANYTHING ELSE?

Yes, constituencies of several sitting legislators and parliamentarians – across parties – may be impacted by virtue of a change in its reservation status or because it has ceased to exist altogether (either its name has changed or boundaries realigned or both).

For example, the Kaliabor constituency – a Congress stronghold represented by MP Gaurav Gogoi – has undergone not just a change in boundary, but also change in nomenclature: it will now be called Kaziranga. Many Muslim-majority areas from the new Kaziranga constituency have been shifted to neighbouring Nagaon, which observers say will affect the electoral fortunes of Gogoi.

At the Assembly level, the Muslim majority Dhing constituency – a stronghold of three-time AIUDF legislator Aminul Islam – has been done away with. Similarly, in Barak Valley, BJP minister Parimal Suklabaidya’s Dholai constituency has now been renamed Narsingpur and its boundaries altered. BJP’s sitting legislator Suman Haripriya will not be able to contest the Hajo seat in Kamrup district as it has been changed from ‘general’ to ‘SC’.

Groups from the Bengali-dominated districts of Barak Valley – both Hindus and Muslims – are also opposing the draft. While the three districts earlier accounted for 15 constituencies, the proposed draft reduces two seats. This, Bengali groups say, will edge out Bengali representation in favour of the Assamese, an old ethnic and linguistic fault line in the state.

However, groups from the Bodo Territorial Council and Karbi Anglong district have welcomed the proposal for securing the representation of their respective communities.

Members of the ruling BJP have hailed the proposal for protecting the aspirations of “indigenous” people. Chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma told reporters that the draft would secure “at least 102 constituencies” for the “Assamese” people. He gave the example of increased seats in the Bodo Territorial Region and Karbi Anglong, as well as Lakhimpur (strongholds of ethnic tribes and Assamese) to make his point.

The party’s Rajya Sabha MP Pabitra Margherita claimed that the exercise was “constitutional and neutral”. “We do not have any involvement in the delimitation process...But from our primary analysis, we have seen that this particular delimitation has empowered the indigenous people of Assam,” he said.

Responding to the allegations by the Opposition parties about “reducing” the Muslim majority in constituencies, Margherita said that it was a “wrong accusation”. “During the process, the EC does not look at caste, community, creed or stalwart of any political party,” he said, “That is why not only legislators from the Opposition but sitting MLAs of the ruling party have lost their own seats.”



MANIPUR VIOLENCE: WHAT IS A ZERO FIR AND WHY IT IS REGISTERED

BACKGROUND:

Just days before a Zero FIR was filed in connection to the May 4 incident, in which two Manipuri women were stripped and paraded in the state's Thoubal district, another Zero FIR was filed at the same police station – pertaining to the alleged abduction, rape and murder of two Kuki-Zomi women.

WHAT IS ZERO FIR?

The concept of zero FIR is new. It refers to a FIR that is registered irrespective of the area where the offence is committed. The police in such a case can no longer claim that they have no jurisdiction. Such a FIR is then later transferred to the police station that has the actual jurisdiction so that investigation can begin.

It was introduced on the recommendation of the Justice Verma Committee formed at the backdrop of the brutal Nirbhaya gang rape in Delhi in 2012. This puts a legal obligation on the police to begin investigation and take quick action without the excuse of absence of jurisdiction.

When a police station receives a complaint regarding an alleged offence that has been committed in the jurisdiction of another police station, it registers an FIR and then transfers it to the relevant police station for further investigation.

No regular FIR number is given. After receiving the Zero FIR, the relevant police station registers a fresh FIR and starts the investigation.

MANIPUR VIOLENCE

The incident took place on May 5, when two young Kuki-Zomi women, aged 21 and 24, who worked at a car wash in Imphal East, were “brutally murdered” in their rented accommodation “after being raped and gruesome(ly) tortured by some unknown persons”, believed to be “about 100-200” in number. On May 16, based on the statement of the younger victim’s mother, a Zero FIR was registered at Saikul police station in Kangpokpi district – the hometown of both victims.

JUSTICE VERMA COMMITTEE

The provision of Zero FIR came up after the recommendation in the report of the Justice Verma Committee, which was constituted to suggest amendments to the Criminal Law in a bid to provide for faster trial and enhanced punishment for criminals accused of committing sexual assault against women, according to a 2020 circular released by the Puducherry government. The committee was set up after the 2012 Nirbhaya gang rape case.

WHY DO WE NEED A ZERO FIR?

The objective of a Zero FIR is to ensure the victim doesn't have to run from pillar to post to get a police complaint registered. The provision is meant to provide speedy redressal to the victim so that timely action can be taken after the filing of the FIR.

WHAT IS AN FIR?

The term first information report (FIR) is not defined in the Indian Penal Code (IPC), Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), 1973, or in any other law, but in police regulations or rules, information recorded under Section

154 of CrPC is known as First Information Report (FIR).

Section 154 (“Information in cognizable cases”) says that “every information relating to the commission of a cognizable offence, if given orally to an officer in charge of a police station, shall be reduced to writing by him or under his direction, and be read over to the informant; and every such information, whether given in writing or reduced to writing as aforesaid, shall be signed by the person giving it, and the substance thereof shall be entered in a book to be kept by such officer in such form as the State Government may prescribe”.

Also, “a copy of the information as recorded...shall be given forthwith, free of cost, to the informant”.

The principal object of the first information report from the point of view of the informant is to set the criminal law into motion, and from the point of view of the investigating authorities is to obtain information about the alleged criminal activity so as to be able to take suitable steps to bring the guilty before the court.

INGREDIENTS OF FIR

Anyone who has any information about the commission of a cognizable offence can lodge a FIR. It is not necessary that he or she should be the victim or an eye-witness.

It was held in *Hallu and Others v. State of Madhya Pradesh* that Section 154 doesn't require that the FIR must be given by a person who has personal knowledge of the incident reported as the section doesn't specifically states so.

The process is very simple. The informant simply has to visit a police station and furnish all the information pertaining to the commission of an offence, orally or in writing.

If given orally, the police officer must reduce the information in writing or authorise his junior to do so.

In non-cognizable offences, when an informant approaches the officer in charge, the officer enters such information in his book maintained as per format prescribed by the State government.

An investigation for a non-cognizable offence can be made only after receiving an order from magistrate under Section 155(3) of CrPC.

The investigating powers of a police officer are same in both cognizable and non-cognizable offences.

LANDMARK JUDGMENTS

The Apex court in *Lalita Kumari v. Government of U.P.* observed that it is mandatory to register a FIR under Section 154 if the complaint is related to a cognizable offence.

In *State of Andhra Pradesh v. Punati Ramulu and Others* where the constable refused to lodge the FIR by the informant who was the nephew of the deceased and an eye witness of the crime on the grounds of jurisdictional limitations, the court observed the failure of duty of the police constable and emphasized on his legal obligation to record the information and then transfer it to the competent police station.



In *Kirti v. State*, the court directed the Commissioner of Delhi police to furnish a standing order to every police station in the National Capital Territory of Delhi to accept all and any information they receive which discloses the occurrence of a cognizable offence even if police station is incompetent on grounds of jurisdictional limitation and thereafter transfer the case to the competent police station.

So, with the introduction of zero FIR, police station is bound to accept the complaint even it does not fall under jurisdiction. This is evolution in the law and order management of the new India, thanks to Justice Verma committee.

UNDERSTANDING ARTICLE 370 : BEFORE & AFTER 2019

CONTEXT : *Constitution Bench headed by CJI D.Y. Chandrachud fixes hearings on Article 370 from August 2*

Article 370 of the Indian Constitution was a significant provision that granted a special status to the region of Jammu and Kashmir. It granted the state a considerable degree of autonomy, allowing it to have its own constitution, flag, and administrative powers. However, the history of Article 370 is complex and controversial, leading to its eventual repeal in 2019.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND:

Article 370 was incorporated into the Indian Constitution in 1949, reflecting the unique circumstances surrounding the accession of Jammu and Kashmir to India after the partition of British India in 1947. It aimed to provide temporary provisions until a plebiscite could be held to determine the state's final status. The provision was drafted by Gopalaswami Ayyangar, a key figure in the Constituent Assembly, and Sheikh Abdullah, the popular Kashmiri leader.



Key Features of Article 370:

Article 370 conferred several special privileges to Jammu and Kashmir. It allowed the state government to have control over all matters except defense, foreign affairs, and communication. It also allowed the state to have its own constitution, flag, and the ability to define its permanent residents and their rights. As a result, the residents of Jammu and Kashmir enjoyed certain protections, including restrictions on land ownership by non-residents and the application of central laws.

Controversies and Criticisms:

Over the years, Article 370 faced criticism from various quarters. Critics argued that the provision perpetuated a sense of separatism and hindered the integration of Jammu and Kashmir with the rest of India. They claimed that the special status allowed for discrimination against women, lack of economic development, and limited opportunities for outside investment in the region.

Repeal of Article 370:

On August 5, 2019, the Indian government, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, revoked the special status granted to Jammu and Kashmir through Article 370. This decision was accompanied by the bifurcation of the state into two Union Territories, Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. The government argued that the move aimed to address issues related to terrorism, lack of development, and promote better governance and economic opportunities in the region.

Implications of the Repeal:

The repeal of Article 370 and the reorganization of Jammu and Kashmir into Union Territories had wide-ranging implications. The decision was met with mixed reactions. Supporters of the move believe it will lead to increased economic development, infrastructure growth, and better governance in the region. Critics, on the other hand, express concerns about potential demographic changes, loss of autonomy, and erosion of the unique identity of Jammu and Kashmir.



Supreme Court and Article 370 Repeal

A Constitution Bench on July 11 said the Centre's fresh affidavit claiming that Jammu and Kashmir is witnessing an "unprecedented era of peace, progress and prosperity" following the abrogation of Article 370 on August 4, 2019 has "no bearing on the constitutional challenge" to the repeal of the provision.

The Bench headed by Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud and four of the senior most judges said it would start hearing the case from August 2.

The court observed that the Home Ministry affidavit, filed on the eve of the Constitution Bench hearing, only sets out the "perspective of the Union Government regarding the post abrogation of Article 370 developments has no bearing on the issues raised in the petitions and shall not hence be relied upon for that purpose".

In its 20-page affidavit, the Centre claimed that post abrogation of Article 370, which deprived Jammu and Kashmir of its special privileges, "life has returned to normalcy in the region after over three decades of turmoil".

Organised stone-pelting incidents, linked to the terrorism-separatist agenda, have come down from 1767 in 2018 to zero in 2023, the Centre has said. Bandhs and hartals have also become a distant memory. "Resolute anti-terror actions" have dismantled the "terror eco-system" which has led to a significant drop in terror recruitment from 199 in 2018 to 12 in 2023 till date, the MHA has said.

The government said it has "encouraged policies to mainstream youth" to "wean them away from militancy". Moreover, the Centre said that work on transit accommodation for the safe return of Kashmiri Pandits to the Valley was in an "advanced stage and is expected to be majorly completed in the next one year".

The Article 370 case has been pending in the Supreme Court for over two years. The case had not come up after a five-judge Bench refused to refer the petitions to a larger Bench in March 2020.

The petitions have challenged a Presidential Order of August 5, 2019 which blunted Article 370. The Article had accorded special rights and privileges to the people of Jammu and Kashmir since 1954 in accordance with the Instrument of Accession. The special status was bestowed on Jammu and Kashmir by incorporating Article 35A in the Constitution. Article 35A was incorporated by an order of President Rajendra Prasad in 1954 on the advice of the Jawaharlal Nehru Cabinet. The Parliament was not consulted when the President incorporated Article 35A into the Constitution through a Presidential Order issued under Article 370.

Following the abrogation, the Jammu and Kashmir (Reorganisation) Act of 2019 came into force and bifurcated the State of Jammu and Kashmir into two Union Territories of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh. In a day, Jammu and Kashmir had lost its full Statehood and became a Union Territory of the Central Government. The move had been preceded by a state of lockdown in the Valley.

The various petitions have challenged the Centre's "unilateral" move to impose curfew and unravel the unique federal structure of India by dividing Jammu and Kashmir "without taking consent from the people".

They have questioned the Centre's sudden move to "unilaterally unravel the unique federal scheme, under cover of President's Rule, while undermining crucial elements of due process and the rule of law".

Separate petitions have contended that the August 5 Order and the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act of 2019 were arbitrary. They have also challenged the proclamation of President's Rule in the State in December 2018.

The petitions have said what happened to Jammu and Kashmir "goes to the heart of Indian federalism". They argue that the Presidential Order of August 5 substituted the concurrence of the Governor of the State Government to change the very character of a federal unit.

They said the Presidential Order took cover of a temporary situation, meant to hold the field until the return of the elected government, to accomplish a fundamental, permanent and irreversible alteration of the status of the State of Jammu and Kashmir without the concurrence, consultation or recommendation of the people of that State, acting through their elected representatives.

They have argued that it amounted to the overnight abrogation of the democratic rights and freedoms guaranteed to the people of Jammu and Kashmir upon its accession.

The basic purpose of Article 370 was to facilitate the extension of constitutional provisions to the State in an incremental and orderly manner, based upon the needs and requirements, without dismantling the State Constitution.

The August 5 Order, by replacing the recommendation of the 'Constituent Assembly' with that of the 'Legislative Assembly' in order to alter the terms of Article 370, assumed that the legislative assembly of the State of Jammu and Kashmir had a power that its own Constitution, under Article 147, denied to it. Thus, the August 5 Order was ineffective, the petitions have alleged.

The government has countered that the Presidential Order of August 5 has become 'fait accompli'.

Article 370 was a significant provision in the Indian Constitution that granted special status to Jammu and Kashmir. Its repeal in 2019 marked a major shift in the region's governance structure. The move has been a subject of intense debate, with proponents emphasizing the benefits of integration and development, while critics express concerns about the erosion of autonomy and potential demographic changes. The long-term implications of the repeal are yet to be fully realized, and the future of Jammu and Kashmir remains a topic of ongoing discussion and analysis.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS





IN SEARCH OF TRUE PEACE IN YEMEN

**INDIA'S RUSSIAN OIL PURCHASES SCALE
NEW RECORD IN MAY**

NARENDRA MODI'S STATE VISIT TO US

**TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF STRATEGIC
PARTNERSHIP WITH FRANCE**

INDIA-EGYPT RELATIONS

GE 414 JET ENGINE DEAL WITH US:



IN SEARCH OF TRUE PEACE IN YEMEN

- In April this year, just as the Saudi-led war in Yemen completed eight years, a diplomatic delegation from the kingdom reached Sanaa airport for talks with its Houthi enemies.
- Some details of the talks soon became public, they are
 - Building on the year-long ceasefire, the two sides agreed to a six-month truce,
 - To be followed by talks over three months to agree on a two-year “transition” period when the details of the Yemeni state that would emerge after the war would be finalised.
 - The Houthis asked that the blockade of Sanaa airport and Hodeidah port be eased
 - Kingdom to pay the salaries from the country's oil revenues.
 - An immediate exchange of prisoners was also agreed to.

DEATH AND DESTRUCTION IN YEMEN

- Saudi Arabia, leading a coalition of some Arab forces, had initiated military operations on March 26, 2015, to prevent the Houthis, a Shia militia representing the marginalised Zaidi community and aligned with Iran, from taking control of Yemen, with which the kingdom shares a porous 1,400-km border.
- However, the war has ground to a stalemate, with the Houthis controlling the capital and the principal port, Hodeidah.
- The coalition controls the sea and the sky and large parts of the south, thus preventing essential food, medical and energy supplies from reaching the population.
- With a death toll of about 4,00,000, including 85,000 children, and several million displaced, Yemen is in the throes of a severe humanitarian crisis:
- 80% of its people (over 20 million) need assistance, while six million are on the brink of starvation.
- Given the estimated expenditure of about \$60 billion in the eight-year conflict, Saudi Arabia has been anxious to obtain a face-saving exit.

OPERATION RAAHAT

India's rescue efforts in Yemen, codenamed Operation Raahat, as many as 23 countries have requested Indian assistance in evacuating their citizens from Yemen. The list of countries comprises Bangladesh, Cuba, Czech Republic, Djibouti, Egypt, France, Germany, Hungary, Iraq, Indonesia, Ireland, Lebanon, Malaysia, Nepal, Philippines, Romania, Slovenia, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Sweden, Turkey, the United States, and Yemen.

SAUDI-IRAN ACCORD

The Saudi-Iran accord brokered by China in March provided this opportunity. There are reports that Iran has agreed to curtail military supplies to the Houthis and facilitate a peace process, thus opening the doors for the Saudi-Houthi engagement in April.

Achievement so far..

What has been achieved so far is the exchange of prisoners and the easing of the blockade on Sanaa and Hodeidah;

□ Humanitarian aid has come in

□ Flights have taken Yemeni pilgrims, including Houthi leaders, to Mecca for the Haj.

Challenges to the peace process

□ Challenges coming in the way of the peace process include the Houthi insistence that the kingdom pay the salaries of all government officials, including armed forces personnel, for the last few years from Yemen's oil revenues.

□ The Saudis are hardly enthusiastic about funding their former enemies.

□ The Houthis are also seeking “compensation” from the Saudis for war damage;

□ Saudis are willing to consider contributing to reconstruction, but not for the idea of “compensation”.

□ The Houthis are also reluctant to engage with the eight-member Saudi-supported Presidential Leadership Council (PLC) that heads the internationally-recognised Yemeni government.

□ They insist on direct negotiations with the Saudis, while the latter wish to be “mediators” between the Yemeni factions.

Houthis have upper hand

□ The crucial point relating to the Yemen scenario is that the Houthis have won the war and the Saudis are desperate to get out of the country.

□ Thus, the Houthis have the upper hand in the negotiations vis-à-vis the Saudis and the PLC set up by them.

□ Even as Saudi involvement with Yemen decreases, the PLC will lose its standing and credibility and open the country, particularly the northern areas, to Houthi control.

Arab Hadhramaut State

□ The Southern Transitional Council (STC), a United Arab Emirates (UAE)-backed movement based in Aden, wants the southern provinces that constituted the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (PDRY), an independent communist country from 1967 to 1990, to once again become an independent state. A UAE academic has caused considerable disquiet in Yemeni circles by suggesting possible names for the new country as “Arab Southern State” or “Arab Hadhramaut State”.



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UAE VS SAUDI ARABIA

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competing geopolitical interests of Saudi Arabia and the UAE in Yemen. • The UAE's control over ports in south Yemen, Eritrea and Somaliland, as also the island of Socotra in the Gulf of Aden and Perim Island at the mouth of the Bab al-Mandab, has already given it a dominant geopolitical and commercial position in the western Indian Ocean. • It is backing the STC's independence agenda to retain these advantages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Saudi Arabia is seeking a united Yemen so that it can assert influence over the south Yemeni provinces of Hadhramaut and Al-Mahr. • Hadhramaut shares an 800-km border with the kingdom, while Al-Mahra could provide an oil pipeline. • Saudis has sponsored its own Hadhramaut National Council that rejects the independence agenda of the STC
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- Recent reports also suggest that Saudi Arabia, anxious to leave Yemen, might accept a north-south division but would want to elbow the UAE out and itself control Aden and the southern areas.
- Another complicating feature is that, despite the Saudi-Iran bonhomie, Iran may be expected to maintain ties with the triumphant Houthis, retain its influence in Yemen, and even consolidate its presence in the Red Sea.
- Thus, despite the cessation of hostilities in the war-ravaged country, rivalries between the diverse Yemeni factions and the competing interests of regional powers will ensure that peace and stability will remain a long way off.

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

- WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE





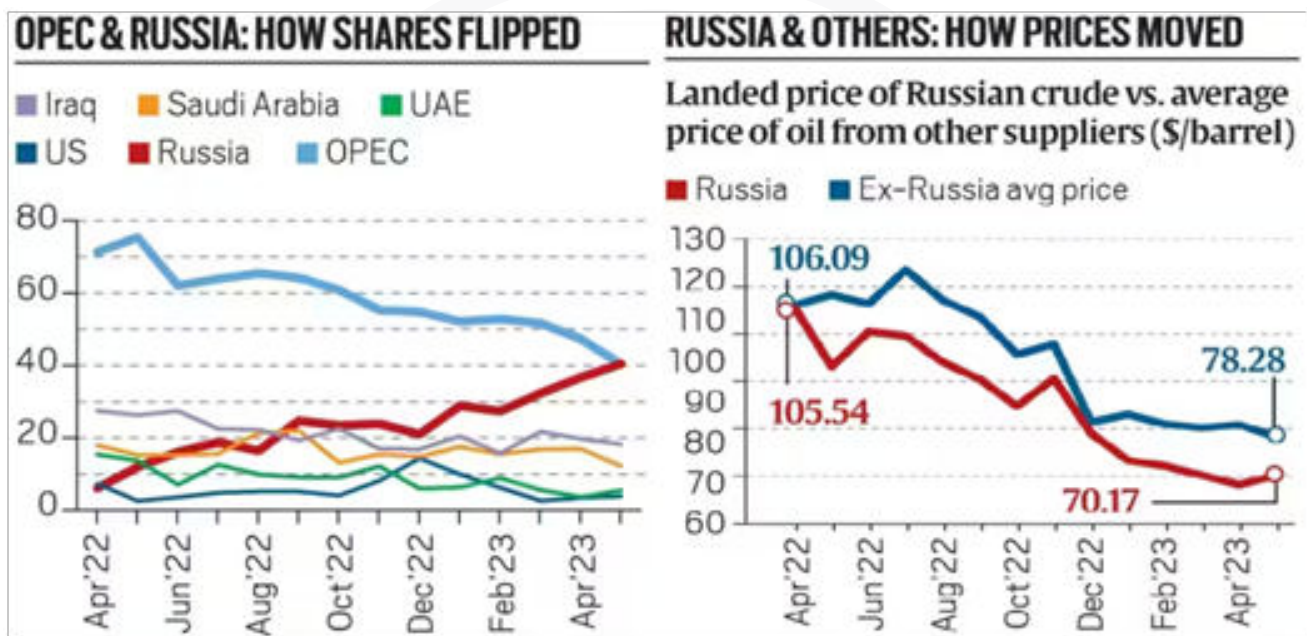
INDIA'S RUSSIAN OIL PURCHASES SCALE NEW RECORD IN MAY

CONTEXT : India's refiners have increased their purchases of discounted Russian oil since the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February last year. As a result, Russia has now become India's primary crude oil supplier, constituting approximately 40% of the country's crude imports, with June 2023 witnessing the 10th consecutive month-on-month rise in Indian imports of Russian crude.

BACKGROUND:

India, the world's third biggest oil consumer and importer, buys more than 80% of its oil overseas. Its refiners have been gorging on Russian oil since the West imposed sanctions on Moscow over its invasion of Ukraine. India is refining this imported oil from Russia and is re-exporting to Europe and other markets as made in India product.

India's rising imports of Russian oil hit a record high of about 1.95 million barrels per day (bpd) in May denting purchases from Iraq and Saudi Arabia



TRANSITION FOR INDIA'S OIL IMPORT FROM RUSSIA

- The transformation of India's oil trade with Russia has been remarkable.
- Data from the Directorate General of Commercial Intelligence and Statistics (DGCI&S) indicates that India's oil imports from Russia have surged by more than 10 times since April 2022.
- The growth in imports has been particularly significant since December 2022.
- The surge in imports coincides with the G7's implementation of a price cap of \$60-per-barrel on seaborne Russian crude.

WHY THERE IS A TRANSITION OF INDIA' OIL IMPORT FROM RUSSIA

Regime of Sanctions on Russia

- Russian conflict with Ukraine led to the US, its allies, and European nations imposing bans on Russian oil and gas imports.
- Germany took the step of halting the Nord stream 2 gas pipeline project from Russia.
- In December 2022, the EU and G7 collectively decided to set a maximum price of \$60 per barrel for Russian

crude oil.

- Saudi Arabia and other oil exporters have not reduced oil prices to match Russian prices.

Substantial discounts offered by Russia

- In the aftermath of sanctions imposed by western nations, Russia's oil sales have shifted their reliance to countries like India, China, Turkey, and Bulgaria. To entice buyers, Russia has implemented significant discounts on its crude oil for these interested nations.
- **India has grabbed the opportunity offered by Russia, despite immense pressure from western nations.**

CHANGE IN PROFILE OF INDIA'S OIL IMPORT

Increase in Russian Share

- Over the 14-month period ending in April 2023, there were significant shifts in market shares (by volume) among India's top 10 crude oil suppliers compared to FY2021-22.
- Russia experienced the most significant gain, increasing its market share from 2% in FY2021-22 to an impressive 24.2%.
- On the other hand, major suppliers like Iraq, Nigeria, and the US witnessed notable declines in their market



shares during the same 14-month period.

Decrease in the share of OPEC

- OPEC's portion of India's oil imports declined significantly, nearly halving from 75.3% in May 2022 to 40.3% in May 2023.
- Iraq, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Kuwait, Nigeria, and Angola, all form part of the OPEC cartel and are among the major oil suppliers to India.
- Russia's share in India's oil import has increased from 6 % to 40.4 % during the period from April 2022 to May 2023.

BENEFIT TO INDIA OWING TO RUSSIAN OIL

SAVINGS TO INDIA

- Over the 14-month period ending in May 2023, Indian refiners saved a substantial amount of foreign exchange, estimated to be at least \$7.17 billion.
- The savings were achieved by increasing their purchases of discounted Russian oil.
- During this period, India's total oil imports amounted to \$186.45 billion.
- the total amount would have been \$193.62 billion had Indian refiners paid the average price for crude from all other suppliers combined.

INDIA AS A SUPPLIER OF REFINED PETROLEUM

NARENDRA MODI'S STATE VISIT TO US

CONTEXT : Prime Minister Narendra Modi's State Visit to the US signified a significant advancement in India-US relations, characterized by the establishment of numerous noteworthy agreements and partnerships. This was his first state visit to the US.

BACK GROUND: India US relationship has generally been on the upswing from the turn of the century. The State visit of the Indian Prime Minister has further cemented the ties between two nations..

During his visit, PM Modi commenced the celebrations of the 9th International Day of Yoga at the United Nations Headquarters on June 21. The UN General Assembly had earlier designated June 21 as the International Day of Yoga in December 2014. On the following day, PM Modi's schedule included a meeting with President Biden to further their high-level discussions, attendance at a State Dinner hosted by President Biden and First Lady Dr. Jill Biden, and addressing a Joint Sitting of the U.S. Congress on June 22.

PM Modi addressed the US Congress, becoming the first Indian prime minister to do so twice

WHAT IS A STATE VISIT?

State visits hold the highest rank among foreign visits to the US, as they are formal invitations extended by the US President to the head of a state. Such visits underline the importance of the guest nation as a valued friend and ally. President Joe Biden has hosted state visits for France's President Emmanuel Macron and South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit. These visits include significant events like a state dinner held at the White House, symbolizing hospitality and friendship, a 21-gun salute White House arrival ceremony, and an invitation to stay at Blair House, the US President's

India has become a significant exporter of petrol and diesel, including some refined from Russian crude, to Europe and other regions. Notably, India's petroleum product exports to the EU increased by 20.4 percent year on year from April to January, reaching 11.6 million tonnes. As a result, Indian refiners are experiencing strong and favourable profit margins.

FUTURE PROSPECTS

Initially, in May 2022, the discounts on Russian oil significantly increased but contracted in June. Subsequently, they rose again and remained stable for the following four months. However, recent industry sources indicate that these discounts have considerably eroded, with Russia's flagship crude breaching the G7 price cap. The discounts on Russian crude have now reduced to just \$4 per barrel from the previous peak of \$25-30 per barrel. If this trend persists, Russian oil may become considerably less appealing to Indian refiners in the upcoming months.

CONCLUSION

India has stayed the course and has defied western pressure to impose sanction on Russia. It has strengthened its trade ties with long standing strategic partner, Russia.

By relying on Russia for oil, India has tried to leverage its strategic autonomy in international relations while providing to address a substantial need of Indian domestic economy. It has also allowed for international oil prices to stabilise without supply disruption by offering it substantial refining capabilities.

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INDIA US BILATERAL TRADE RELATIONS

At the heart of the Indo-US strategic partnership is deepening economic engagement and resolve on both sides to elevate the bilateral relationship to a "global strategic partnership"

During the fiscal year 2022-23, the economic ties between India and the USA flourished, resulting in the US becoming India's largest trading partner. The bilateral trade reached a remarkable milestone, totalling US\$ 191 billion, a significant increase from the US\$ 119.42 billion recorded in 2021-22. In the previous fiscal year, India enjoyed a trade surplus of US\$ 32.8 billion with the US. Moreover, India witnessed a historic high in foreign direct investment (FDI) in FY 2020-21, with the US emerging as the second-largest source of FDI, contributing US\$ 13.82 billion. The USA remains one of the top five destinations for Indian foreign direct investment.

INDIA US DEFENCE COOPERATION

The India-US defence cooperation is governed by the "New Framework for India-US Defence Cooperation," which was renewed for ten years in 2015. In 2016, the relationship was elevated to a Major Defence Partnership (MDP), aiming to establish a comprehensive and mutually beneficial defence alliance. Notably, in July 2018, India was moved to Tier-1 status in the US Department of Commerce's Strategic Trade Authorization license exception. In a



significant milestone, in August 2022, the USNS Charles Drew visited Chennai for repairs, marking the first-ever repair of a US Navy ship in India.

Various crucial defence agreements have been signed, including the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Association (2016), Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (2018), Industrial Security Agreement (2019), and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (2020).

The bilateral exercises encompass Yudh Abhyas (Army), Vajra Prahar (Special Forces), and the tri-services exercise Tiger Triumph (inaugurated in 2019).

Additionally, in November 2022, the Australian Navy joined the US-India-Japan MALABAR annual Naval Exercise, and the US participated in India's multilateral Exercise Milan 2022. These developments exemplify the strengthening defence ties between India and the USA.

SIGNIFICANT DEFENCE DEALS DURING THE VISIT:

India _ US Defence Acceleration Ecosystems (INDUS -X)

The primary objective is to foster collaborative defense technology innovation and promote co-production of advanced defense technology by industries from both nations. Additionally, the Indo-US Joint Innovation Fund provides funding support for defense start-ups. This fund was established under the Critical and Emerging Technology (iCET) initiative, jointly launched by the US Department of Defense and the Indian Ministry of Defense. The initiative seeks to bolster cooperation and accelerate advancements in critical and emerging technologies within the defense sector.

- MOU between GE and HAL for manufacturing F414 jet engines in India to be used in Tejas Mk2(80 % technology transfer)
- Purchase of armed MQ9B Sea Guardian UAVs
- Artemis Accords is a framework for space exploration and cooperation that has been signed by 25 countries at present.

COOPERATION IN SCIENCE and TECHNOLOGY

In the realm of space cooperation, ISRO and NASA have embarked on a collaborative endeavor to develop a joint microwave remote sensing satellite called NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR) for Earth observation. ISRO has benefited from NASA/JPL's Deep Space Network Antenna support during missions like Chandrayaan-1, Mars Orbiter Mission (MOM), and Chandrayaan-2. There are ongoing discussions about potentially obtaining similar support for the Chandrayaan-3 satellite.

On the commercial front, ISRO has successfully launched over 200 satellites from the US as co-passengers on its Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV).

In January 2023, NSA Doval and his US counterpart Jake Sullivan initiated a new US-India collaboration focusing on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET). These technologies encompass artificial intelligence, quantum computing, semiconductors, and wireless

telecommunications.

NASA and ISRO have agreed to launch a joint mission to the International Space Station in 2024.

PATH AHEAD IN INDIA – US RELATIONSHIP

Challenges persist in the India-US relationship, encompassing various areas that warrant attention and resolution. One concern centers around India's relationship with Russia, with the US expressing apprehension about India's continued reliance on Russian military imports. Additionally, India's recent shift towards increased oil imports from Russia has displaced Iraq as its top supplier, raising further concerns.

Trade and technology relationships face hurdles as well, as the US maintains significant export controls on India due to the 1998 nuclear test, hindering the free transfer of technology. Furthermore, in 2019, the US terminated India's designation as a beneficiary developing country under the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) program, causing disruptions in bilateral trade.

The US is troubled by India's turn towards protectionism, as policies safeguard domestic industries from foreign competition, limiting India's contribution to only two percent of the United States' merchandise trade.

Concerns regarding the state of Indian democracy have also emerged, with members of Congress and officials in the Biden administration closely monitoring reports on civil liberties and minority rights in India. Questions surrounding data protection in India have raised implications regarding surveillance and censorship.

The protracted delays in visa processing for the United States since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic have been a consistent source of irritation in the bilateral relationship. Data published by the US embassy in India indicates that wait times for B1 and B2 work visas often exceed 400 days.

Addressing these challenges will be crucial for fostering stronger and more cooperative ties between India and the US. Open dialogue and mutual understanding will play pivotal roles in finding constructive solutions to these complex issues.

CONCLUSION: India-US relations have evolved into a crucial strategic partnership marked by growing economic, defense, and diplomatic cooperation. Both nations have recognized the significance of each other as major players in regional and global affairs. Together, they have tackled various challenges such as terrorism, climate change, and trade issues. This relationship has fostered mutual understanding, shared values, and a commitment to democratic principles. Despite occasional disagreements, the overall trajectory has been one of increasing collaboration and mutual benefit. The 21st century has witnessed India and the US deepening their ties, paving the way for a promising and stable future partnership.



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TWENTY-FIVE YEARS OF STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP WITH FRANCE

CONTEXT : *India- France relation is now geared towards the next quarter century, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had reached Paris on an official visit to France as a chief Guest of the Bastille Day celebrations.*

BACKGROUND: India and France have had robust ties from the colonial times. The French republic had established diplomatic relations with India from 1947. The French and Indian government had reached an agreement with regard to transfer of the French colony of Pondicherry to India. India and France reached an agreement in 1956 and finally all French colonial territories joined the Indian Union by 1960. India had significant defence ties with the French in the wake of cordial relations following the peaceful transfer of Pondicherry. In the past when India faced significant sanctions from the western democracies following the Pokran 1 and 2, nuclear explosions, France was one of the few western powers which had breached that trend and had stood with India. France had supplied critical technologies to ISRO and Indian Military in times of need.

On the basis of this in 1998, India and France had entered into a strategic partnership agreement with India in 1998 during the then French President's visit to India on its republic day celebrations. From then onwards India France ties had grown significantly. Meanwhile due to various reasons, French collaboration with India's neighbour Pakistan had been on decline.

During the civil nuclear negotiations with the US, French President Jacques Chirac, on his visit to India in 2006, sent a strong message to President George W Bush that India should not be boxed into a corner.

Visit of Shri Manmohan Singh in 2009 on the French national day had strengthened India France relations. Indian defence contingent from the Maratha light infantry had marched along with French forces on that day. This was one of the rare instances of Indian forces marching on the national day of a foreign nation. This year in 2023 another regiment from the Indian army is taking part in the celebration with Indian PM Narendra Modi as the Chief Guest.

WHAT IS BASTILLE DAY?

Bastille Day, celebrated on July 14th, commemorates the storming of the Bastille prison in 1789 during the French Revolution. This event marked a turning point in the revolution, symbolizing the fight against tyranny and the pursuit of liberty, equality, and fraternity. The storming of the Bastille represented the people's demand for change, leading to the end of the monarchy and the birth of the French Republic. Today, Bastille Day is a national holiday in France, celebrated with parades, fireworks, and festivities across the country. It serves as a reminder of the power of the people and the ongoing struggle for freedom and democracy.

INDIA FRANCE STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

Further Both countries are active participants of the comprehensive convention on International Terrorism (CCIT) and on many global issues. France has been a consistent supporter of India's aspirations of a permanent membership in the United Nations Security Council. It has also facilitated India's entry into various multilateral forums like Wassenaar Agreement (WA), the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) and the Australia Group.

In the VivaTech 2022, Europe's largest technology event, India was the "Country of Year" and in the 2022

Annual Cannes Film festival, India was the country of Honour.

ALLIES AND STRATEGIC PARTNERS WITH SHARED VALUES

The past 25 years of successful and significant strategic partnership has been marked with significant bilateral visits. In 2018, the bilateral visit of the French President Emmanuel Macron to India was marked by the signing of 14 agreements with India. The visit was highlighted by his statement "We want India as our first strategic partner here (Indo - Pacific) and we want to be India's first strategic partner in Europe and even in western world."

India and France share a common quest for strategic autonomy amid the complexities of big power dynamics, making them almost "mirror images" of each other. Despite being located on different continents, both countries exhibit a remarkable alignment in their strategic outlook.

Similar to the US, India has a strategic partnership agreement with France for mutual sharing of bases and other strategic possessions on a mutual agreement basis. France has certain islands in the Indo Pacific which are of significant importance to Indian strategic reach.

Both India and France prioritize their strategic autonomy and uphold independent foreign policies, while also acknowledging the US's significance in global affairs. France's nuanced perspective on the Ukraine war aligns well with India's stance on the need for serious diplomatic efforts to restore peace. India recognizes France's potential to lead a rapprochement between Europe and Russia, a critical issue of global importance. French support is crucial for achieving a consensus at the upcoming G20 summit in New Delhi, and India remains optimistic that differences over the Ukraine conflict will not hinder positive outcomes.

PARTNERSHIP IN CLEAN ENERGY

Both have many agreements to work towards achieving sustainable growth while aligning their goals towards climate change and mitigate its effects.

Last October, India and France signed a Road Map on Green Hydrogen, which aims "to bring the French and Indian hydrogen ecosystems together" to establish a reliable and sustainable value chain for a global supply of decarbonised hydrogen.

Earlier in February 2022, they signed a Road Map on the Blue Economy and Ocean Governance.

India is a signatory to the Paris agreement of 2015. France has collaborated with India by demonstrating its support for clean energy by endorsing the international solar alliance. It was launched by PM Narendra Modi in Paris 2015. France has signed and ratified the same. India is also a crucial partner of an International thermonuclear project based in Europe.

INDIA FRANCE DEFENCE PARTNERSHIP.

The defense relationship between India and France is a crucial aspect of their ties, characterized by trust and



dependability. Unlike defense deals with the US, which can be affected by unpredictable Congressional interventions and export control regulations, the agreements with France are free from any such constraints. France recognizes India's preference for diversifying its defense procurement and respects India's stance of not relying solely on one source for its defense needs.

- According to the report of Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI), France is the Second largest supplier of defence equipment to India with 29% share for a period between 2017 and 2022.
- India has procured 36 Multi role Rafale aircrafts in 2015 from France through Inter governmental acquisition route.
- India has also entered into an agreement with Airbus consortium to buy and later build C-295 medium lift aircraft for IAF. This is another area where France has significant influence along with other EU countries. First 16 aircraft are to be acquired in fly away condition with the rest to be manufactured and assembled by TATA Advanced systems (TASL) in Vadodara. This programme will significantly contribute to developing a complete life cycle of the aerospace ecosystem in India.
- Project 75 – India (P-75) an initiative to construct Scorpene – Class submarines at Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL) in collaboration with French manufacturers.
- Defence acquisition committee chaired by defence minister shri Rajnath sikh has accorded approval for the procurement of 26 Rafael Marine fighter which will be operated of the aircraft carriers of India
- The contract for six Scorpene submarines from M/s DCNS was signed in October 2006. All six vessels are to be built under technology transfer at the Mazagaon Docks Ltd. Project implementation is underway. The first submarine INS Kalvari was commissioned in 2017.
- 3 additional Scorpene class diesel electric submarines are also to be procured from France. It has also been cleared by DAC
- The French offered their own Safran engine that would be fully made in India. While the US offer, which signalled a major breakthrough in India-US defence ties, does not include the transfer of a critical part of the technology, the French have promised 100 per cent technology transfer.

The Defence Acquisition Committee of India is a decision-making body responsible for approving and overseeing the acquisition of defence equipment and systems for the Indian Armed Forces. It evaluates proposals, ensures compliance with procurement procedures, and aims to enhance the country's military capabilities and self-reliance in defence production.

- DAC approves procurement of additional submarines with higher indigenous content.
- Objective is to maintain force level and operational readiness of the Indian Navy.
- Decision expected to generate significant employment opportunities domestically.
- DAC also approves guidelines for achieving desired

indigenous content in all capital acquisition cases.

- Focus on promoting self-reliance in critical manufacturing technologies and lifecycle sustenance of defence platforms.
- Procurement of 26 Rafale-M fighters includes 22 single-seater jets and four twin-seater trainers, as per defence officials.

The Defence Acquisition Committee (DAC) of India has granted acceptance of necessity (AoN) for the procurement of 26 Rafale Marine aircraft, along with associated ancillary equipment, weapons, simulators, spares, documentation, crew training, and logistic support for the Indian Navy. This decision was made based on the Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) with the French government. The Ministry of Defence stated that the price and other terms of purchase will be negotiated, taking into account various factors, including the comparative procurement price of similar aircraft by other countries.

There has been news of India and France collaborating to jointly develop Barracuda class SSNs by transferring technology. This may be a fall out of the scrapped France Australia submarine deal. But not confirmed.

Military dialogues and joint exercises like Varuna (Navy), Garuda (Air Force) and Shakthi (Army) are held regularly to ensure synergised interoperability.

INDO FRANCE COLLABORATION IN SPACE AND OTHER TECHNOLOGIES

ISRO and the French national centre for space have robust collaboration dating back to the 1960's.

Joint working group for Gaganyaan and shared expertise for space medicine, astronaut training and health monitoring are certain areas of Collaboration.

Mutual exchange of Launch facilities, high resolution space observations with applications in meteorology, oceanography and cartography are areas of mutual cooperation and collaboration.

OTHER AREAS OF COOPERATION

France has emerged as a major source of FDI for India with the presence of more than 1000 French establishments in India.

The two countries can further work towards increasing bilateral trade and investments including emphasis on free trade agreements and promoting investments.

CHINA ANGLE IN INDIA FRANCE PARTNERSHIP

Being the sole EU state with territories in the Indo-Pacific, France holds significant potential as a partner for enhancing maritime domain awareness and monitoring China's activities in the region. This can strengthen India's involvement in the Quad alliance. It is essential for India to recognize that France maintains a unique relationship with China, particularly in trade and commerce, which may pose challenges in completely mitigating risks or decoupling from China. Nevertheless, France's support can aid India in bolstering its maritime defense capabilities through a transactional approach, presenting valuable opportunities for cooperation.



SIGNIFICANCE

India and France share the distinction of being each other's oldest strategic partners, with an exceptionally smooth and friction-free relationship. Both countries place a high premium on their strategic autonomy and pursue independent foreign policies, envisioning a multipolar world. Their defense ties are sturdy and poised to further strengthen. The India-France relationship exemplifies a harmonious and mutually beneficial alliance based on shared values and common goals.

KEY WORDS

BASTILLE DAY

Strategic Partnership

Blue economy

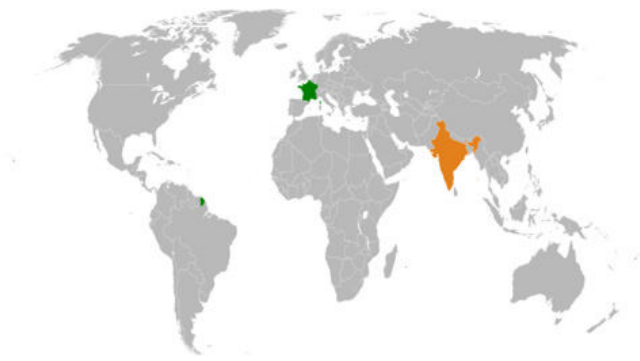
Ocean Governance

Defence Acquisition Committee

Project 75i

Scorpene

Rafale Marine



INDIA-EGYPT RELATIONS

CONTEXT : Visit of Shri Narendra Modi ji to Egypt Highlights the growing cooperation between India and Egypt. Egyptian President Abdel Fateh el – Sisi was the Chief guest for the Republic Day Parade this year.

BACKGROUND:

India and Egypt share a rich history of contact dating back to Emperor Ashoka's time, with relations even during the rule of Ptolemy II. As far back as 2750 BCE, Pharaoh Sahure sent ships to peninsular India, signifying early maritime connections. During the Hellenistic period, there were connections between Egypt under Ptolemaic rule and the Mauryan Empire in India.

The desire for independence from British colonial rule united Mahatma Gandhi and Egyptian revolutionary Saad Zaghloul. Formal diplomatic relations were established in 1947, and a friendship treaty was signed in 1955.

India supported Egypt during the 1956 Suez Crisis and sought to mediate the conflict. The two countries became founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961, reflecting shared interests in promoting peace and neutrality during the Cold War.

Throughout history, India and Egypt have maintained a bond of friendship and cooperation, stemming from their deep-rooted historical and cultural connections.



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PM'S VISIT AND STRATEGIC TIES WITH EGYPT

STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF EGYPT

With a population of nearly 110 million, Egypt holds a strategic position at the crossroads of Africa and Asia. It boasts the region's largest standing army and serves as the host of the League of Arab States, signifying its significant role in Arab politics. Despite its size, Egypt's diplomatic influence extends beyond its proportion in global affairs. India is determined to enhance its ties with Egypt, recognizing its pivotal role in both Arab world politics and African affairs.

The Indian government is actively engaging with the Global South, and Egypt plays a crucial part in this endeavour. India views Egypt as a key partner in its effort to consolidate its positions as a voice of Global South, as it gears to host the G20 meeting in September. New Delhi is looking for deeper access to the Middle East and North Africa through Cairo. India also sees Egypt as a substantial power to balance out its interaction with the members of the Gulf Cooperation Council. By allying with Egypt, India is seeking to deepen its already substantial access to the Arab world, Africa and Israel, especially in the context of historic Abrahamic accord reached by the countries of the middle east.

Egypt would like to see Egypt join BRICS and India would like to see a friendly Egypt as part of the grouping to balance out China.

China currently surpasses India in bilateral trade with Egypt, with trade reaching \$15 billion compared to India's \$7.26 billion in 2021-22.

As the most populous country in West Asia, Egypt's geo-strategic location is vital, with the Suez Canal facilitating 12% of global trade. President Sisi has pursued Chinese investments, visiting China multiple times in recent years.

Both India and Egypt share concerns about terrorism and extremism, emphasizing the importance of regional stability in the Middle East and North Africa. India wants to curtail religious extremism by supporting moderate countries in the region.

INDIA EGYPT ECONOMIC COOPERATION

Bilateral trade between the two countries in 2021-22 was over \$7 billion, nearly a third of it was petroleum related.

Egypt has enhanced its appeal by entering into various free trade agreements, encompassing regions such as Africa (ACFTA, AGADIR, COMESA), Europe (EFTA), Latin America (MERCOSUR), and the Arab world (GAFTA). Additionally, it is considered a significant gateway to access markets in both Africa and Europe.

EGYPT's ambitious vision to transform the Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZONE) into a global manufacturing hub is gaining significant momentum. Positioned on both banks of the Suez Canal, a crucial waterway linking the Mediterranean and Red Seas, SCZONE offers the shortest route between European and Asian markets. China has swiftly recognized the potential of SCZONE, integrating it into its Belt and Road and Maritime Silk Road initiatives. Consequently, deepening economic ties with Egypt becomes imperative for China's strategic interests.

The India-Egypt Bilateral Trade Agreement has been in operation since March 1978 and is based on the Most Favoured Nation clause and the bilateral trade has increased more than five times in the last ten years.

India was Egypt's sixth largest trading partner, while Egypt was India's 38th in 2022-23.

Indian investments in Egypt are spread over 50 projects totalling USD 3.15 billion. Egypt has invested USD 37 million in India.

Egypt's economy has been in shambles over the past few years. Egypt's foreign debt is over \$163 billion (43% of the GDP) and its net foreign assets are minus \$24 billion.

It was battered by the collapse of tourism during the pandemic, and the Russia-Ukraine war has impacted its supply of food – almost 80% of Egypt's grain came from these two countries – and hit its foreign exchange reserves.

Despite restrictions on the export of wheat, India had last year allowed shipments of 61,500 metric tonnes to Egypt.

BILATERAL INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISM

India and Egypt have a joint commission, foreign office consultations and at least nine joint working groups.

COOPERATION IN TERRORISM AND DEFENCE

- In the 1960s, the Air Forces of India and Egypt collaborated on fighter aircraft development, with Indian pilots training their Egyptian counterparts until the mid-1980s.
- Presently, both the Indian Air Force (IAF) and the Egyptian air force operate the French Rafale fighter jets.
- In 2022, the two countries signed a pact to engage in joint exercises and training cooperation.
- Recently, the first joint special forces exercise, named "Exercise Cyclone-I," took place in January 2023 in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, involving the Indian Army and the Egyptian Army.
- Both the IAF and Egyptian air force fly the French Rafale fighter jets.
- New Delhi wants to supply India-made defence equipment such as the LCA Tejas to Egypt.
- A pact was signed when Defence Minister Rajnath Singh visited Cairo last year. The two countries have decided to also participate in exercises and cooperate in training.

Operation Sankalp is an Indian Navy deployment launched in June 2019 in the Gulf of Oman and the Persian Gulf. It aims to protect Indian-flagged vessels, ensure maritime security, and safeguard Indian nationals in the region amidst escalating tensions and maritime threats.

It reflects India's commitment to maintaining stability and security in crucial maritime routes and promoting peace and stability in the region.



CULTURAL RELATIONS:

The Maulana Azad Centre for Indian Culture (MACIC) was established in Cairo in 1992 to promote cultural cooperation between India and Egypt.

Recently, an MoU was signed to facilitate content exchange and co-productions between Prasar Bharati and the National Media Authority of Egypt.

KEY HIGHLIGHTS OF PM MODI'S VISIT TO EGYPT

Order of the Nile Award: President El-Sisi conferred the 'Order of the Nile' award, Egypt's highest state honour, upon Prime Minister Narendra Modi. This marks the 13th such state honour received by PM Modi from various countries.

Strategic Partnership Agreement: Both leaders signed an agreement to elevate the bilateral relationship between India and Egypt to a "Strategic Partnership," indicating a strengthened and comprehensive cooperation between the two nations.

MoUs/Agreements: Three MoUs were signed in the fields of Agriculture, Archaeology & Antiquities, and Competition Law, further promoting cooperation and collaboration in these areas.

Invitation to G20 Summit: Prime Minister Modi invited President El-Sisi to the upcoming G20 Summit scheduled for September 2023, reflecting India's interest in Egypt's participation in global economic discussions.

Visit to Al-Hakim Mosque: PM Modi visited the historic 11th-century Al-Hakim Mosque in Cairo, which was restored with the assistance of India's Dawoodi Bohra community. The Dawoodi Bohra community, known for their origin in Egypt and presence in India since the 11th century, played a significant role in the mosque's renovation and maintenance.

Heliopolis War Cemetery: In a solemn gesture, PM Modi paid respects to Indian soldiers who sacrificed their lives

during World War I at the Heliopolis War Cemetery in Cairo, honoring their memory and sacrifice.

CONCLUSION: The bilateral relationship between India and Egypt is marked by various points of convergence. Both countries share cultural and religious ties, recognizing Egypt's special place in the Islamic world with Al Azhar University being a respected seat of Sunni Islam learning. They stand united against terrorism, viewing it as a significant global security threat and emphasizing the need for joint action. Economic cooperation thrives due to Egypt's strategic location, providing India access to European and African markets. As founding members of the Non-Aligned Movement, they value non-alignment and cooperation in international affairs. India and Egypt seek Mutual cooperation in the emerging New global south through increased synergies in G20, possible access to BRICS etc. While the geopolitical landscape in West Asia has evolved, India and Egypt continue to maintain their cooperation, promoting peace and stability in the region. The relationship remains strong and holds potential for further growth and mutual benefits.

GLOBAL SOUTH

Order of Nile Award

Al – Hakim Mosque

Heliopolis War cemetery

Suez Canal Economic Zone (SCZONE)

GE 414 JET ENGINE DEAL WITH US:

CONTEXT : *The focal point of the Indian Prime Minister's official State Visit to the US was the significant defense agreement aimed at establishing the production of fighter jet engines in India.*

BACKGROUND: India has achieved significant milestones in various defense and space initiatives, including the successful design and construction of the indigenous fighter jet, LCA Tejas. However, the country has faced challenges in developing its own engines to power these aircraft.

The pursuit of indigenous aero-engines dates back to the 1960s when India introduced its first indigenous fighter, HF-24 Marut, a supersonic jet. Unfortunately, it couldn't reach its full potential due to the unavailability of a suitable engine.

In 1986, the Kaveri program was initiated to develop an indigenous military gas turbine engine for the ambitious LCA project. The program incurred a substantial expenditure of over ₹2,000 crore, but it failed to meet the necessary technical requirements.

Due to the ongoing challenges in the development of the Kaveri engine, India opted for American GE-F404 engines as an interim solution to power the LCA Tejas Mark-1.

Later, in 2010, the Aeronautical Development Agency (ADA) chose the more powerful F414 engines for the Tejas Mark-2. India had wanted access to critical US engine technologies as part of this deal. However, this deal faced challenges as it couldn't materialize due to US domestic legislation and regulatory hurdles.

WHAT IS THE AGREEMENT?

During the Indian Prime Minister's official State Visit to the US, an important defense deal is set to take place between General Electric (GE) Aerospace, an American manufacturing company, and Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL). The deal aims to facilitate the sharing of critical technology, enabling the joint production of GE-F414 jet engines to be used in the indigenous Light Combat Aircraft (LCA) Tejas Mk-II.

According to media reports, the US has taken an unprecedented step by agreeing to transfer approximately 80% of the technology value to India. This move is expected to significantly enhance India's capabilities in manufacturing advanced jet engines for its domestic defense projects.



WHAT ARE THE CRITICAL FEATURES OF THE GE F414 ENGINE?



The General Electric F414 is an American afterburning turbofan engine in the 22,000-pound (98 kN) thrust class produced by GE Aerospace (formerly GE Aviation). The F414 originated from GE's widely used F404 turbofan, enlarged and improved for use in the Boeing F/A-18E/F Super Hornet. The engine was developed from the F412 non-afterburning turbofan planned for the A-12 Avenger II, before it was cancelled.

The F414 provides unrestricted engine performance with rapid throttle response and no throttle restrictions, ensuring power is readily available when needed. The engine offers good afterburner light and stability, enabling additional thrust to be quickly accessed when required.

The forthcoming defense deal involves the implementation of a state-of-the-art Full Authority Digital Engine Control (FADEC) system, which is a fully digital electronic control system responsible for managing various engine functions. This cutting-edge technology will be customized to incorporate single-engine safety features that align with India's specific defense requirements.

The engines powered by this advanced FADEC system have already been successfully integrated into several next-generation combat aircraft worldwide, including Boeing's F-18 Super Hornet and Saab's JAS 39-Gripen.

Upon finalizing the deal, India will achieve a remarkable milestone, as it will become the fifth country globally to locally produce jet engines, joining the ranks of the United States, Russia, France, and the United Kingdom. This development marks a significant step forward in India's indigenous defense capabilities and underscores the nation's progress in high-tech aerospace engineering.

SIGNIFICANCE: In the context of dual threats of China and Pakistan along its borders and the importance of maintaining strategic autonomy in the emerging world order, India recognizes the necessity of achieving self-reliance and technological advancement in the defense sector.

The proposed defense deal between India and General Electric (GE) Aerospace holds immense significance for bilateral defense cooperation, as well as high-tech collaboration, especially in light of China's increasing influence and global technological dominance. It is seen as a crucial step in bolstering India's military capabilities, particularly during the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict.

The deal's implications go beyond immediate benefits, as it is expected to play a vital role in replacing India's aging fleet of Russian fighters with indigenously produced ones. This move not only enhances India's defense readiness but also saves decades of research and development costs.

Furthermore, the deal's transformative impact is anticipated to extend to the aerospace and defense manufacturing industry, fostering technological growth and self-sufficiency. By advancing its capabilities in jet engine production and acquiring critical technology, India will strengthen its position as a major player in the global defense landscape.

CONCLUSION: The deal has potential to elevate US as an alternative to Russia as the traditional supplier of critical military hardware. This has to be seen in perspective of Russia's increasing dependence on China due to its various Geo political considerations.

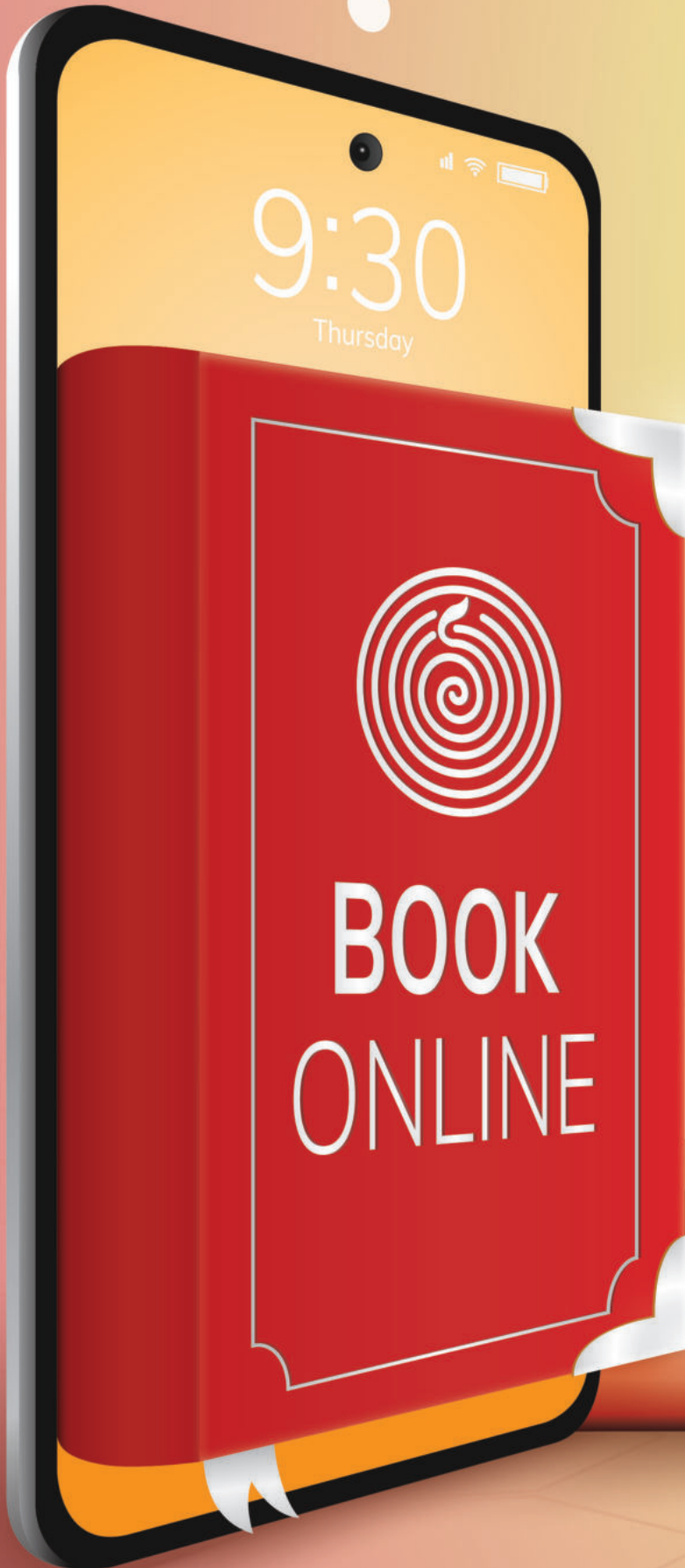
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AIRBUS C-295 AIRCRAFT

**MILITARY AIRCRAFT VISIT COCOS
ISLANDS**

**CERT-IN CAUTIONS INTERNET USERS
AGAINST 'AKIRA'**



AIRBUS C-295 AIRCRAFT

CONTEXT: The Indian Air Force (IAF) will receive the first C-295 transport aircraft in September, 2023. The second C-295 will be delivered in May 2024 followed by seven aircraft in 2024 at the rate of one per month.

Designed and initially manufactured by the Spanish aerospace company CASA, Medium tactical transport aircraft is capable of performing a wide variety of missions effectively, including parachute and cargo dropping, Electronic Signals Intelligence (ELINT), medical evacuation (MEDEVAC), and maritime patrol



BACKGROUND: In September 2021, the Defence Ministry signed a ₹22,000-crore deal with Airbus and Space S.A., Spain, for procurement of 56 C-295MW transport aircraft to replace the Avro aircraft in service with the IAF. As per contract, 16 aircraft would come in fly away condition, manufactured at the Airbus facility in Seville, and 40 would be manufactured in India by Airbus jointly with Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL). The Final Assembly Line (FAL) at Vadodara in partnership with Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) is being set up and will be ready by mid-2024 and start production by November 2024 with the first aircraft manufactured in India to be delivered in September 2026.

MILITARY AIRCRAFT VISIT COCOS ISLANDS

CONTEXT: An Indian Navy Dornier maritime patrol aircraft and an Indian Air Force (IAF) C-130 transport aircraft visited Australia's Cocos (Keeling) Islands (CKI) in the Southern Indian Ocean, close to Indonesia and strategic maritime choke points earlier this month.

SIGNIFICANCE: The visit, latest in a series of India's growing military-to-military engagements, deepening interoperability broadly in the region and especially with Australia represents an important step in the bilateral relationship as the two countries increasingly give each other access to their military facilities in the Indian Ocean.

Cocos Islands could serve as a staging point for Australian and Indian air surveillance of the maritime choke points through Southeast Asia and the entire eastern Indian Ocean. India's access to CKI and Christmas Island, closer to the strategic choke points would significantly enhance the on-station time of the Indian Navy's P-8Is to monitor movements into the Indian Ocean, especially by China's People's Liberation Army Navy, whose forays into

the region have significantly gone up in recent years.

In February, an Indian Navy Kilo class conventional submarine, INS Sindhukesari, which was on operational deployment, travelled through the Sunda Strait and docked in Jakarta, Indonesia for operational turnaround.

Cocos Islands had been a point of cooperation between the space agencies of the two countries for India's Gaganyaan human space flight mission. Australia's active support in establishing a temporary ground station at CKI for the Gaganyaan missions, and potential opportunities for cooperation in earth observation, satellite navigation, space situational awareness, weather and climate studies using satellite data.

CERT-IN CAUTIONS INTERNET USERS AGAINST 'AKIRA'

CONTEXT: The Indian cyber security agency, CERT-In, warns of the ransomware virus 'Akira' targeting Windows and Linux systems. Akira steals personal data, encrypts victim's files, and conducts double extortion, demanding ransom payments.

The Indian cyber security agency, CERT-In, issues an advisory about the ransomware virus 'Akira' actively targeting Windows and Linux systems. Akira steals personal data, encrypts files, and conducts double extortion to force victims into paying ransoms. If payment is not made, the attackers release victim data on the dark web. The ransomware group exploits VPN services without multi-factor authentication and uses tools like AnyDesk, WinRAR, and PCHunter. CERT-In advises users to follow online hygiene practices, maintain offline backups, update systems regularly, use strong passwords, and enable multi-factor authentication to counter such cyber-attacks.



“a malicious act where cybercriminals use software to encrypt a victim's data, demanding payment (ransom) for decryption.”

Ransomware is malicious software that encrypts data, demanding payment for decryption keys. Cybercriminals exploit vulnerabilities, phishing, or malware to deliver ransomware to victims' systems. It poses a severe threat to individuals, businesses, and governments worldwide. Paying ransom doesn't guarantee data recovery, and it fuels criminals to continue attacks. Understanding ransomware helps implement robust security measures and preventive strategies.

1. Regular data backups are crucial to mitigate the impact of a ransomware attack.
2. Awareness and education about phishing and safe online practices are essential defences.
3. Cooperation among law enforcement, cyber security experts, and the public is vital for combating ransomware.

Cyber Emergency Response Team - India (CERT-In): The Cyber Emergency Response Team - India (CERT-In) was established in 2004, functioning under the Department of Information Technology. The Cyber Emergency Response Team - India (CERT-In) is mandated under the IT Amendment Act, 2008 to serve as the national

- Ransomware Attack
agency in charge of cyber security. Since 2012, DG of CERT-In is called the National Cyber Security Coordinator (NCSC).

MANDATE:

1. Improve visibility of integrity of ICT products and services by establishing infrastructure for testing & validation of security of such product.
2. Create workforce for 500,000 professionals skilled in next 5 years through capacity building skill development and training.
3. Provide fiscal benefit to businesses for adoption of standard security practices and processes.
4. Enable Protection of information while in process, handling, storage & transit so as to safeguard privacy of citizen's data and reducing economic losses due to cyber-crime or data theft.
5. Enable effective prevention, investigation and prosecution of cybercrime and enhancement of law enforcement capabilities through appropriate legislative intervention.

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 diagonal line; and a series of white circles connected by a dotted line. A grid of white dashed lines is also present.



INDIAN COMPANIES TO LIST ON FOREIGN EXCHANGES THROUGH IFSC

S&P GLOBAL INDIA PMI EASES

A MACRO VIEW OF THE FISCAL HEALTH OF STATES

GOVERNMENT RAISE INTEREST RATE FOR PF DEPOSITS IN 2022-23

50TH GOODS AND SERVICE TAX COUNCIL MEETING

GO FIRST INSOLVENCY

DE – DOLLARISATION OF GLOBAL TRADE

FOREX RESERVE TOPS \$600BN, A 15 MONTH HIGH

NET DIRECT TAX COLLECTIONS

TRACKING INFLATION

NITI AAYOG REPORT: 13.5-CR. PEOPLE LIFTED OUT OF MD POVERTY

IMF REVISE INDIA'S GROWTH FORECAST TO 6.1 %

BANKS WRITE OFF BAD LOANS WORTH RS 2.09 LAKH CRORE IN 2022-23: RBI

PRONAB SEN COMMITTEE



INDIAN COMPANIES TO LIST ON FOREIGN EXCHANGES THROUGH IFSC

CONTEXT: The Union Minister of Finance Nirmala Sitharaman hinted allowing Indian companies to directly list their shares on foreign exchanges operating at the GIFT City-based International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) in Gujarat, an announcement on this during her budget speech of 2021-22. The government has taken a decision to enable direct listing of listed and unlisted companies on the IFSC exchanges.

Nirmala Sitharaman, the Union Finance Minister inaugurated a Limited Purpose Clearing Corporation (LPCC) mechanism called AMC Repo Clearing Ltd. (ARCL) and the Corporate Debt Market Development Fund (CDMDF) which is expected to help in the development of a vibrant corporate bond market in India.

AMC Repo Clearing Ltd. (ARCL) provide clearing and settlement services for corporate bond repo transactions and develop an active repo market. It would allow market makers to access cost-effective funding for their inventory, bondholders to meet their short-term liquidity needs without having to liquidate their assets, and entities with short term surpluses to deploy their funds in a safe and efficient manner.

Corporate Debt Market Development Fund (CDMDF) worth over ₹33,000 Cr. would purchase and hold eligible corporate debt securities from participating investors during fall in market operation and sell these securities as markets recover.

BACKGROUND: The first International Financial Service Centre (IFSC) in India has been set up at the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City), a multi-service Special Economic Zone (SEZ) located at Gandhinagar. The SEZ Act, 2005 allows setting up an IFSC in an SEZ or as an SEZ after approval from the Centre. The office of IREDA at GIFT City, Gandhinagar, will be classified as an overseas office, allowing the IREDA to avoid foreign exchange hedging costs.

SIGNIFICANCE: Gandhinagar can emerge as a global financial centre. The IFSC at Gandhinagar provide trans-border financial products and services to customers outside the jurisdiction of the domestic economy.

SERVICES OFFERED BY IFSC

Fund-raising services for individuals, corporations and governments.

Asset management and global portfolio diversification undertaken by pension funds, insurance companies and mutual funds.

Wealth management.

Global tax management and cross-border tax liability optimization.

Global and regional corporate treasury management operations.

Risk management operations such as insurance and reinsurance.

Merger and acquisition activities among trans-national corporations

INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL SERVICES CENTRES AUTHORITY

TYPE: Statutory organisation.

STATUTE: IFSCA Act, 2019.

HEADQUARTERS: GIFT City.

MANDATE: Develop and regulate financial products, services and institutions in the IFSC in India.

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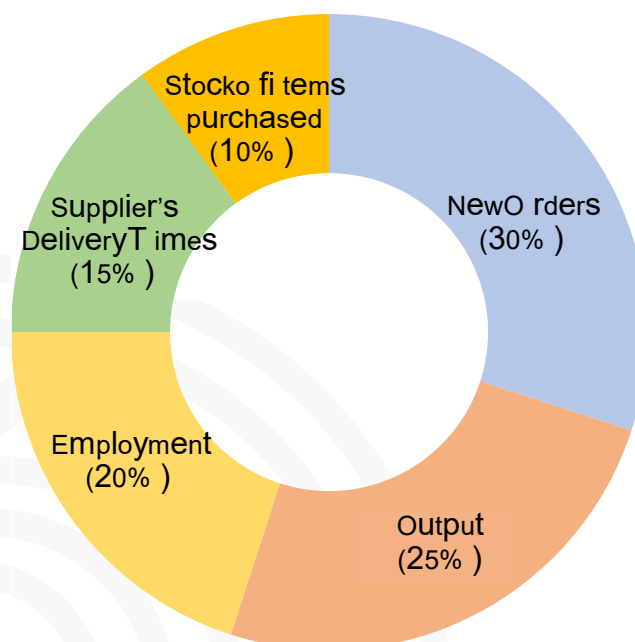
S&P GLOBAL INDIA PMI EASES

CONTEXT: The survey-based S&P Global India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) eased to 57.8 in June from 31-month high of 58.7 in May

The S&P Global India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index measures the performance of the manufacturing sector and is derived from a survey of 500 manufacturing companies. The 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. A reading above 50 indicates an expansion of the manufacturing sector compared to the previous month; below 50 represents a contraction; while 50 indicates no change

A strong demand forecast prompted manufacturers to purchase fresh raw materials at the second-strongest pace in more than 12 years. The factory orders which constitute about 30% of the manufacturing PMI's weight grew at the strongest pace in for May since February 2021. The hiring process accelerated with a strong demand and the uptick in output, as overall business confidence rose to a six-month high. The positive demand dynamics and greater labour costs pushed inflation to a 13-month high.

FIGURE: Pie chart representation of weightages assigned for calculation of the S&P Global India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI).



A MACRO VIEW OF THE FISCAL HEALTH OF STATES

CONTEXT: As in 2023-24 (BE), out of 17 major States, 13 States face revenue deficit with a large debt to Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) ratio. Out of these 13 revenue deficit States, seven States - Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Kerala, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal have their fiscal deficits primarily driven by revenue deficits.

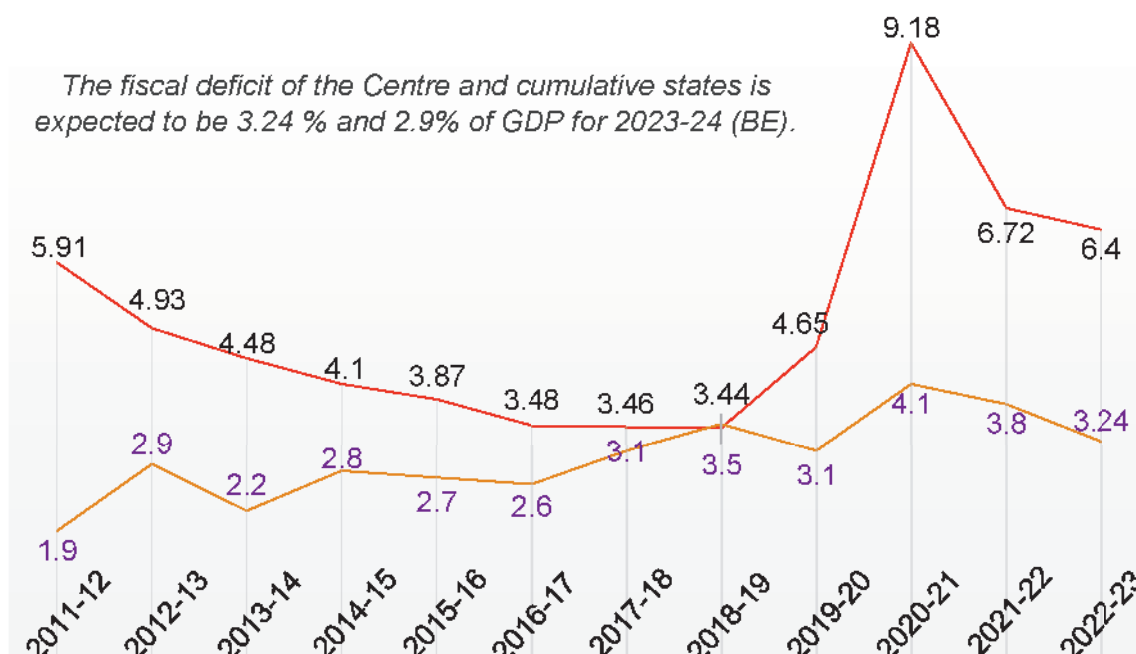


FIGURE: Column chart representation of the fiscal deficit as a percentage of GDP of the Centre.

Fiscal consolidation at State levels:

1. States in aggregate managed to be fiscally prudent despite a significant contraction in revenues even during the peak of COVID-19.
2. States were able to reprioritise expenditure and quickly contain the fiscal deficit.



3. Reduction in fiscal deficit is a combination of expenditure-side adjustments, improved Goods and Services Tax (GST) collection and higher tax devolution due to buoyant central revenues.
4. Non-GST revenues are also showing signs of recovery after the pandemic in most States

GROUP OF SEVEN:

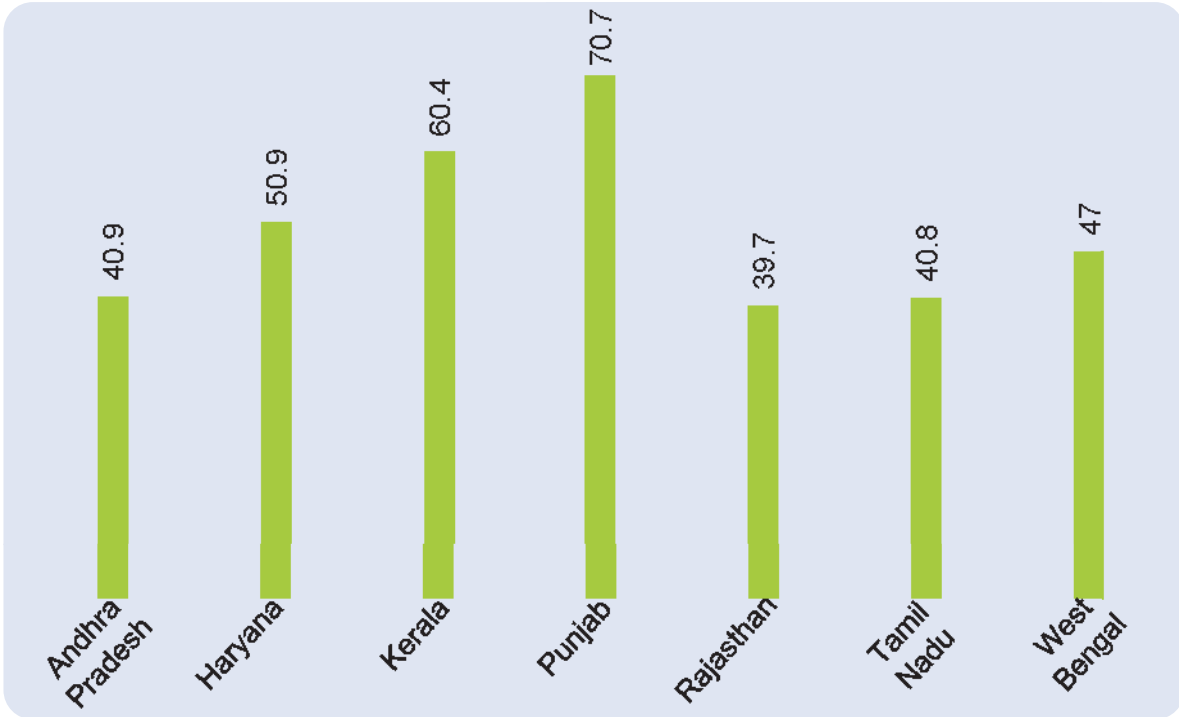
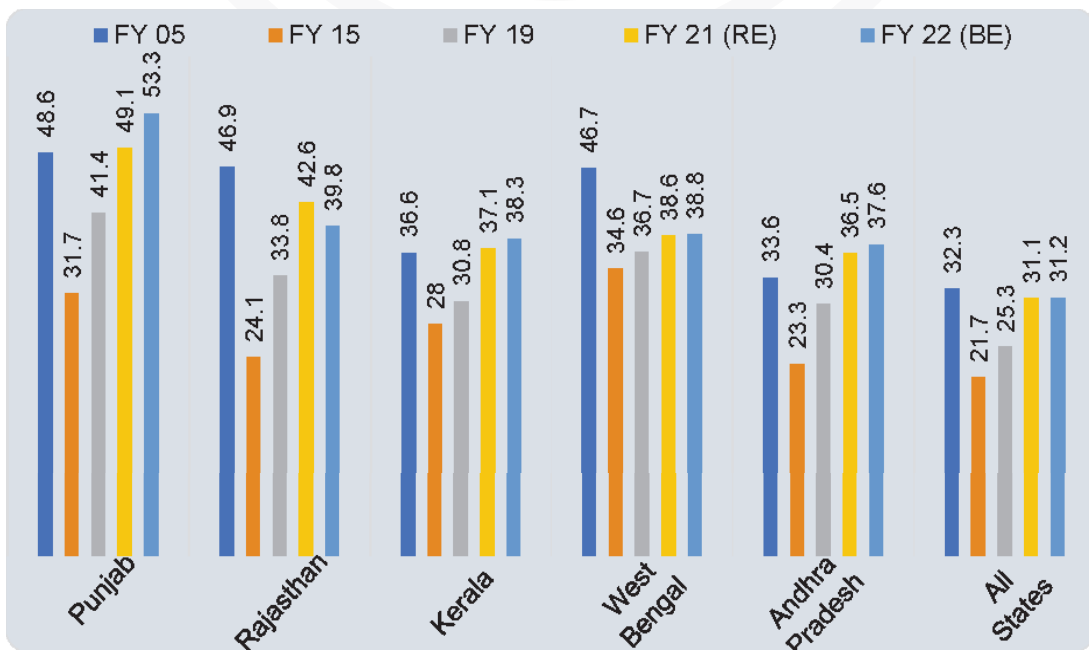


FIGURE: Column chart representation of shares of revenue deficit in fiscal deficit for 2023-24

The combined fiscal deficit of 7 fiscally stressed States is 3.71% of GSDP compared to the all-State average of 2.9 % of GSDP. The combined revenue deficit of 7 fiscally stressed States is 2.15 % of GSDP compared to the all-State revenue deficit is 0.78 %. The combined debt ratio 7 fiscally stressed States is higher than the Finance Commission recommended debt ratio for all States for the year 2023-24.

STATUS OF STATES DEBT



Bar chart representation of projected Liabilities-GSDP ratio (a metric that shows what a state owes with what it produces, indicating a particular state's ability to pay back its debts) of Punjab, Rajasthan, Kerala and West Bengal by 2026-2



TEN STATES - Punjab, Rajasthan, Kerala, West Bengal, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Haryana account for half of the total expenditure in India

REASONS FOR FISCAL DETERIORATION IN STATES

- **PUBLIC FINANCE INDISCIPLINE:** Among the ten states, Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Punjab exceeded both debt and fiscal deficit targets for FY 2020-21, set by the Fifteenth Finance Commission.
- **DECLINE IN TAXATION RECEIPTS:** Taxation receipts of some of these 10 states - Madhya Pradesh, Punjab and Kerala has been declining over time, making them fiscally more vulnerable.
- **UNCERTAIN NON-TAXATION RECEIPTS:** Non-tax receipts from General services, interest receipts and economic services remained volatile for most of these states, even dropping significantly in recent years.
- **POOR EXPENDITURE QUALITY:** High revenue spending to capital outlay ratios (share of revenue expenditure in total expenditure) that varies in the range of 80-90 %. Some states like Rajasthan, West Bengal, Punjab and Kerala spend around 90 % on revenue accounts.
- **LIMITED FISCAL SPACE:** High committed expenditures - interest payments, pensions and administrative expenses, account for a significant portion (over 35 %) of the total revenue expenditure in states like Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Kerala and Punjab, leave little space for undertaking developmental expenditures.
- **ABSORPTION OF LOSSES OF DISCOMs:** The shift in liability of DISCOMs to the part of the Government after the UDAY scheme further worsened the situation.

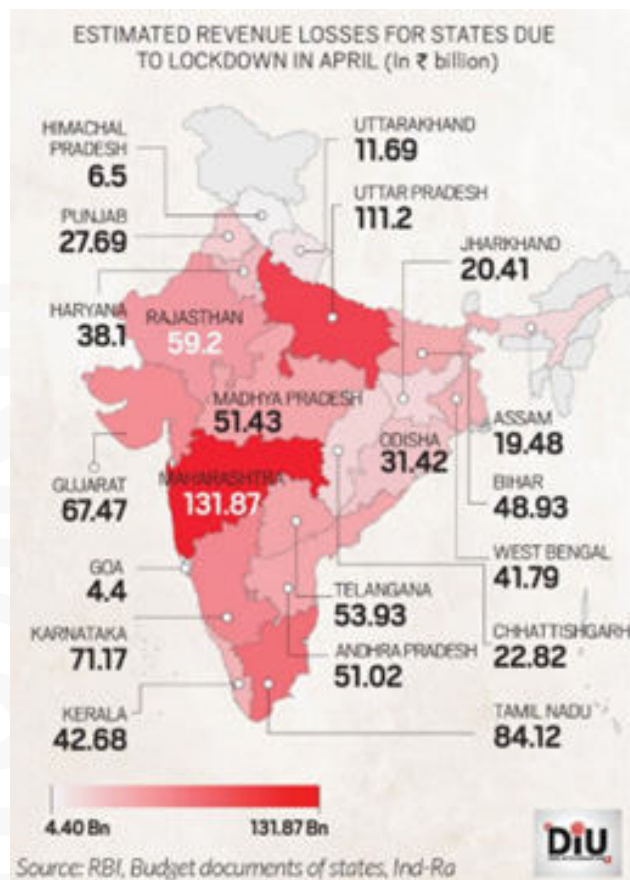


FIGURE: Map representing estimated revenue losses for States due to lockdown in April, 2020

LONG-TERM MEASURES:

- Adopting best practices of other states for crop diversification
- Focus on slums redevelopment and cluster development
- Advance urban planning for Tier II and Tier III cities
- Urban development along the transit corridor
- Focus on the quality of their teachers

PRESENT FISCAL STATUS: It is clear that in the present fiscal environment, even achieving a consolidated debt-to-GDP ratio of 58.2 recommended by the 14th Finance Commission for 2019-20 would be unfeasible in the medium term. The Finance Commission had recommended that the Union government bring down its deficit relative to GDP from 43.6 % in 2015-16 to 36.3 %, and the States maintain their deficit at about 22%. Even before the pandemic, the aggregate public debt had slipped to 74.3 % in 2019-20, and the pandemic pushed it to 89.7 % in 2020-21. With the nominal GDP recovering to grow at 18.5 % in 2021-22 after the pandemic, the debt ratio declined only marginally to 85.7 %. With the high primary deficit of 3.7 % of GDP in 2022-23 and budgeted at over 3 % in 2023-24, we will have to contend with elevated debt levels in the medium term.



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TARGETS SET BY NK SINGH COMMITTEE, 2016 (FY 2022-23)

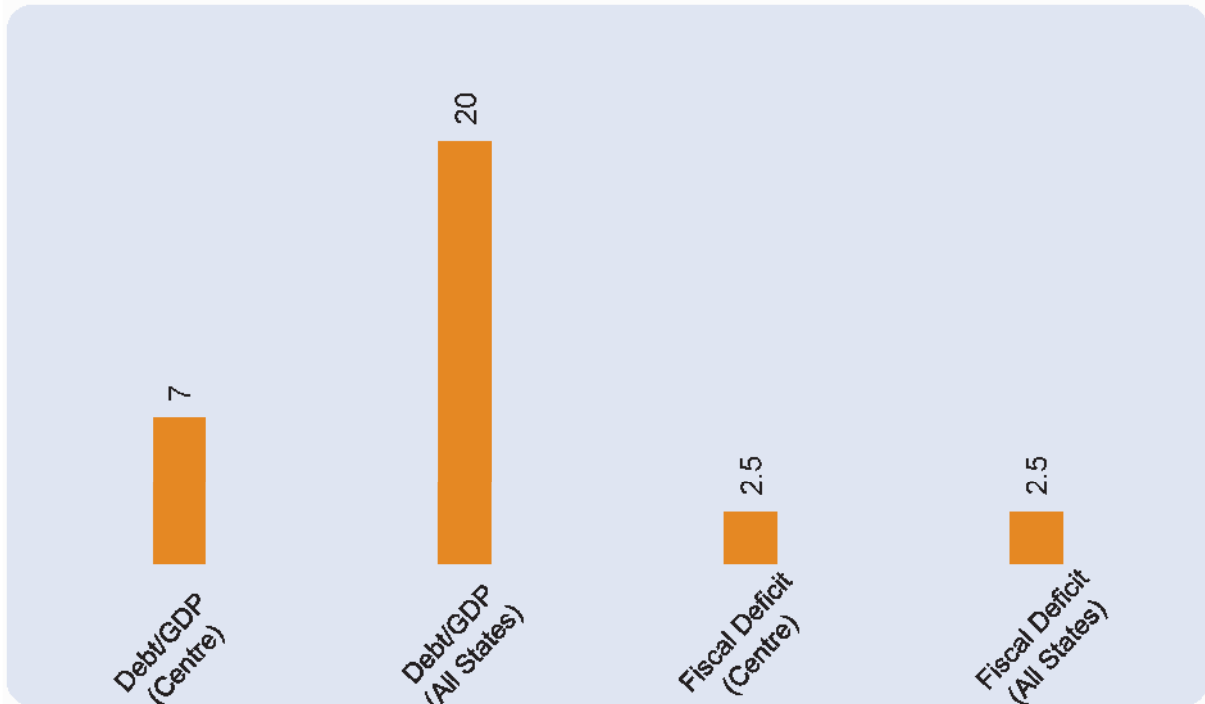


FIGURE: Bar chart representation of targets set as a per centage of GDP by NK SINGH COMMITTEE, 2016 for FY 2022-23.

CONCLUSION: The annual deficits add to the total debt and debt repayment depends on a state’s ability to raise revenues. A vicious cycle starts with a state, or all the states in aggregate, finds it difficult to raise revenues, a rising mountain of debt. The States end up paying more and more towards interest payments instead of spending their revenues on creating new assets that provide better education, health and welfare for their residents.

GOVERNMENT RAISE INTEREST RATE FOR PF DEPOSITS IN 2022-23

CONTEXT: The Government approved an interest rate of 8.15% for Employees’ Provident Fund (EPF) deposits for the financial year 2022-23 recommended by the Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO). The Central Board of Trustees of the Employees’ Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO), chaired by the Union Minister of Labour and Employment fix the interest rate based on the performance of the National Pension System (NPS) benchmark index

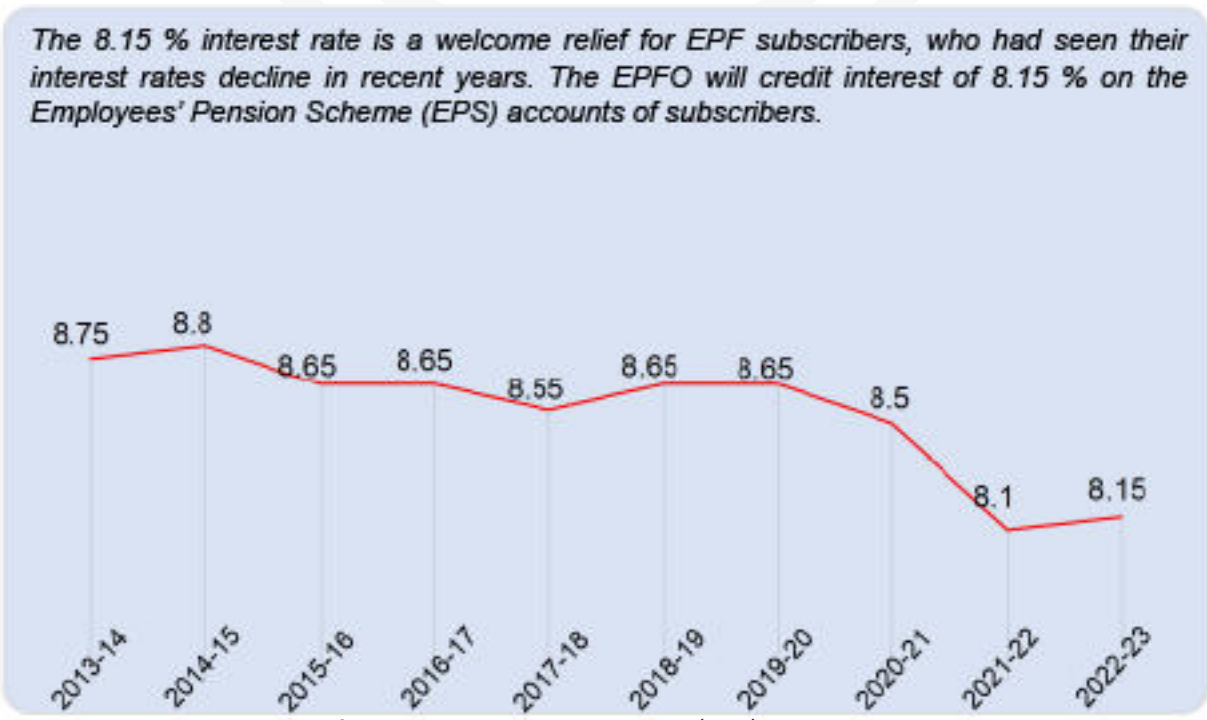


FIGURE: Line chart representation of the Employees Provident Fund (EPF) interest rates.



NPS BENCHMARK INDEX: The National Pension System (NPS) benchmark index is a set of indices used to measure the performance of NPS funds updated on a monthly basis. The indices are used to measure the performance of NPS funds over different time periods. For example, the 1-year return of an NPS fund is calculated by comparing the value of the fund's assets at the end of one year to the value of the assets at the beginning of the year. The indices are divided into four asset classes: equity, corporate bonds, government bonds, and alternative assets. The equity benchmark index is the Nifty 50. The corporate bond benchmark index is the CRISIL Corporate Bond Index. The government bond benchmark index is the RBI 10-Year G-Sec Index. The alternative assets benchmark index is the S&P BSE SENSEX Infrastructure Index.

50TH GOODS AND SERVICE TAX COUNCIL MEETING

CONTEXT: The 50th meeting of the Goods and Services was held on July 11, 2023 at New Delhi.

BACKGROUND: The Parliament of India enacted the Goods and Service Tax (GST) Act, 2017 on March 29, 2017 and came into effect on July 01, 2017.

SALIENT FEATURES: Goods and Service Tax is an indirect tax levied on the supply of goods and services. GST is a comprehensive, multi-stage, destination-based tax levied on every value addition. GST is a single domestic indirect tax law for the entire country, replaced many indirect taxes in India such as the excise duty, VAT, services tax, etc. The Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman emphasised that the GST has moved the country towards a unified market during the launch of the GST system in 2016. Earlier, each State followed different indirect tax structures and procedures, with check posts at inter-State borders marked by bottlenecks that added to logistics costs and subtracted from Indian goods' competitiveness. All businesses with annual turnover of ₹ 5 crore will have to generate e-invoices from August, 2023.

DECISIONS TAKEN AT THE GST COUNCIL

1. Impose a 28 % tax on online gaming, casinos, and horse racing levied on the full-face value of bets and wagers made on these activities, regardless of whether they involve skill or chance. The decision to levy a uniform 28 % tax was made after the GST Council considered the "moral question" of prioritizing online gaming over essential goods. The council also noted that online gaming is a "high-margin" industry, and that a higher tax rate would be appropriate.

IMPLICATIONS:

- **Higher prices for consumers:** The higher tax rate is likely to lead to higher prices for consumers, which could dampen demand for online gaming. The industry could adapt and find ways to pass on the cost of the tax to consumers.
- **Increased competition from international players:** International players, who are not subject to the same taxes, may be able to offer lower prices and attract more customers.
- **Slower growth:** The GST move could lead to slower growth in the online gaming industry, as companies may be less willing to invest in the sector.
- **Innovation:** The higher tax rate could force companies to innovate and find new ways to reduce costs. This could lead to new products and services that are more appealing to consumers.
- **Earnings for the Government:** The government is expecting to earn an additional ₹17,000 crore in revenue from the 28% GST on online gaming.

2. Included the Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) under the Prevention of Money-laundering Act (PMLA). The inclusion of GSTN under PMLA was necessary to curb tax evasion and money laundering.

IMPLICATIONS:

- Facilitate the sharing of information between the GSTN with the Enforcement Directorate (ED) and other investigative agencies.
- Data on businesses and transactions maintained by the Goods and Services Tax Network (GSTN) can be used to track down tax evaders and money launderers.

3. Constitute 50 Goods and Services Tax (GST) Appellate Tribunals in a phased manner: The Centre has given an assurance that the first set of tribunals should become operational in four to six months, beginning with State capitals and cities with High Court benches.

IMPLICATIONS:

- Industry may hope for quicker redress of mounting GST litigations clogging up courts.
4. Granted tax exemptions, reduced or clarified some rates and regularised past incongruencies in tax payments on some items owing to confusion about their classification:



IMPLICATIONS:

- Food and beverages in cinema halls will now attract a lower 5% GST, as would unfried, uncooked snack pellets, fish soluble paste and imitation zari yarn.
- Exempted GST on drugs imported for cancer and some rare diseases and levy of higher tax levy on sport utility vehicles.

GST COUNCIL

TYPE: Constitutional body

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT: Constitution (101st Amendment) Act, 2016

ARTICLE: Article 279-A

MANDATE: Make recommendations to the Union and State Government on issues related to Goods and Service Tax.

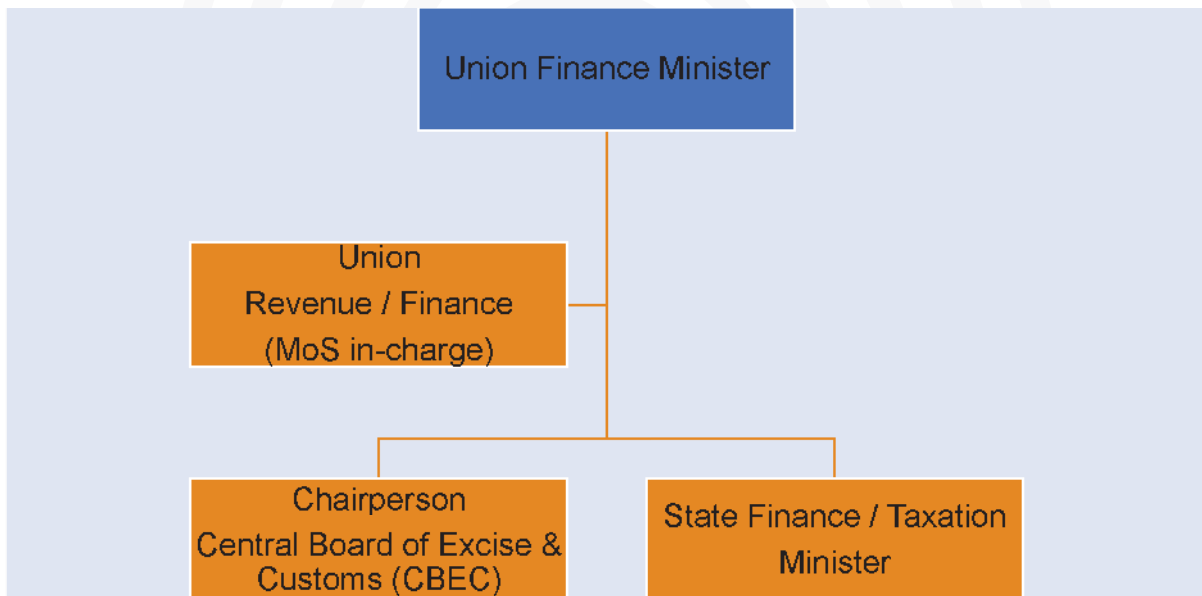
CONSTITUTING BODY: Presidential Order (PO)

SECRETARIAT: New Delhi.

EX-OFFICIO SECRETARY: Union Revenue Secretary

VISION: To establish the highest standards of the cooperative federation in the functioning of the Council, which is the first constitutional federal body vested with powers to take all major decisions relating to GST.

MISSION: Evolving by a process of wider consultation, a GST structure, which is information technology driven and user friendly.



COMPOSITION: The Council is a joint forum of the centre and the states and consists of the following members:

The Union Finance Minister as the Chairperson

The Union Minister of State in-charge of Revenue or Finance

The Minister in-charge of Finance or Taxation or any other Minister nominated by each state government

The members of the Council from the states have to choose one amongst themselves to be the Vice-Chairperson of the Council. They can also decide his term. The Union Cabinet also decided to include the Chairperson of the Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) as a permanent invitee (non-voting) to all proceedings of the Council.

Working of the GST Council

- The decisions of the Council are taken at its meetings. One-half of the total numbers of members of the Council is the quorum for conducting a meeting.
- Every decision of the Council is to be taken by a majority of not less than three-fourths of the weighted votes of the members present and voting at the meeting.

The decision is taken in accordance with the following principles:

- The vote of the central government shall have a weightage of one-third of the total votes cast in the meeting.
- The votes of all the state governments combined shall have a weightage of two-thirds of the total votes cast in that meeting.
- Any act or proceeding of the Council will not become invalid on the following grounds.
- Any vacancy or deficit in the constitution of the Council
- Any defect in the appointment of a person as a member of the Council
- Any procedural irregularity of the Council not affecting the merits of the case.

Functions of the Goods and Services Tax Council: The Council is required to make recommendations to the centre and the states on the following matters:

- The taxes, cesses and surcharges levied by the centre, the states and the local bodies that would be merged in GST.
- The goods and services that may be subjected to GST or exempted from GST.
- Model GST Laws, principles of levy, apportionment of GST levied on supplies in the course of inter-state trade or commerce and the principles that govern the place of supply.
- The threshold limit of turnover below which goods and services may be exempted from GST.
- The rates include floor rates with bands of GST.
- Any special rate or rates for a specified period to raise additional resources during any natural calamity or disaster.
- Special provision with respect to the states of Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Jammu and Kashmir, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Sikkim, Tripura, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand.
- Any other matter relating to GST, as the Council may decide.
- In addition, the council shall also recommend the date on which the GST may be levied on petroleum crude, high-speed diesel, petrol, natural gas and aviation turbine fuel.
- The Council also has to recommend the compensation to the states for the loss of revenue arising on account of the introduction of GST for a period of five years. Based on the recommendation, the Parliament determines the compensation.

Go First INSOLVENCY

CONTEXT: Ashish Chhawchharia, the resolution professional for Go First, the erstwhile GoAir, has invited Expressions of Interest (EoI) from prospective Resolution Applicant in a prescribed format along with a non-refundable deposit of ₹ 25 lakh till August 9. The prospective Resolution Applicant should have a net worth of at least ₹ 3,000 Cr. and a track record of operating an airline.



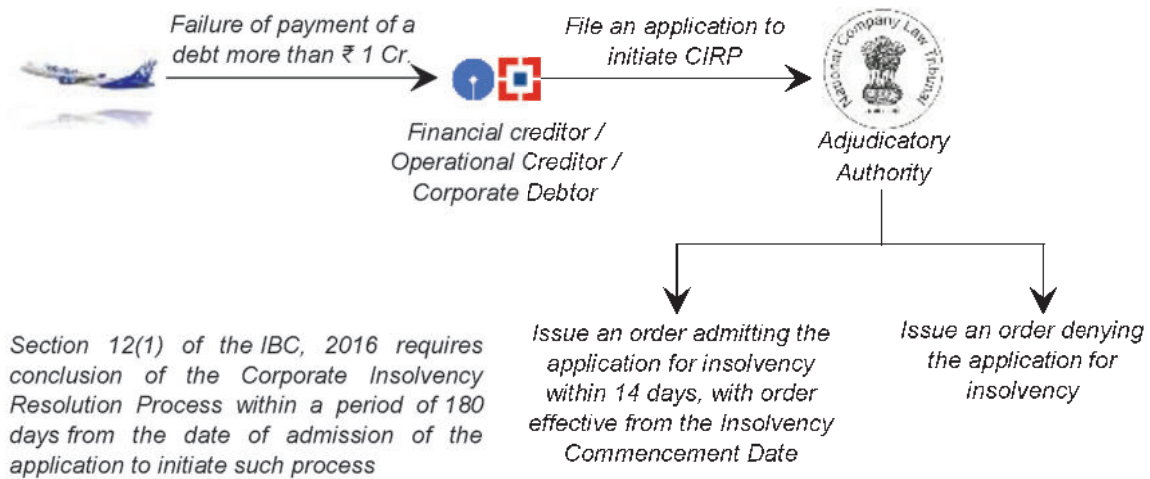
FIGURE: Bar chart representation of the net profit / loss (₹ Cr.) of Go First Airlines. Source: Go First.



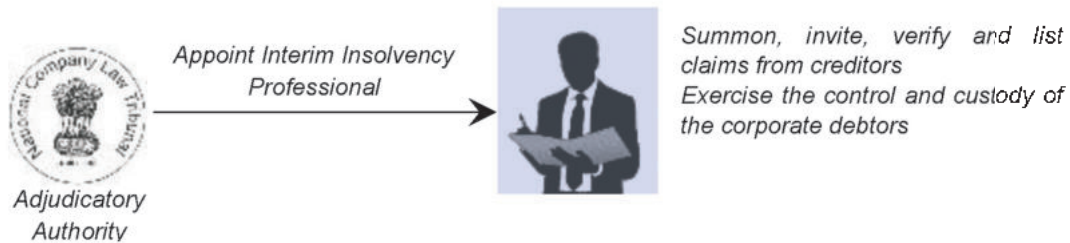
BACKGROUND: Go First Airlines claims to have been largely impacted by supply chain issues of Pratt & Whitney PW 1000G engines which power their A320neos. Go First Airlines filed for voluntary insolvency resolution proceedings before the National Company Law Tribunal in Delhi on 2 May 2023 following financial trouble and the cancellation of all its flights till 26 May due to a cash crunch. It also sued Pratt & Whitney in a US federal court seeking to enforce an arbitral award directing supply of engines as contracted.

TIMELINE OF THE CORPORATE INSOLVENCY RESOLUTION PROCESS

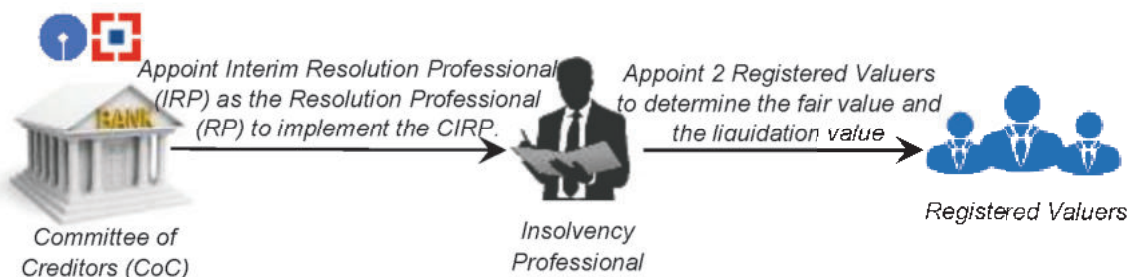
May 02, 2023: Go First Airlines files for voluntary insolvency resolution proceedings before the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC). **May 03, 2023:** Go First Airlines suspends all flights. **May 10, 2023:** The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) admits Go First's insolvency petition.



May 12, 2023: The National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT) appoints Ashish Chhabra as the Interim Resolution Professional (IRP) for Go First Airlines.



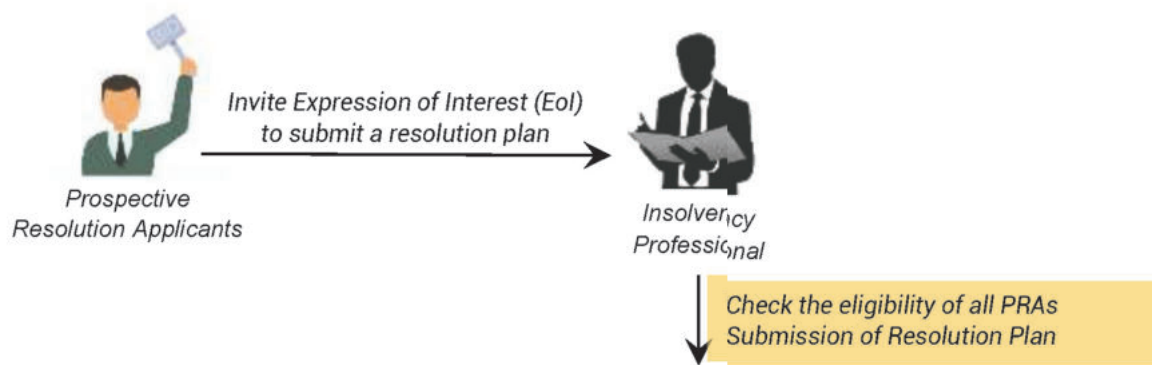
Declare moratorium under Section 14 of the Code
 Transfer the control and custody of the corporate debtors to the IRP
 Suspend the powers of the Board of Directors or the partners of the corporate debtor



Appoint any professional, in addition to registered valuers to assist in discharging duties in the conduct of the corporate insolvency resolution process.
 Sell an unencumbered asset(s)* of the corporate debtor, other than in the ordinary course of business.
 Resolution professional shall form an opinion on whether the corporate debtor, subject to any transaction covered under Sections 43, 45, 50, or 66 of the Code.



June 01, 2023: The Insolvency Resolution Professional (IRP) invites Expression of Interest (Eoi) from potential investors.
June 15, 2023: The Insolvency Resolution Professional (IRP) shortlists three Expression of Interests (Eoi).



July 10, 2023: The NCLAT upholds the NCLT's order admitting Go First's insolvency petition.

July 11, 2023: The IRP invites final bids from potential investors. August 15, 2023: The IRP is expected to submit a report to the NCLT on the status of the insolvency proceedings

STEPS INVOLVED IN THE INSOLVENCY RESOLUTION PROCESS UNDER THE IBC:

1. Filing of an insolvency petition by a creditor or the corporate debtor itself.
2. Admission of the petition by the NCLT.
3. Appointment of an interim resolution professional (IRP).
4. Preparation of a resolution plan by the IRP.
5. Approval of the resolution plan by a majority of the creditors and the NCLT.
6. Implementation of the resolution plan.
7. Liquidation of the corporate debtor if the resolution plan is not approved.

TIMELINE

1. May 2, 2023: Go First files for voluntary insolvency resolution proceedings before the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT).
2. May 10, 2023: The NCLT admits Go First's petition and imposes a moratorium on the airline, preventing its creditors from taking any legal action against it.
3. May 12, 2023: The NCLT appoints an interim resolution professional (IRP) to oversee the insolvency process.
4. June 1, 2023: The IRP invites expressions of interest (EOI) from potential investors.
5. June 15, 2023: The IRP receives EOI from several potential investors.
6. July 15, 2023: The IRP submits a report to the NCLT on the progress of the insolvency process.
7. August 1, 2023: The NCLT extends the moratorium on Go First until September 1, 2023.
8. September 1, 2023: The NCLT extends the moratorium on Go First until October 1, 2023.

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DE – DOLLARISATION OF GLOBAL TRADE

CONTEXT: The Government is pushing hard for promoting international trade settlement in Indian Rupees with broader objective to de-dollarize the global trade.

BRIEF HISTORY OF GULF RUPEE: In the 1950s, the Gulf monarchies purchased Indian Rupees (INR - ₹), legal tender for almost all transactions in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman and Qatar with the British Pound Sterling (GBP - £). The Reserve Bank of India (Amendment) Act, 1959 enabled the creation of the Gulf Rupee, notes issued by the central bank for circulation only in the West Asian region to mitigate challenges associated with gold smuggling. Holders of the Indian currency were given 6 weeks to exchange their Indian currency. However, by 1966, India devalued its currency, eventually causing some West Asian countries to replace the Gulf rupee with their own currencies. The volatility of Indian Rupees (INR - ₹), along with an economic boom linked to oil revenue slowly led to the introduction of sovereign currencies in the region.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS: Currently, the international trade is settled in US Dollars, UK Pound Sterling, Eurozone Euro, Japanese Yen and Chinese Yuan. An importer needs to pay any of these globally acceptable currencies – preferably US Dollars to pay for the import of goods and services. Meanwhile, an exporter needs to convert US Dollars into their domestic currencies for use in their domestic territory. The unilateral sanctions imposed by United States and European countries attract secondary sanctions upon companies engaged in trade and commerce with listed Russian entities. Many Indian entities, especially in the oil and gas sector engage trade with Russian firms upon specific sectorial waivers extended by US and European countries and are at potential risks of facing secondary sanctions.

The international sanctions have frozen Russia to access the dollar and euro financial networks. Indian refiners have begun paying for some oil imports from Russia in Chinese yuan Indian Oil Corporation in June became the first to pay for some Russian purchases in Chinese Yuan. The rise in Chinese Yuan payments has given a boost to Beijing's efforts to internationalise its currency, with Chinese banks promoting its use specifically for Russian oil trade. Since the imposition of sanctions on Moscow, Indian

refiners have mostly bought Russian crude from Dubai-based traders and Russian oil companies. Indian refiners have also settled some non-dollar payments for Russian oil in the United Arab Emirates' Dirham.

The Chinese Yuan (CNY ¥) is slowly replacing the US Dollar (\$), long been the primary global oil currency, including for purchases by India. The unilateral sanctions imposed by the west forced buyers of Russian crude, including Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) to explore alternatives to the US Dollar (\$) for payment settlements. Recently, India emerged as the largest buyer of seaborne Russian oil. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) allowed domestic traders to settle global trade in Indian rupees (₹) to facilitate trade with Russia hit by sanctions of the United States of America and European Union. The Inter-Departmental Group (IDG) of officials of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) report cautioned about increased volatility in the exchange rate of Rupees in the initial stages internationalisation of Indian Rupee.

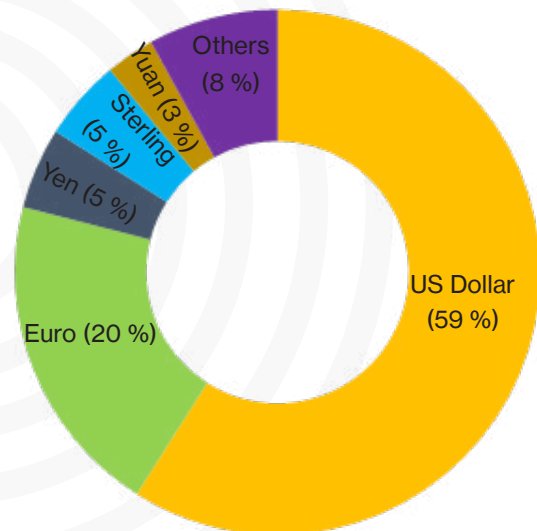


FIGURE: Pie chart representation of the share of global trade in per cent. Source: WB.

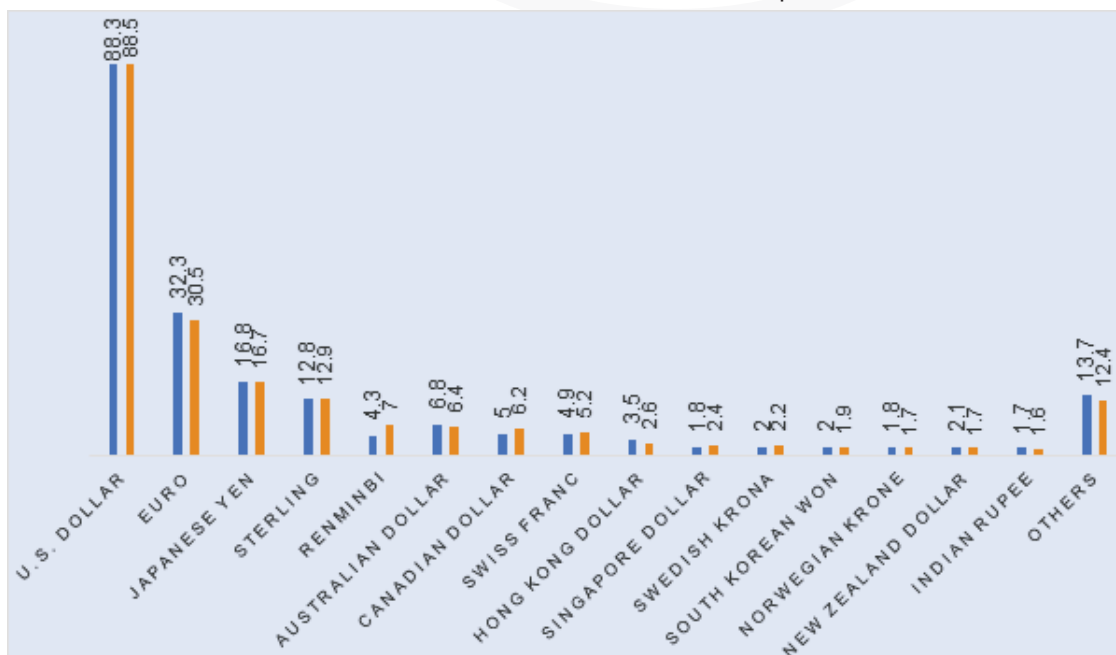


FIGURE : Column chart representation of the currency distribution of global foreign exchange market turnover. The total sum is 200 % because each currency trade always involves a currency pair; one currency is sold (US\$) and another bought.

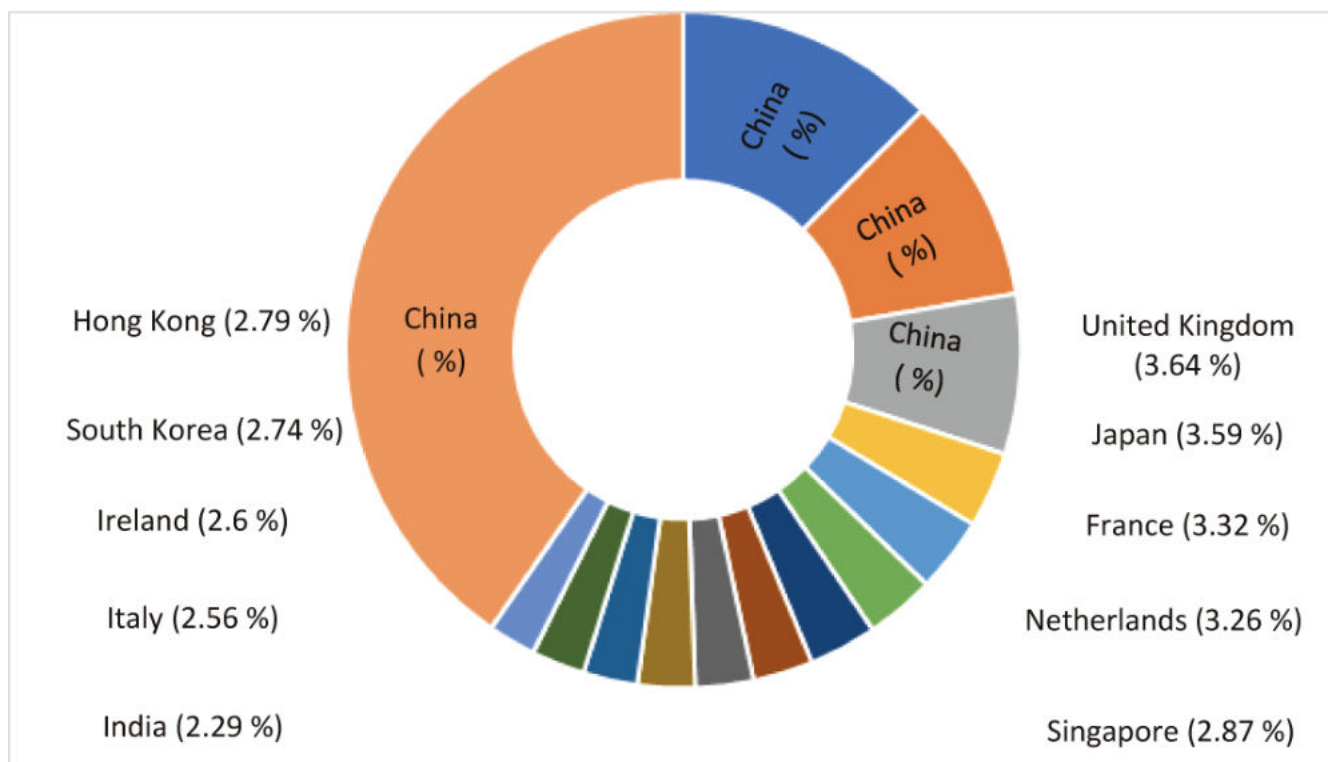


FIGURE: Pie chart representation of share of countries in the global trade in 2020. (Source: The World Bank)

INITIATIVES OF INDIA: India has taken some steps to promote the internationalisation of the rupee

Promote External Commercial Borrowings in Rupees: External Commercial Borrowings (ECBs) are loans in India made by non-resident lenders in foreign currency to Indian borrowers. They are used widely in India to facilitate access to foreign money by Indian corporations and PSUs (Public Sector Undertakings). ECBs include commercial bank loans, buyers' credit, suppliers' credit, securitised instruments such as floating rate notes and fixed rate bonds etc., credit from official export credit agencies and commercial borrowings from the private sector window of multilateral financial Institutions such as International Finance Corporation (Washington), ADB, AFIC, CDC, etc. ECBs cannot be used for investment in stock market or speculation in real estate. The DEA (Department of Economic Affairs), Ministry of Finance, Government of India along with Reserve Bank of India, monitors and regulates ECB guidelines and policies.

Local Currency Settlement System (LCSS): During PM Modi's recent visit to the UAE, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and the Central Bank of the UAE signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to establish a framework to promote the use of local currencies for cross-border transactions. The Local Currency Settlement System (LCSS) promote the use of rupee and the dirham bilaterally to cover all current and permitted capital account transactions.

- Enable exporters and importers to send invoices and pay in their respective domestic currencies, which

in turn would help the development of the INR-AED foreign exchange market.

- Promote investments and remittances between the two countries.
- Help optimise transaction costs and settlement time for transactions, including for remittances from Indians residing in UAE.

Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVA): Open Rupee Vostro accounts for banks from Russia, the UAE, Sri Lanka and Mauritius and measures to trade with -18 countries in rupees. Account that domestic banks hold for foreign banks in the former's domestic currency, the rupee, which allows domestic banks to provide international banking services to their clients who have global banking needs without having to be physically present abroad. The SRVA serve as an additional arrangement to the existing system that uses freely convertible currencies and works as a complimentary system.

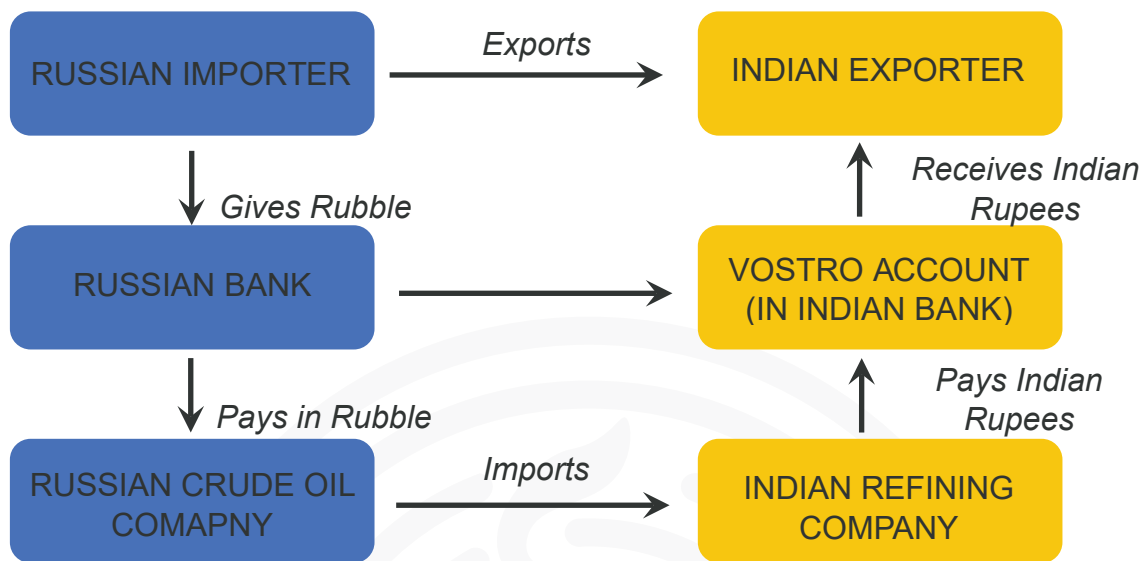
RUPEE INTERNATIONAL TRADE SETTLEMENT REGIME - HOW IT WORKS?

VOSTRO ACCOUNT: Account maintained by a foreign bank in a domestic bank in their domestic currencies. For example, an account maintained in Indian Rupees (₹) by Sberbank (Russian Bank) in State Bank of India (Domestic Bank) is a VOSTRO ACCOUNT for Sberbank.

NOSTRO ACCOUNT: Account maintained by a domestic bank in a foreign bank in usually in currency of the foreign country. For example, an account maintained in Russian Roubles (₽) by State Bank of India (Domestic Bank) in Sberbank (Foreign Bank) is a NOSTRO ACCOUNT for State Bank of India.



How India buys Russian crude oil and settle in Indian Rupees



The Economic Survey (2022-2023) has noted down benefits of the Rupee international trade settlement regime.

- **Enable trading with Russia:** The international trade settlement regime in Indian Rupee can help India to continue trade and commerce relations with Russia. The Indian entities can overcome the secondary sanctions for conducting trade and commerce with Russian entities under the existing unilateral trade sanctions imposed by western countries.
- **Macro-economic stability:** The international trade settlement regime in Indian Rupee can reduce the “net demand for foreign exchange, the US Dollar (\$) in particular for the settlement of trade flows. This can make the country less vulnerable to external shocks, reducing the dependence on foreign currencies and need for holding foreign exchange reserves.
- **Improve acceptability:** Currently, the US Dollar is the most dominant vehicle currency accounting for 88 % of all trades by value, with the Indian Rupees (₹) accounting for 1.6 % only. The international trade settlement regime in Indian Rupee would promote Indian Rupee as an international currency with the rupee settlement mechanism gaining traction. The Indian exporters could get advance payments in INR from overseas clients and in the long term.

Advantages of Internationalizing the Rupee:

- **Increased global trade:** Internationalizing the rupee can facilitate international trade by making it easier for Indian businesses to conduct transactions in their own currency. It reduces the reliance on other currencies and reduces exchange rate risks, potentially boosting trade volume.
- **Reduced transaction costs:** When the rupee is widely accepted, there would be less need for currency conversion, resulting in reduced transaction costs for businesses and individuals involved in cross-border transactions. This can enhance economic efficiency and competitiveness.
- **Enhanced Monetary Policy autonomy:** Internationalization of the rupee can provide the

Reserve Bank of India (RBI) with greater control over its monetary policy. By reducing the dominance of other currencies in international trade settlements, the RBI can have more influence over domestic interest rates and exchange rates.

- **Attraction of Foreign Investment:** A globally recognized rupee can attract foreign investment into India. Investors may feel more comfortable investing in Indian assets denominated in their own currency, reducing currency risk and facilitating capital flows.

Concerns posed by the Inter-Departmental Group (IDG)

- **Triffin dilemma:** Obligation upon RBI to supply Indian Rupee to meet the global demand may conflict with its domestic monetary policies.
- **Capital outflow:** Accentuate an external shock, given the need to adopt the Full Convertibility to facilitate the flow of funds into and out of the country and from one currency to another.

Recommendations

- Design a template and adopt a standardised approach for examining the proposals on bilateral and multilateral trade arrangements for invoicing, settlement and payment in INR and local currencies.
- Enable INR as an additional settlement currency in existing multilateral mechanisms such as the Asian Clearing Union.

REFORMS SUGGESTED: The Government should pursue these reforms to make rupee an effective international currency.

- **Migration to ‘Full convertibility’:** The Indian Rupee must be made more freely convertible, with a goal of full convertibility by 2060 – letting financial investments move freely between India and abroad. Full convertibility would allow foreign investors to easily buy and sell the rupee, enhancing its liquidity and making it more attractive.
- **Development of Rupee bond market:** The RBI should pursue a deeper and more liquid rupee bond market,



enabling foreign investors and Indian trade partners to have more investment options in rupees, enabling its international use.

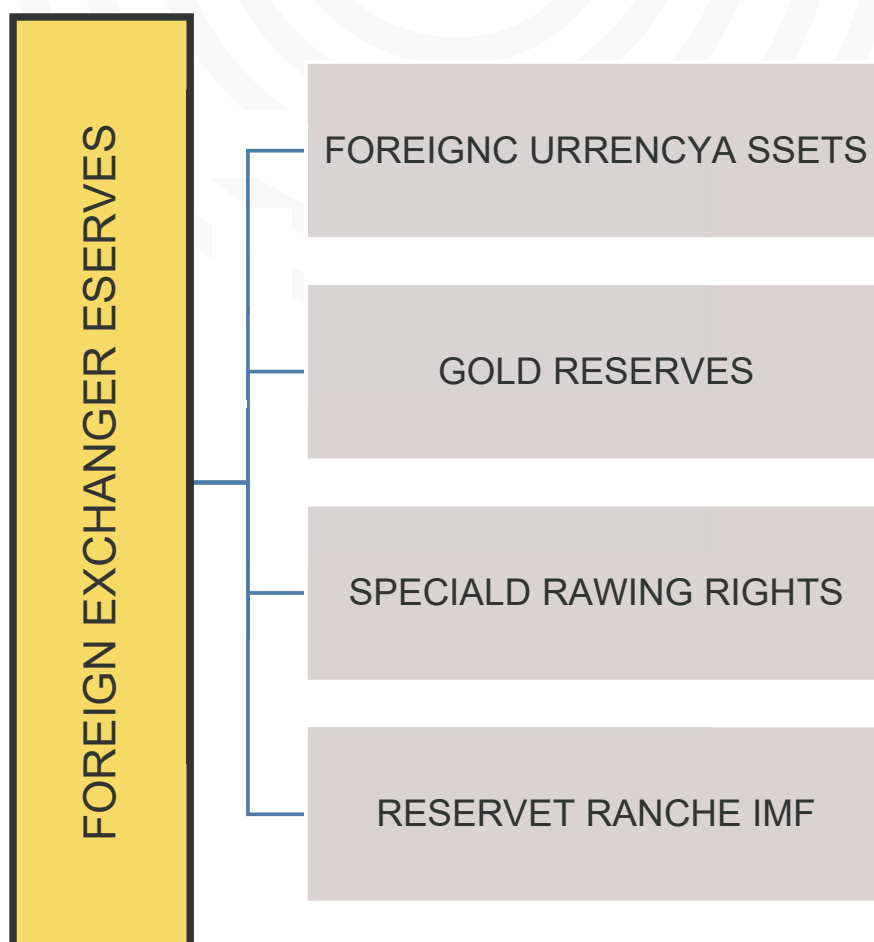
- **Rupee invoice for Foreign Trade:** Indian exporters and importers should be encouraged to invoice their transactions in rupee – optimising the trade settlement formalities for rupee import/export transactions would go a long way.
- **Currency Swap Agreements:** Additional currency swap agreements (as with Sri Lanka) would further allow India to settle trade and investment transactions in rupees, without resorting to a reserve currency such as the dollar.
- **Tax incentives:** Tax incentives to foreign businesses to utilise the rupee in operations in India.
- **Stable and transparent rupee management:** The RBI and the Ministry of Finance must ensure currency management stability (consistent and predictable issuance/retrieval of notes and coins) and improve the exchange rate regime. More demonetisation (or devaluation) will impact confidence.
- A start could be made to push for making the rupee an official currency in international organisations, thereby giving it a higher profile and acceptability.
- **Implement Tarapore committee recommendations:** The Tarapore Committees' (in 1997 and 2006) recommendations must be pursued including a push to reduce fiscal deficits lower than 3.5%, a reduction in gross inflation rate to 3%-5%, and a reduction in gross banking non-performing assets to less than 5%.

FOREX RESERVE TOPS \$600BN, A 15 MONTH HIGH

CONTEXT: India's foreign exchange reserves increased by \$12.74 billion from the previous week, on the back of strong foreign portfolio inflows and rose to a 15-month high of \$609.02 billion on July 14, 2023.

FACTS AND FIGURES: Foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have infused ₹30,600 Cr. into Indian equities so far in July 2023, after withdrawing a net of ₹50,200 Cr. in June. The latest inflow comes after a prolonged period of selling by FPIs, who have pulled out a net of ₹3.6 trillion from Indian equities since October 2022. The inflow in July is being attributed to a number of factors, including the recent decline in oil prices, which has eased inflation concerns. The rupee has also been relatively stable in recent weeks, which has made Indian equities more attractive to foreign investors. The increase in forex reserves is a positive sign for the Indian economy, as it gives the RBI more room to intervene in the foreign exchange market to smoothen volatility. The RBI had intervened in the foreign exchange market in recent months to sell dollars and prop up the rupee, which had been under pressure due to rising oil prices and concerns about the global economic outlook.

COMPONENTS OF FOREX RESERVES



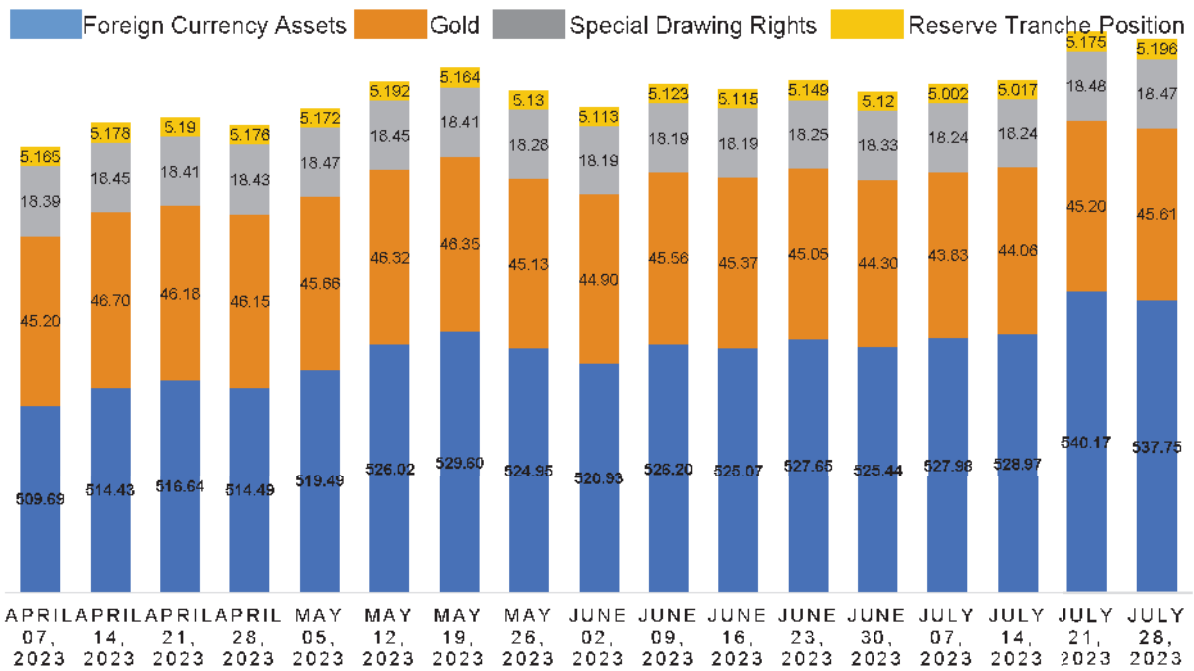


FIGURE: Bar chart representation of Forex Reserves (US \$ Billion)

NET DIRECT TAX COLLECTIONS

CONTEXT: The net direct tax collection in India has increased by 16% to ₹4.75 lakh crore till July 9, 2023, as compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. The gross direct tax collection during the period under review stood at ₹5.17 lakh crore, up 14.65% from last year. Refunds amounting to ₹42,000 crore were issued during the period, which is 2.55% higher than the refunds issued during the same period in the previous year.

This is a positive sign for the economy, as it indicates that tax compliance is improving and that the government is on track to meet its revenue targets for the current fiscal year. The increase in net direct tax collection is being attributed to a number of factors, including the growth in the economy, the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax (GST), and the government's focus on improving tax compliance.

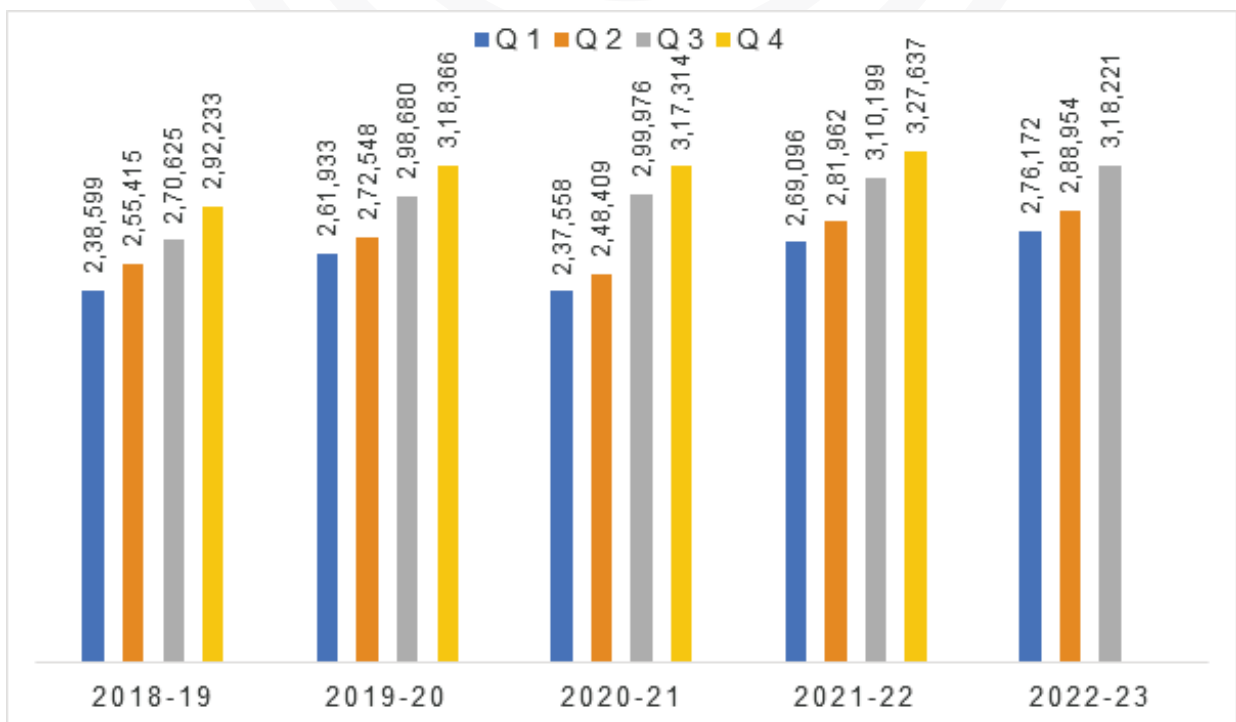


FIGURE: Bar chart representation of quarter wise Net Direct Tax collections*. *Refund adjusted. (Source: Union Ministry of Finance).



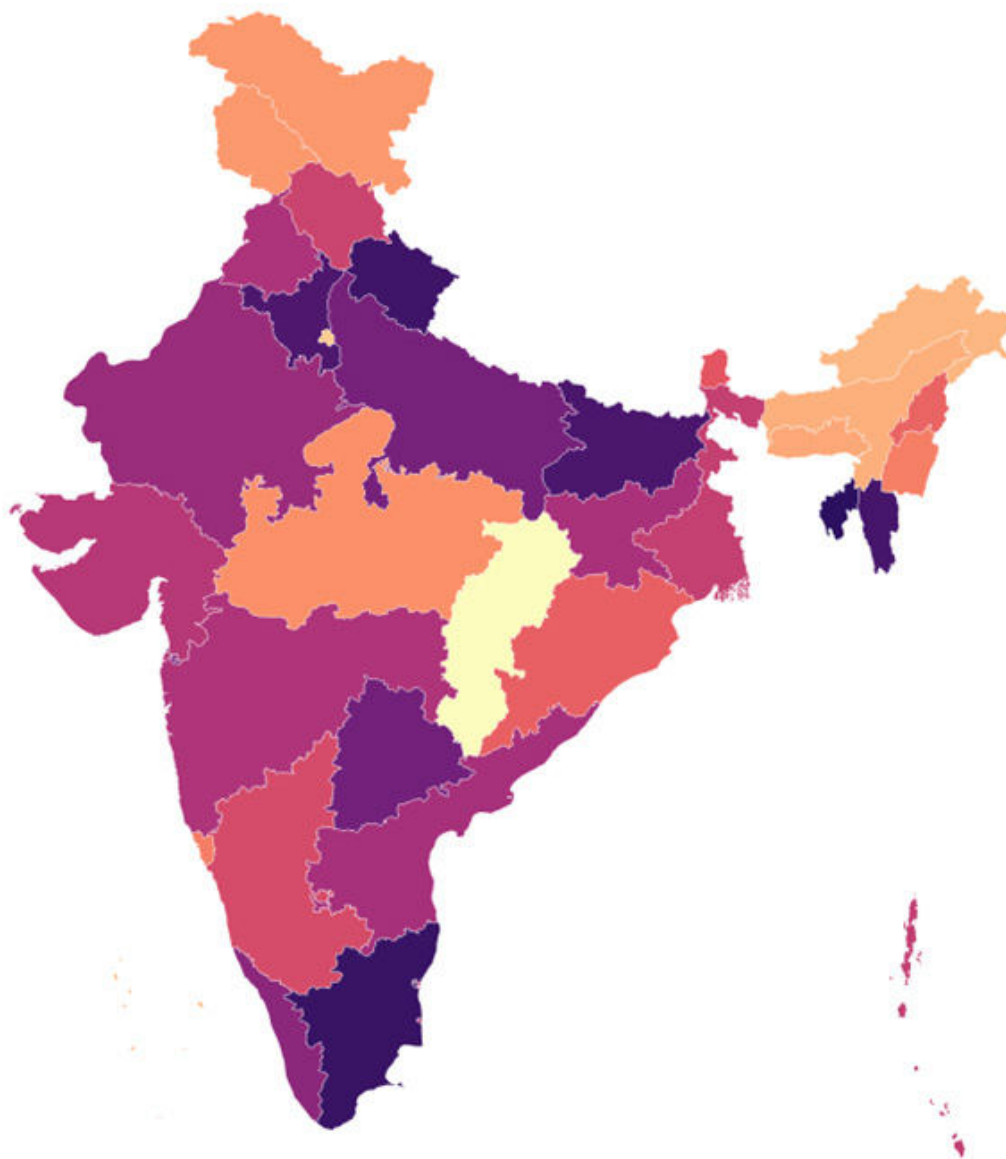
TRACKING INFLATION

CONTEXT: The lower sowing of crops like rice and pulses with deficient monsoon and uneven distribution of monsoon in India could further exacerbate food inflation. Rice, pulses, eggs, margarine, butter, flour and prepared flour mixes and fats and oils are likely to be most affected by inflation.

CPI-based Inflation rates (June, 2023)

CPI-based Inflation rates
(June, 2023)

1.24 6.58



Inflation rate shown against Jammu & Kashmir pertains to combined Union Territories of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh; Inflation rate pertains to Arunachal Pradesh (Rural) and Manipur (Urban); Map not to scale Source: MoSPI, India. Created with Datawrapper

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

- WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE



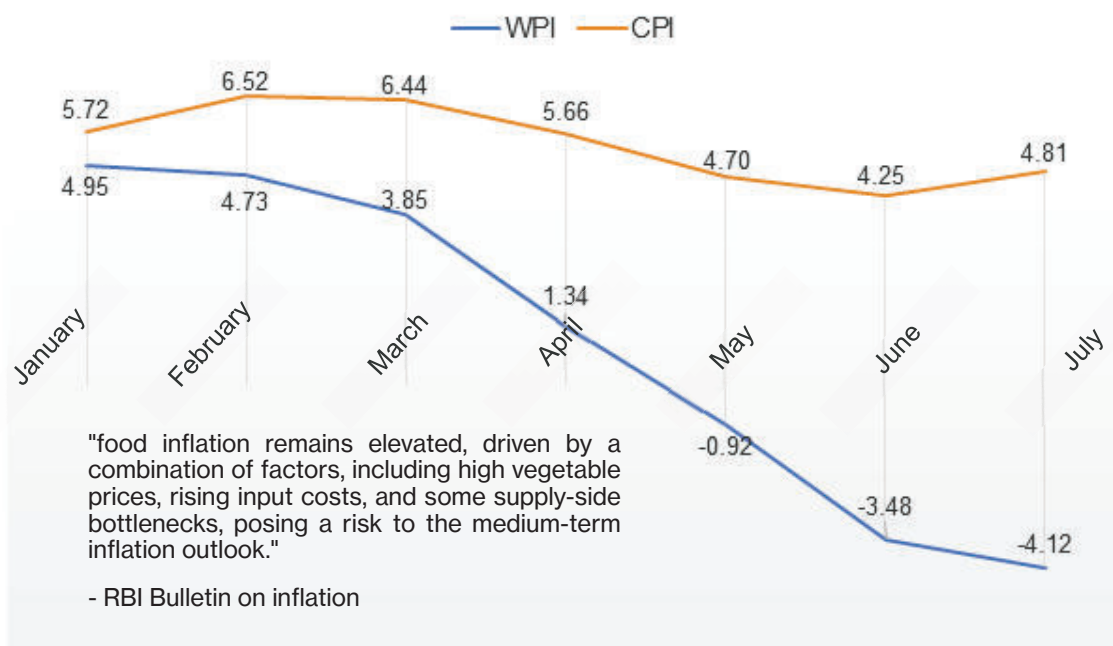


FIGURE: Line chart representation of wholesale price index-based inflation and consumer price-index based inflation rates.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) cited the rising food prices as a major concern with inflation hovering above the Central Bank's target of 6% for several months. The RBI has been raising interest rates in an effort to cool inflation. The central bank has raised the repo rate, the rate at which it lends to banks, by 0.9 percentage points in the past two months. The RBI is expected to continue raising interest rates in the coming months.

The Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) of the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) is facing a balancing act. On the one hand, it needs to keep inflation in check, which is currently running above the RBI's target of 4%. On the other hand, it needs to support economic growth, which is slowing down.

The MPC has raised interest rates three times in the past six months in an effort to cool inflation. However, these rate hikes have not yet had a significant impact on inflation, which is still rising.

The MPC is likely to raise interest rates again in its next meeting in August. However, it is also likely to take steps to support economic growth. For example, the MPC could announce a cut in the repo rate, which is the rate at which the RBI lends money to banks.

The MPC's decision will be a delicate one. If it raises interest rates too much, it could slow down economic growth too much. However, if it does not raise interest rates enough, it could allow inflation to spiral out of control.

India's retail inflation rose to 4.81% in June 2023, the highest in three months, driven by a spike in food prices. The rising costs faced by households for items such as cereals, pulses, milk and tomatoes led to increase in food inflation from less than 3% in the previous month rose to 4.5%. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been keeping interest rates low in an effort to support economic growth, but it may need to take action to cool inflation.

India's factory output grew to a three-month high of 5.2% in May 2023, as against 4.5% growth in April, primarily due to pick up in manufacturing and mining output. The growth was led by infrastructure, which grew by 8.4%, followed by manufacturing (5.7%) and mining (4.7%). Twelve of the 23 manufacturing sectors showed growth, led by electrical machinery (19.2%), furniture (13.3%) and basic metals (12.2%). The growth in IIP is a positive sign for the Indian economy, which is showing signs of recovery after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The US inflation rates slowed to 3% in June, 2023, the lowest since March of 2021, compared to 4% in May and expectations of 3.1%. The slowdown is partly due to a high base effect from last year when a surge in energy and food prices pushed the headline inflation rate to 1981-highs of 9.1%.



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FIGURE: Line chart representation of the US Headline inflation rates. Source: US Bureau of Labour Statistics.

NITI AAYOG REPORT: 13.5-Cr. PEOPLE LIFTED OUT OF MD POVERTY

CONTEXT: NITI Aayog, the government's think tank in its report, "National Multidimensional Poverty Index: A Progress Review 2023" reported a decline in multidimensional poverty in India from 24.85 % in 2015-16 to 14.96 % in 2019-21. An estimated 13.5 crore people were lifted out of multidimensional poverty between 2015-16 and 2019-21. The report found that the states with the fastest decline in multidimensional poverty were Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, and Rajasthan.

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.

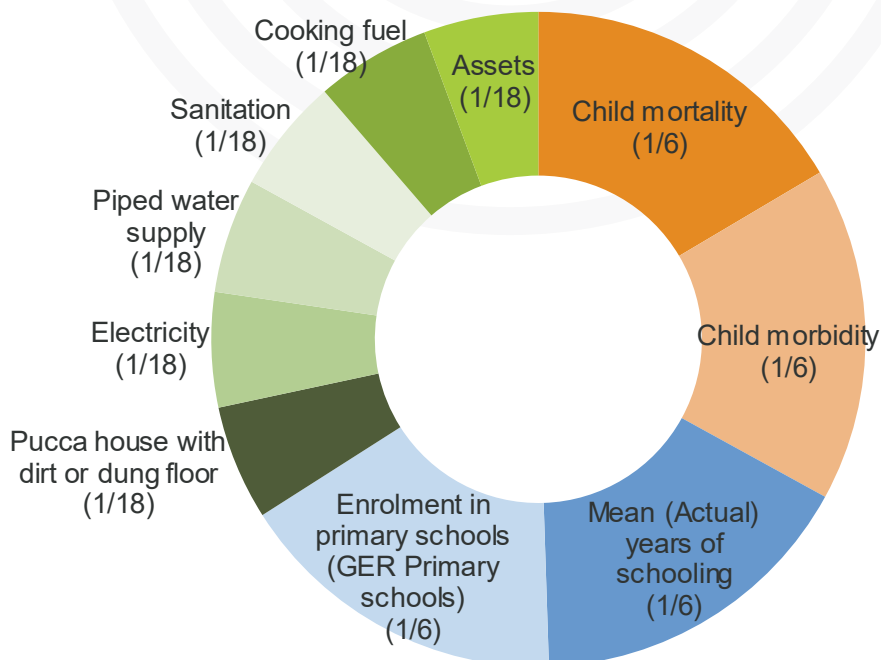


FIGURE: Pie chart representation of weightages assigned to parameters used to calculate the Multi-Dimensional Poverty Index.

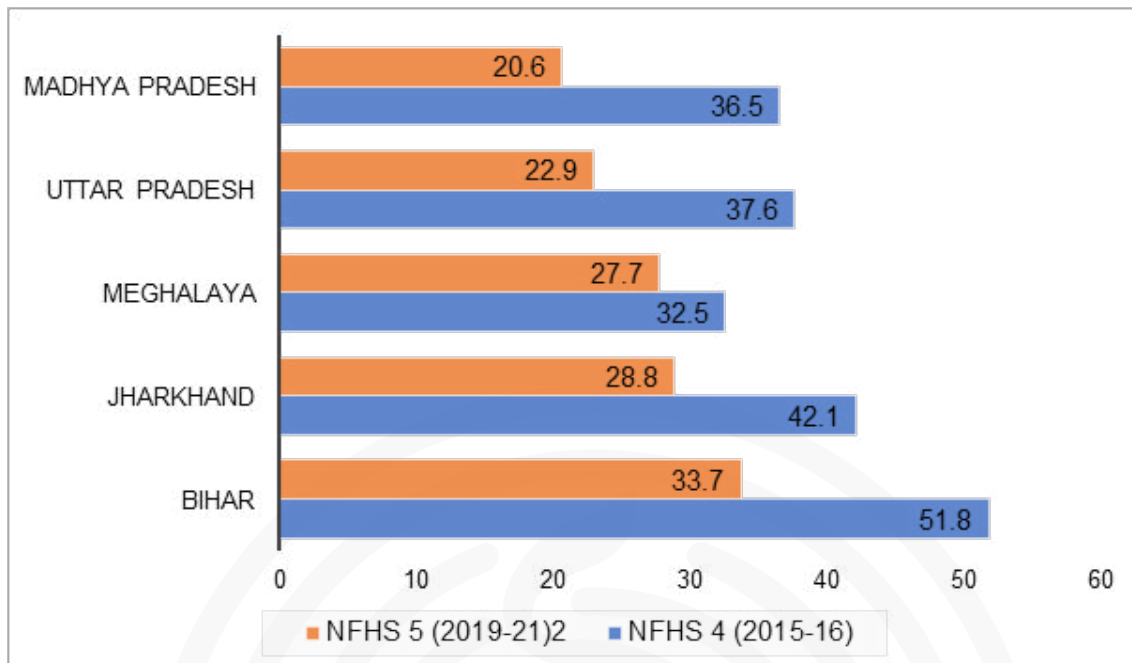


FIGURE: Bar chart representation of Multi-Dimensionally poor population as a share of population. (Source: National Family Health Survey)

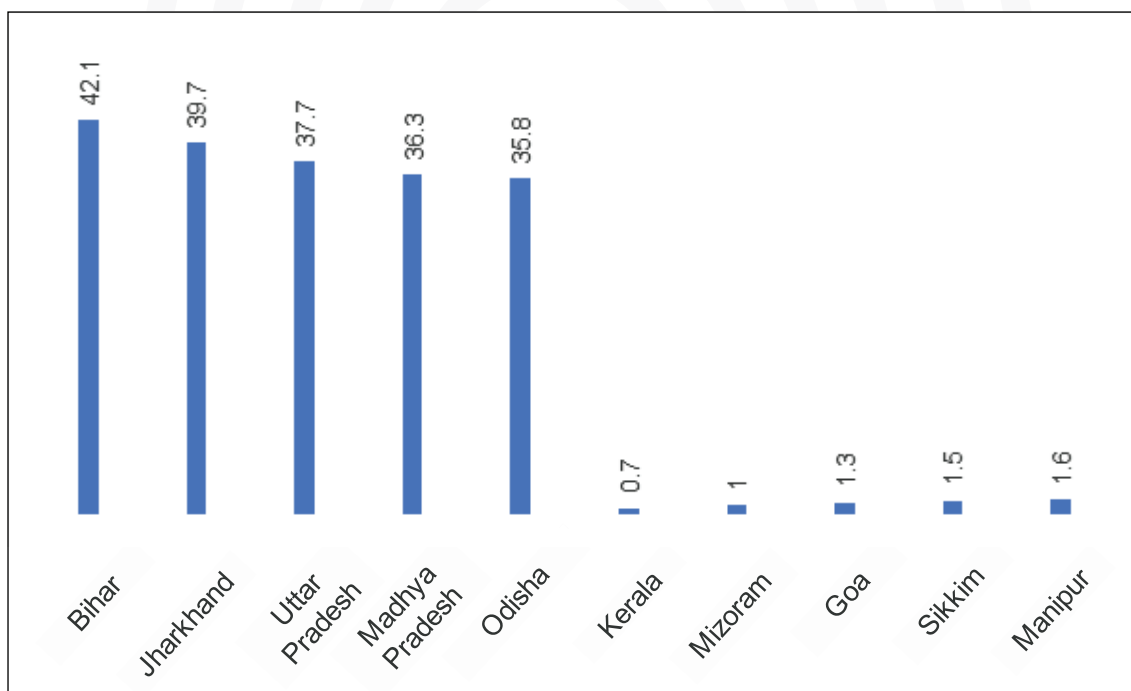
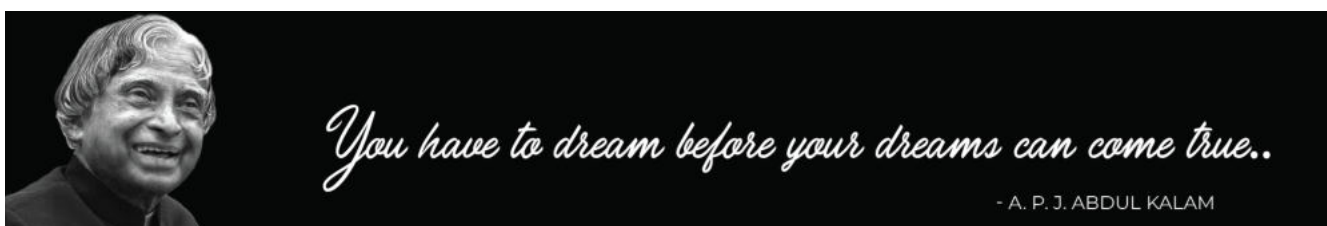


FIGURE: Bar chart representation of Multi-Dimensionally poor population as a share of population. (Source: National Multidimensional Poverty Index: A Progress Review 2023, NITI Ayog)

OBSERVATION: The decline in multidimensional poverty was more pronounced in rural areas, where the proportion of people living in poverty declined from 32.59 % to 19.28 %. In urban areas, the proportion of people living in poverty declined from 8.65 % to 5.27 %. According to the report, between 2015-16 and 2019-21, the MPI value has nearly halved from 0.117 to 0.066 and the intensity of poverty has reduced from 47 % to 44 %.





IMF REVISE INDIA'S GROWTH FORECAST TO 6.1 %

CONTEXT: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has raised its growth forecast for India's economy in 2023 to 6.1 %, up from 5.9 % in its previous forecast.



FIGURE: Column chart representation of the IMF growth forecasts of India. Source: International Monetary Fund)

consumption and slumping overseas demand for its exports.

The International Monetary Fund's latest update to its world economic outlook posits a global economy showing signs of having weathered its most recent challenges, including the bank collapses in the U.S. and Switzerland, and likely poised to expand by 3% in 2023.

The United States and China, have slowed down appreciably and face increased uncertainty amid global and domestic headwinds. In the U.S., the surpluses from pandemic-era cash transfers, made to help families tide over the distress wrought by COVID-19 and the cost-of-living crisis in its aftermath, have all but depleted. China's post-reopening rebound has begun to fizzle out, with the economy floundering on the shoals of a contraction in the key real estate sector, combined with weakening

The Ukraine-war induced spike in gas prices has led to momentum decelerating especially in the largest regional Euro Zone economies of Germany and France. The Standard & Poor's Global's latest HCOB flash PMI survey recorded fall in business output fell at the fastest rate for eight months in July. The policymakers are forced to pursue demand-retarding monetary tightening with core inflation, remaining well above central banks' targets. Russia's termination of the Black Sea grain deal could also push up grain prices by as much as 15 %, affecting some low-income economies in Africa. The IMF economist also pointed to the heightened debt vulnerabilities among many frontier economies and stressed the urgent need for a concerted global debt resolution initiative to help highly indebted countries from sliding into debt distress.

BANKS WRITE OFF BAD LOANS WORTH RS 2.09 LAKH CRORE IN 2022-23: RBI

CONTEXT: As per the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) reports, Indian Banks wrote off bad loans worth over ₹ 2.09 lakh crore (\$ 25.50 billion) during the year ended March 2023, taking the total loan write-off by the banking sector to ₹ 10.57 lakh Core (~ \$ 129 billion) in the past five years.

"the loan account after the borrower has defaulted on the loan repayment with a very low chance of recovery is not closed, meaning that the lender can try to recover the loan amount with the help of a legal entity."

- LOAN WRITE-OFF

"the bank will not attempt to take any legal action against the borrower to recover the loan."

- LOAN WAIVER-OFF

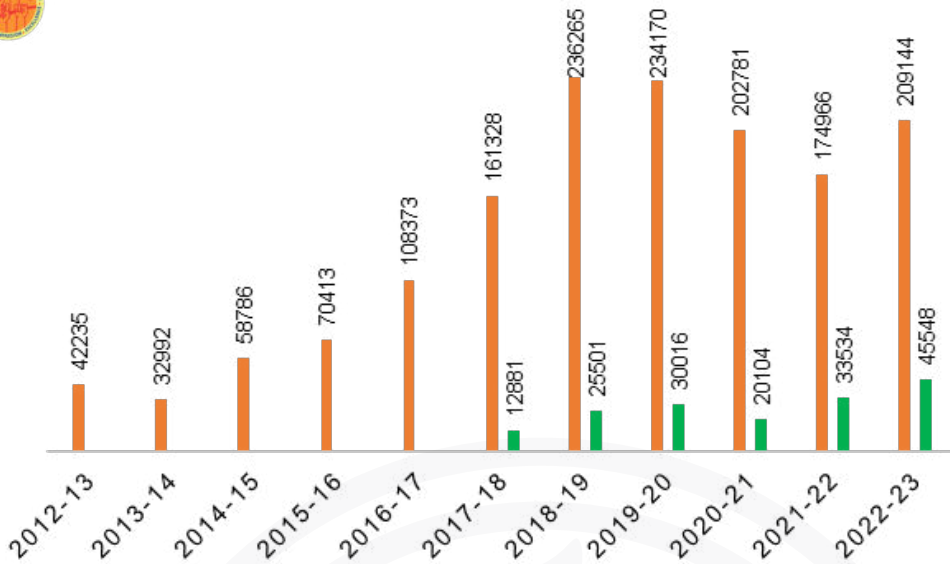


FIGURE: Bar chart representation of loan write-offs (₹ Cr.) and recoveries from loan write-offs in green (₹ Cr.)

PRONAB SEN COMMITTEE

CONTEXT: The Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation has constituted a new Standing Committee on Statistics (SCoS) headed by India's first Chief Statistician, Pronab Sen to advise on official data, including the household surveys carried out by the National Sample Survey Office (NSSO).

BACKGROUND: In November 2019, the government had opted to junk the findings of the last Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) with another quinquennial employment survey, was conducted in 2017-18, citing data quality issues. The Standing Committee on Statistics (SCoS) formed has a broader mandate to

help design surveys for all types of data, identify data gaps that must be plugged, and conduct pilot surveys for new data sets.

The panel's first tasks will likely pertain to the results of the Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) by the NSSO over the past year, and it must sensitise users on the methods deployed and interpretational

nuances they necessitate. The HCES is critical not only to ascertain people's living standards over time but also the key to revising economic indicators such as the Consumer Price Index and the Gross Domestic Product used to measure the economy's output.

CONTENTIONS: Shamika Ravi and Bibek Debroy argue that outdated survey methodology used by national surveys such as the National Sample Survey (NSS), National Family Health Survey (NFHS) and Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) systematically underestimated India's development, failing to capture the dynamicity of the Indian economy. On the other hand, P. C. Mohanan and Amitabh Kundu reasoned no systematic underestimation of development by these national surveys and hence no need for restructuring and overhauling the survey methodology.

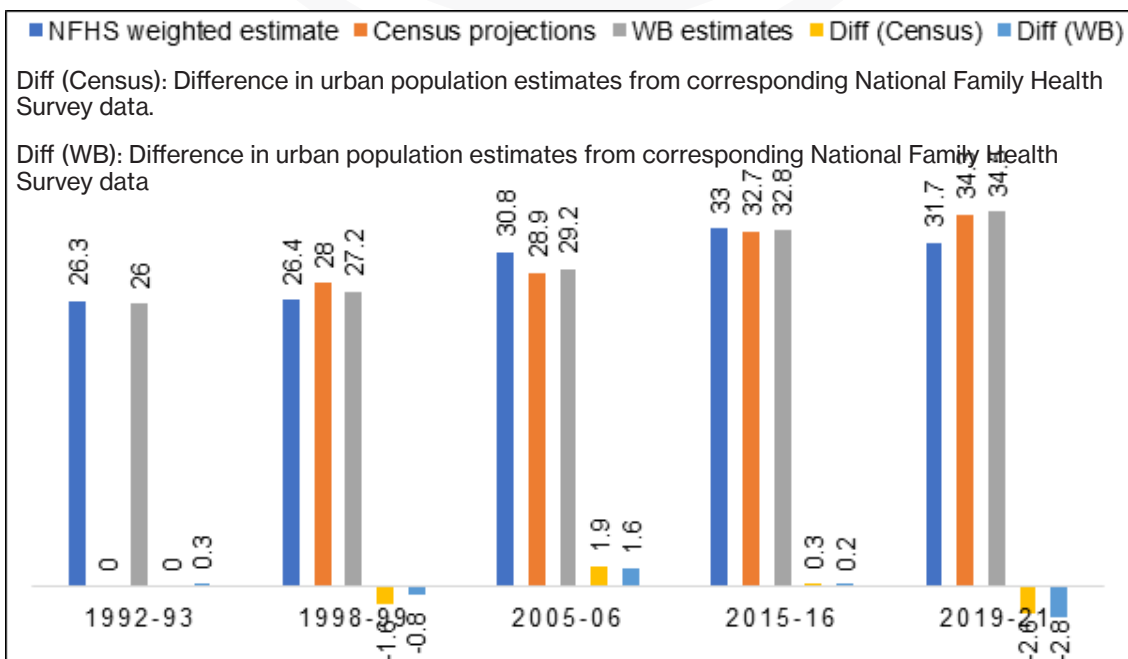


FIGURE: Bar chart representation of the urban population estimates.



Generally, there are higher percentages of no-response in urban areas compared to rural areas. The NFHS-1 with its near correct estimation of urban population had the lowest urban response rate at 94.5%, while NFHS-5 with its underestimation of urban population had the second lowest urban response rate of 95.6 % does not seem to have any systematic relation with either rural or urban bias in estimation.

THE ETHANOL IMPETUS

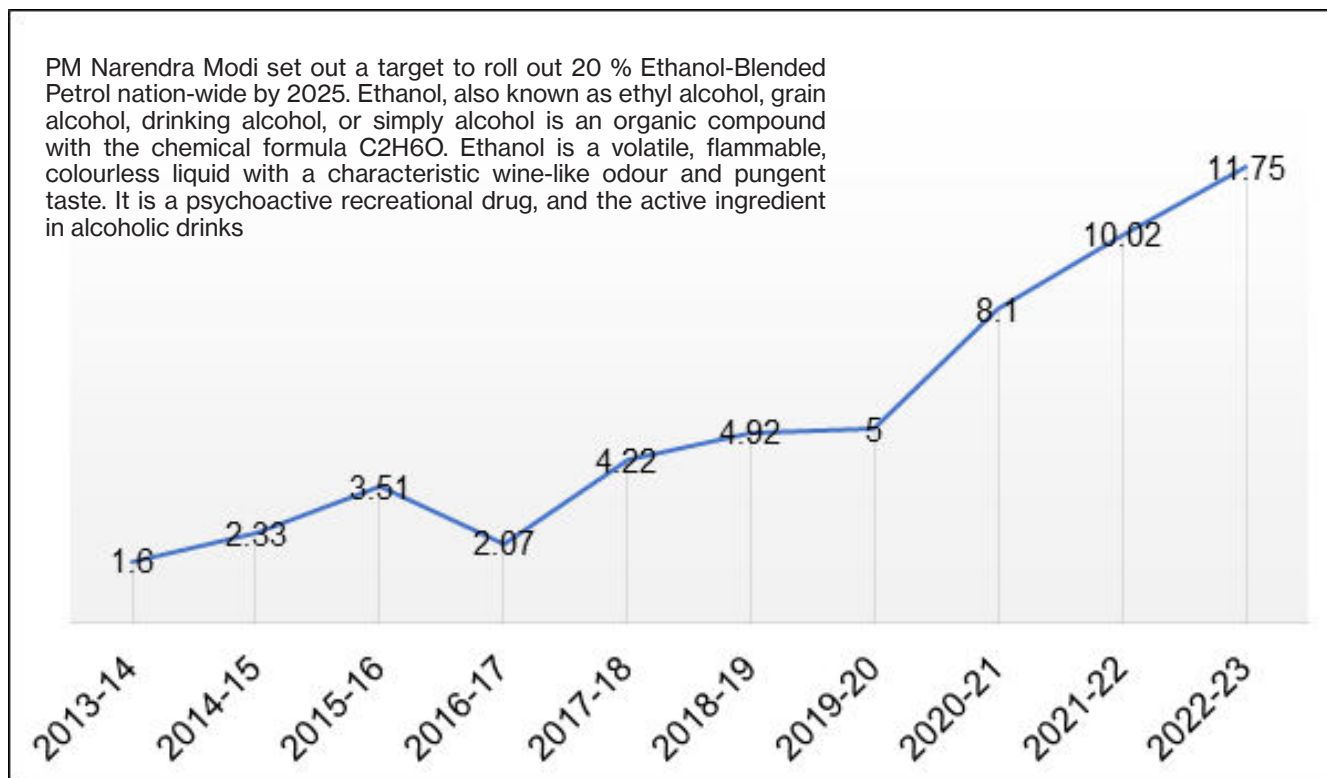


FIGURE: Bar chart representing the ethanol blending ratio in per centage.

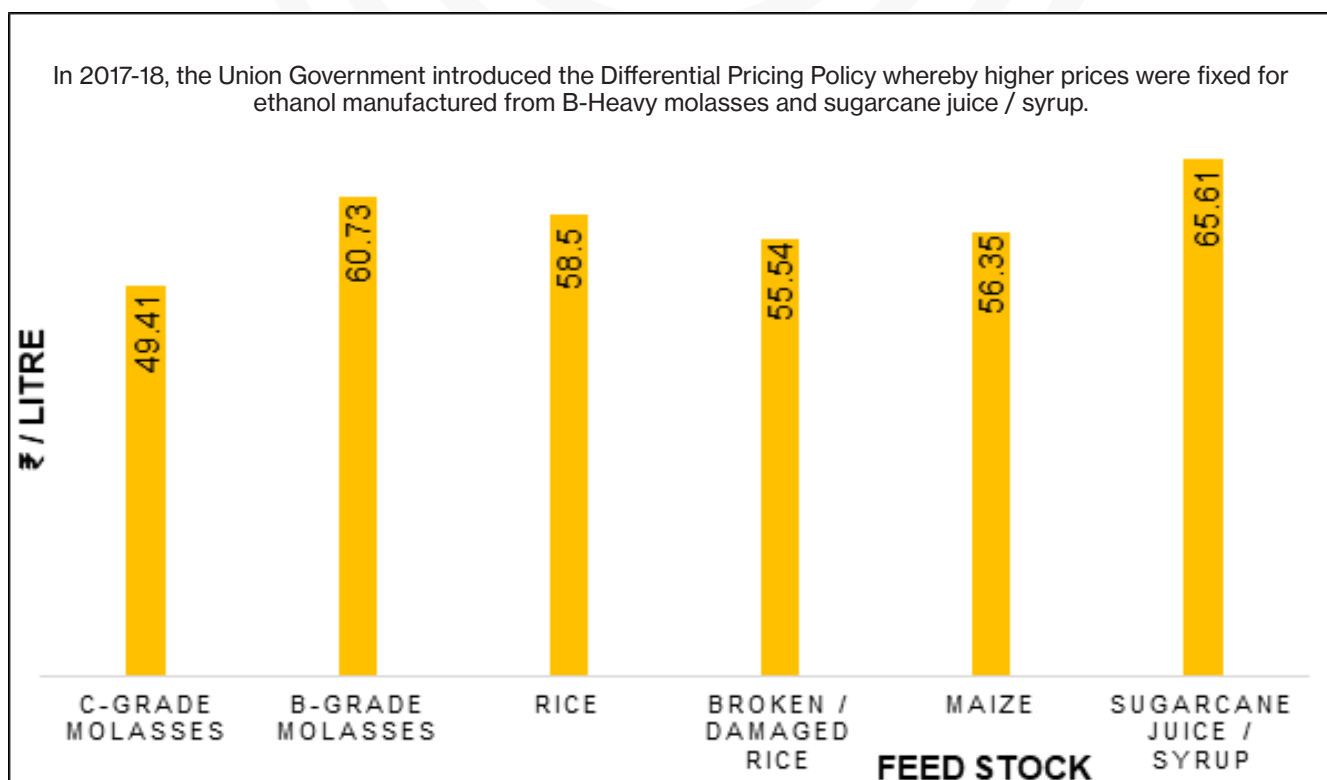


FIGURE: Bar chart representing the pricing of ethanol prepared from different feed stocks under the Differential Pricing Policy.

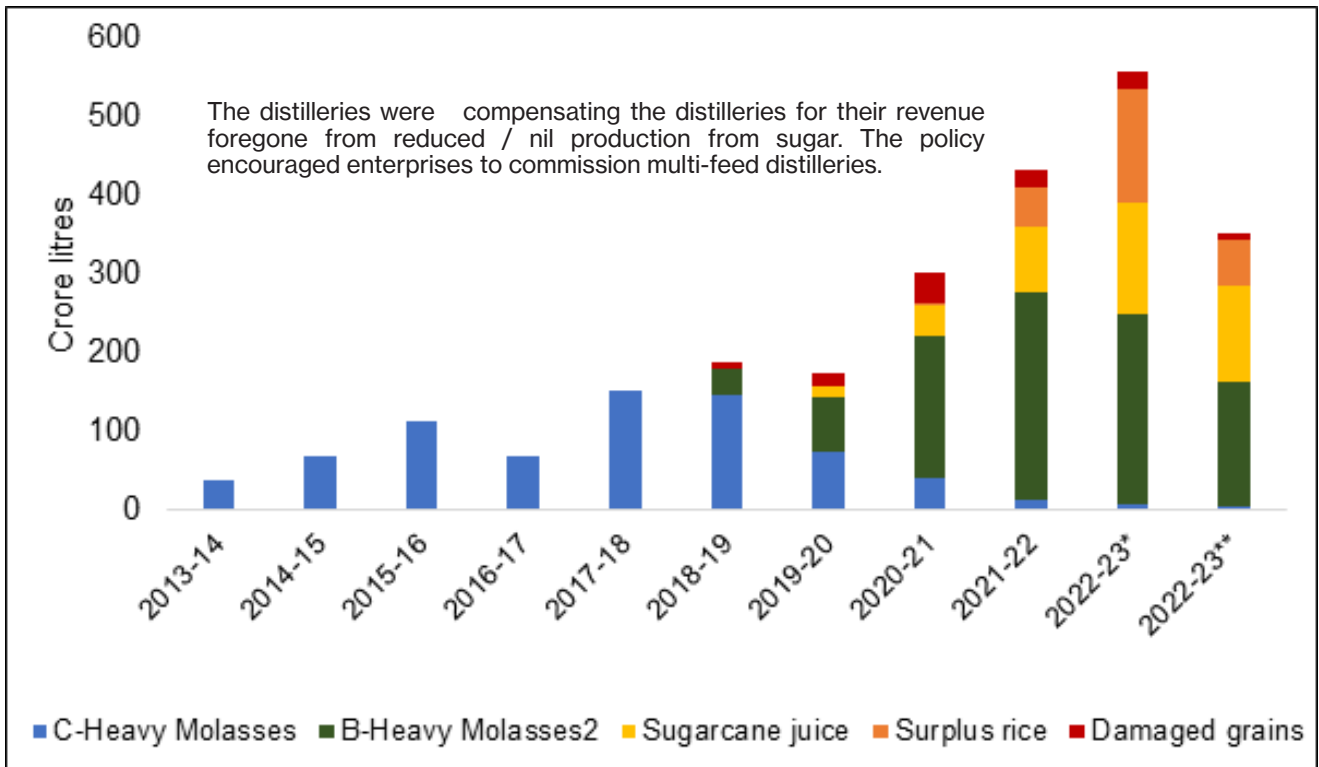


FIGURE: Bar chart representing the share of ethanol prepared from different feed stocks.

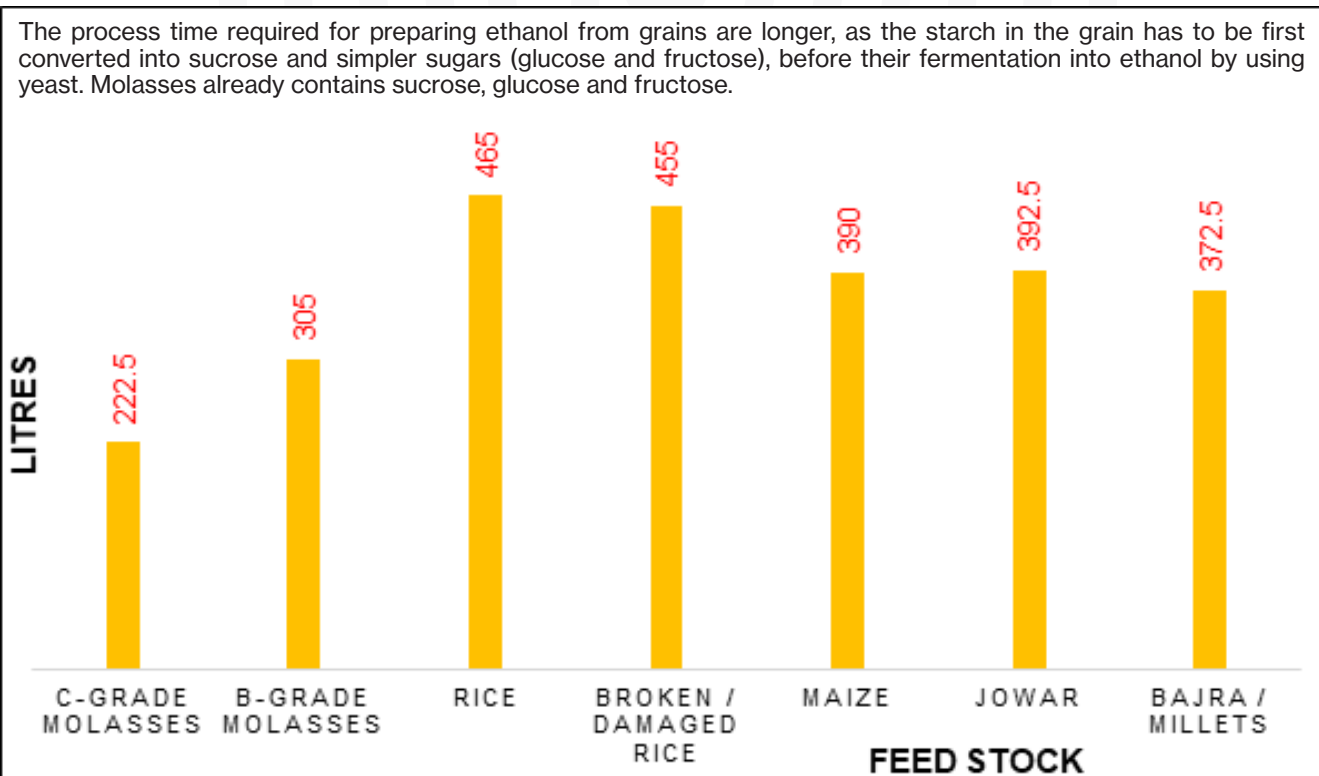
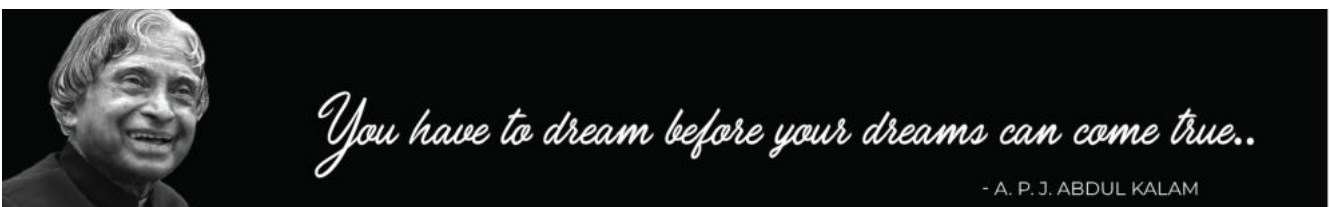


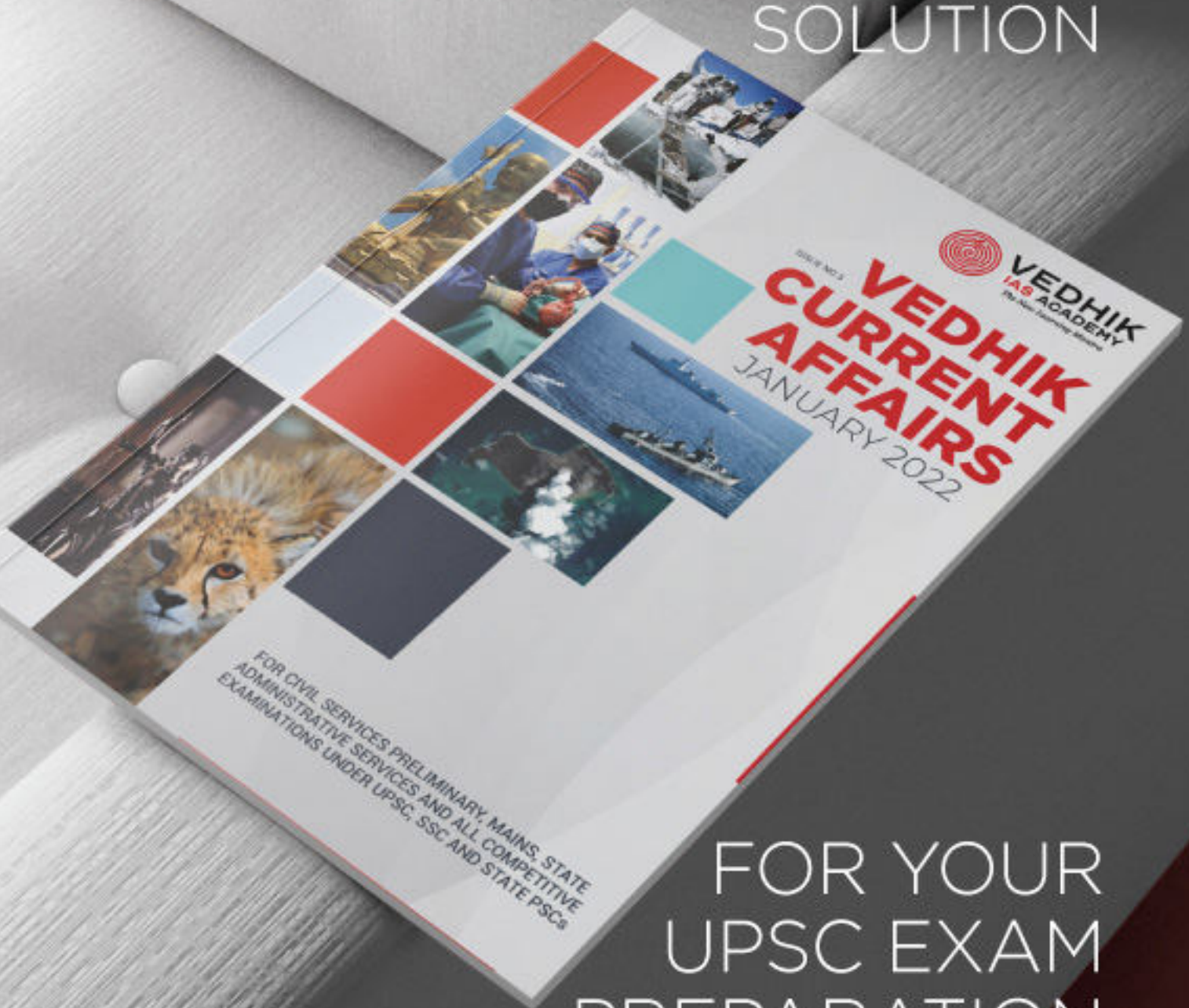
FIGURE: Bar chart representing the average yields from different feed stocks.





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ECOLOGY





INTERNATIONAL PLASTIC BAG FREE DAY

**FOREST (CONSERVATION) AMENDMENT
BILL, 2023**

SIGHT PROGRAMME

GREEN HYDROGEN

PROJECT CHEETAH



INTERNATIONAL PLASTIC BAG FREE DAY

CONTEXT : July 3: International Plastic Bag Free Day raises eco-awareness on harmful single-use plastics.

BACKGROUND: In 2008, Rezero, a member of Zero Waste Europe (ZWE), initiated International Plastic Bag Free Day, sparking a global movement against single-use plastic bags. The EU's 2015 directives and Bangladesh's 2022 ban set examples for other nations to take action, promoting awareness and combating plastic pollution.

STATUS OF PLASTIC GENERATION IN INDIA: India produces 3.4 million tonnes of plastic waste, with only 30% being recycled. Over five years, plastic consumption rose by 9.7% CAGR, reaching 20 million tonnes in 2019-20. Maharashtra, Gujarat, and Tamil Nadu contribute 38% of India's total plastic waste. The data is from a report by IISc and Praxis Global Alliance.

Single Use Plastic Ban in India

- The Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016, amended in 2021, ban certain single-use plastic items with high littering potential, including ear buds with plastic sticks, candy sticks, and polystyrene decorations.
- The amended rules also prohibit the use of various plastic items like plates, cups, cutlery, and stirrers, aiming to reduce plastic waste generation and its adverse environmental impact.
- Plastic carry bags with thickness less than 75 microns were banned from 30th September 2021, and those less than 120 microns were prohibited from 31st December 2022, to encourage sustainable alternatives and decrease plastic pollution.
- The prescribed authorities play a crucial role in enforcing the rules and ensuring compliance with the ban on identified single-use plastic items and the regulation of plastic carry bag thickness.
- The amended Plastic Waste Management Rules

demonstrate a proactive step by the government of India to address the plastic waste crisis, promoting responsible consumption and waste management practices for a cleaner environment.

International Plastic Bag Free Day 2023 holds significance as a global awareness campaign to promote reducing plastic bag usage, highlighting the environmental impact, and encouraging sustainable alternatives for a cleaner planet.

BIO-PLASTICS

- **Making**: Bioplastics are derived from renewable sources like corn, sugarcane, or plant oils, through a process of fermentation and polymerization, resulting in eco-friendly plastic alternatives.
- **Degradation**: Bioplastics can be biodegradable, breaking down naturally into harmless substances, or non-biodegradable, requiring specific industrial conditions for decomposition.
- **Composition**: Bioplastics are composed of bio-based polymers or a blend of bio-based and fossil-fuel-based polymers, offering varying degrees of environmental sustainability.
- **Alternatives**: Bioplastics serve as eco-friendly alternatives to conventional plastics, reducing the reliance on fossil fuels and mitigating environmental impacts like plastic pollution and greenhouse gas emissions.
- **Significance in India**: In India, bioplastics adoption aligns with sustainable development goals, curbing plastic waste, supporting rural economies through biomass production, and reducing India's carbon footprint.

FOREST (CONSERVATION) AMENDMENT BILL, 2023

CONTEXT : Lok Sabha passed Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill 2023, amending the Act regulating forest resource extraction.

BACKGROUND: During the Monsoon session, Lok Sabha approved the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023, which aims to amend the Forest Conservation Act, 1980. The Joint Committee on the Forest (JPC) endorsed all the proposed amendments in the Bill this month. The amendments regulate the extraction of forest resources by industries and local communities.

How the bill differ from Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980?

- The proposed Bill aims to regulate forest land use, including land declared as a forest or notified as a forest after October 25, 1980, and land changed from forest to non-forest use on or before December 12, 1996.
- Certain exemptions are provided, such as forest land along railways or public roads, and land within 100 km from international borders for strategic projects or national security.
- State governments need prior approval from the central government to assign forest land to any entity, including government-owned ones, subject to

prescribed terms and conditions.

- The Act restricts de-reservation of forests or non-forest use, but certain activities related to forest and wildlife conservation, ecotourism, and silvicultural operations are excluded from non-forest purposes.
- The central government may issue implementation directions to any authority/organization recognized by the central, state, or union territory governments under the Act.

Significance of Changes

- The proposed Bill's aim to regulate forest land use is crucial for preserving valuable forest ecosystems and mitigating the adverse impacts of unchecked development on biodiversity. Exempting certain forest lands along railways, roads, and near international borders for strategic projects ensures essential infrastructure development while still maintaining ecological balance.
- Requiring prior approval from the central government



for assigning forest land promotes better decision-making, transparency, and accountability in land use policies. By restricting de-reservation and non-forest use, the Act protects vital forest areas from degradation and helps combat deforestation, aiding in climate change mitigation.

Criticism

Critics argue that the proposed Bill's regulation of forest land use might impede some development projects and economic activities, potentially hindering the country's

progress. The exemptions provided for strategic projects near international borders raise concerns about potential ecological disruptions and threats to wildlife habitats in sensitive regions.

Requiring prior approval for land assignment could create bureaucratic bottlenecks and delays, affecting both public and private initiatives seeking to utilize forest land responsibly. Critics question whether the Act's exclusions for certain activities may open room for misinterpretation or misuse, potentially leading to uncontrolled exploitation of forest resources.

SIGHT PROGRAMME

CONTEXT : Government invites bids for 450,000 tonnes/year green hydrogen capacity under SIGHT scheme in India.

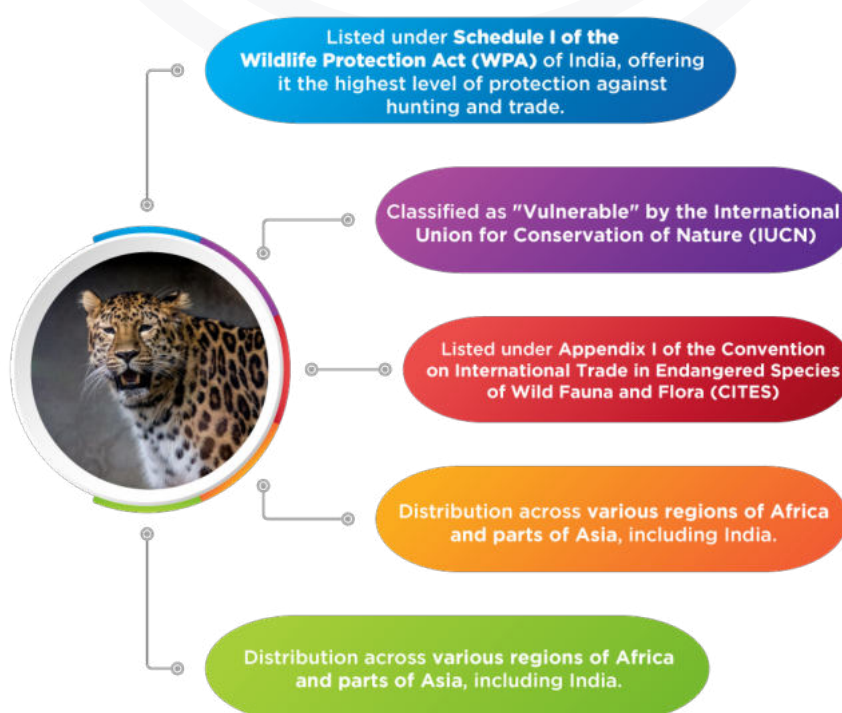
BACKGROUND: The government invited bids for green hydrogen production under SIGHT scheme, part of India's National Green Hydrogen Mission. The overall mission has a budget of Rs.17, 490 crore, with Rs.13, 050 crore allocated for green hydrogen capacities until FY 2029-30, including electrolyzers.

for Green Hydrogen Transition (SIGHT) is a sub-component of India's National Green Hydrogen Mission. It has two components: Component I provides incentives for electrolyser manufacturing (INR 4440 crore), and Component II focuses on green hydrogen production (INR 13050 crore). The scheme will be executed by the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI).

ABOUT THE PROGRAMME: The Strategic Interventions

SOHAGI BARWA WILDLIFE SANCTUARY

- Sohagi Barwa Wildlife Sanctuary, located in Maharajganj district, Uttar Pradesh, was established in 1987, carved out of the northern part of the Old Gorakhpur Forest Division.
- The sanctuary's topography is mostly flat, with diverse landscapes including grasslands, ponds, lakes, swamps, and open grasslands, drained by several rivers.
- It is home to a wide range of fauna, including Tiger, Leopard, Cheetal, Bear, Wild boar, Python, and various bird species like Peafowl, Hornbill, and Kingfishers.
- The area predominantly consists of Sal forests, along with other tree species such as Jaamun, Gatal, Sema, and Khair, providing a rich and varied habitat for wildlife.
- The sanctuary's strategic location near the international Indo-Nepal border and the U.P.-Bihar border contributes to its ecological significance and biodiversity conservation efforts.





GREEN HYDROGEN

CONTEXT : New Delhi hosts 3-day International Conference on Green Hydrogen; Focus on clean energy partnerships and technology.

BACKGROUND: The Indian government hosts the International Conference on Green Hydrogen (ICGH-2023) in New Delhi to promote energy transition and decarbonisation. Stakeholders from India and worldwide gather to establish a Green Hydrogen ecosystem, discuss advancements in the sector, and foster sustainability through innovation-driven solutions in the green hydrogen value chain.

GREEN HYDROGEN MISSION

- The Union Cabinet has approved the National Green Hydrogen Mission to make India a global hub for green hydrogen production, utilization, and export. The Mission aims to achieve 5 MMT of green hydrogen production capacity annually by 2030, accompanied by 125 GW of renewable energy capacity addition.
- The Mission's initial outlay is Rs. 19,744 crore, with investments totalling over Rs. 8 lakh crore and the creation of six lakh jobs by 2030. It targets a cumulative reduction of nearly 50 MMT of greenhouse gas emissions and a decrease of over Rs. one lakh crore in fossil fuel imports.

- The Mission's benefits include export opportunities, decarbonisation of major sectors, and reduced reliance on imported fossil fuels, indigenous manufacturing growth, and the development of cutting-edge technologies.

- The Strategic Interventions for Green Hydrogen Transition Programme (SIGHT) will provide financial incentives for domestic electrolyser manufacturing and green hydrogen production under the Mission.

- The Mission will establish a policy framework, standards and regulations, public-private partnerships for R&D, and a coordinated skill development program to support the growth of the green hydrogen ecosystem in India.

Green hydrogen holds immense promise as a clean and sustainable energy solution, utilizing renewable resources to produce hydrogen through electrolysis. Its potential to decarbonize various sectors could pave the way for a greener and more resilient future.

PROJECT CHEETAH

CONTEXT : A cheetah named Surya was found dead in Kanha National Park, India, possibly due to a wound infected by maggots from its radio-collar.

BACKGROUND: Cheetah "Surya" was found dead in Kanha National Park (KNP) with a neck wound infected by maggots. The radio-collar fitted on the cheetah's neck may have caused chafing and obstructed its movement. The collar's material, along with the monsoon moisture, possibly prevented the cheetah from cleaning itself, leading to fatal parasites. Radio-collaring is common in India without prior links to such infections.

WHAT IS PROJECT CHEETAH?

- Project Cheetah is an ambitious initiative by the Government of India to reintroduce cheetahs to the country.
- It is implemented by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) in collaboration with Madhya Pradesh Forest Department and wildlife experts from Namibia and South Africa.
- The project follows the 'Action plan for Introduction

in India' and is overseen by a Steering Committee with experienced officials from successful tiger reintroductions.

- 20 radio-collared cheetahs were brought from Namibia and South Africa for the first-ever transcontinental wild-to-wild translocation to Kuno National Park in Madhya Pradesh.
- After quarantine, the cheetahs were shifted to larger acclimatization enclosures, and 11 are currently under free-ranging conditions.
- Five cheetahs, including a cub born in India, remain in quarantine enclosures. Each free-ranging cheetah is closely monitored round-the-clock by a dedicated team.
- The project aims to restore cheetahs to their natural habitat and conserve the species in India.



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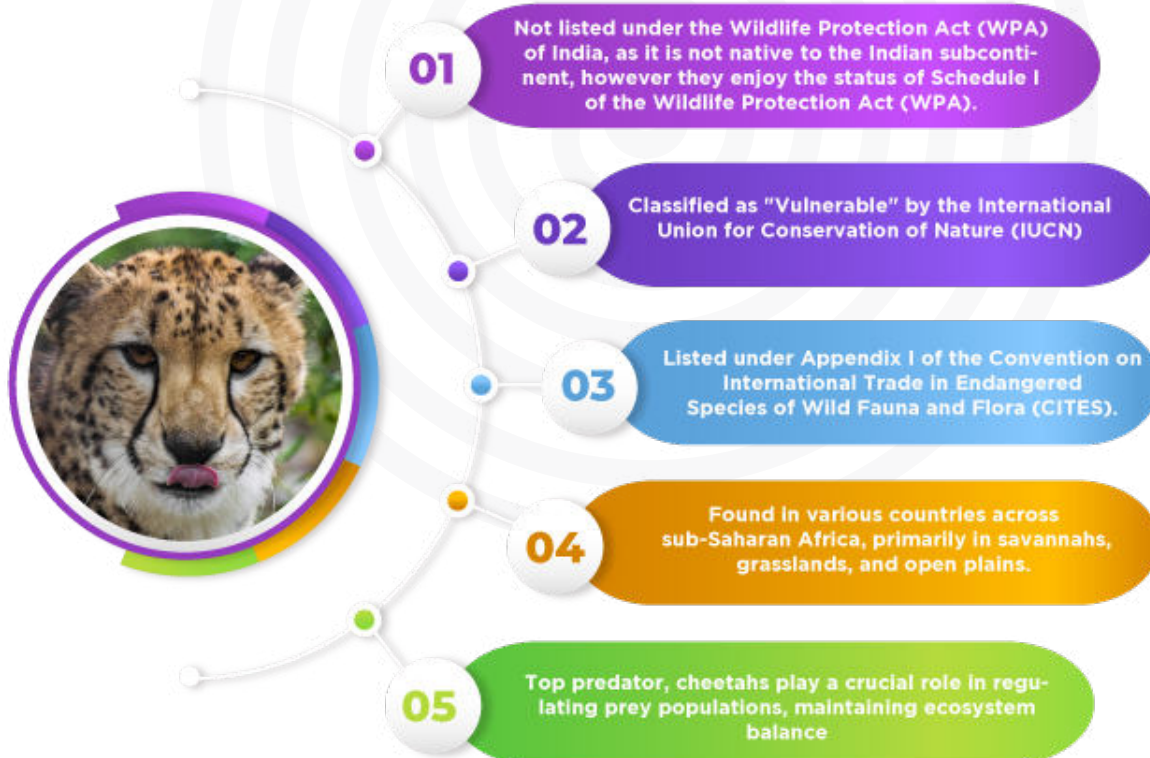




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GENOME-SEQUENCING

BHARAT 6G ALLIANCE

ORV - SAGAR NIDHI

CHANDRAYAAN-3 MISSION

GRAVITATIONAL WAVES

HYDROGEN FUEL-CELL

NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

GM MUSTARD

DRUG-RESISTANT TUBERCULOSIS (DR-TB)

HIV (HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS)



GENOME-SEQUENCING

CONTEXT: New-born screening programs save infants from death or disability by diagnosing around 30 treatable diseases early, enabling effective interventions.

BACKGROUND: Genomic sequencing's availability, affordability, and comprehensive coverage offer fast and effective diagnosis in neonatal ICUs. This aids in identifying and treating uncommon genetic diseases, improving outcomes compared to routine new-born screening with multiple tests.

WHAT IS GENOMIC SEQUENCING?

- Genomic sequencing in biotechnology involves determining the precise order of nucleotides in an organism's DNA, providing essential genetic information for research, medicine, and agriculture.
- It aids in identifying genes, regulatory regions, and genetic variations, contributing to the study of inherited disorders and evolution.
- Genomic sequencing plays a vital role in personalized medicine, helping diagnose diseases based on an individual's unique genetic makeup.
- It enables genetic engineering techniques like gene editing, enhancing crop yields, and developing genetically modified organisms (GMOs) with desirable traits.

SIGNIFICANCE OF GENOMIC SEQUENCING IN NEWBORNS

Early Detection: Genomic sequencing helps identify genetic disorders in new-borns, enabling timely interventions and personalized treatment plans for improved health outcomes.

Precision Medicine: It allows tailoring medical care based on an infant's unique genetic profile, enhancing the effectiveness of treatments and minimizing adverse reactions.

Rare Disease Diagnosis: Genomic sequencing aids in diagnosing rare genetic diseases that may not be apparent through conventional screening methods.

Family Planning: Information from sequencing can guide parents in making informed decisions about future pregnancies and potential risks.

Research Advancements: New-born genomic data contributes to medical research, enhancing our understanding of genetic diseases and paving the way for novel therapies.

Early Intervention: Identifying genetic predispositions early can prompt preventive measures, minimizing the impact of certain diseases on the child's health.

Ethical Considerations: Genomic sequencing raises ethical concerns regarding privacy, consent, and potential misuse of genetic information, necessitating robust regulatory frameworks.

GENOMIC SEQUENCING DEVELOPMENTS IN INDIA:

The Genome India Project, supported by the Department of Biotechnology, is two-thirds complete, sequencing 10,000 Indian genomes. It aims to create a public database, aiding global researchers in studying unique genetic variants in the Indian population.

GENOME INDIA PROJECT

- Genome India Project is a government initiative aimed at sequencing the genetic diversity of India's population to understand disease patterns, ancestry, and personalized medicine.
- Scope: It plans to analyse 10,000 ethnically diverse genomes, representing India's vast population diversity.
- Objectives: The project seeks to identify genetic variations related to disease susceptibility and drug responses for precision healthcare.
- Research Collaborations: Genome India involves collaborations with national and international research institutes and the private sector to achieve its objectives.
- Public Health Impact: The project's findings can aid in early disease detection, prevention, and better management of genetic disorders.
- Data Privacy: Ensuring data security and privacy is crucial due to the sensitive nature of genomic information.

BHARAT 6G ALLIANCE

CONTEXT: DoT Launches Bharat 6G Alliance to Drive Innovation and Collaboration in Next-Generation Wireless Technology

BACKGROUND: Shri Ashwini Vaishnaw, Hon'ble Union Minister for Railways, Communications, Electronics & IT, announced the formation of Bharat 6G Alliance (B6GA) in line with the PM's vision. It aims to develop indigenous technology, telecom, semiconductor manufacturing, and lead in 6G technology through collaborations with public-private entities and international alliances.

HIGHLIGHTS: DoT launches Bharat 6G Alliance to drive innovation and collaboration in next-gen wireless tech. Over 75 innovators felicitated. DCIS grants Rs. 48 crore to 66 start-ups and MSMEs. Agreements worth Rs. 240.5 crores signed under TTDF scheme. 9 years of industry-centric reforms made telecom a sunrise sector. India and USA to co-create technology. India ranks among Top 3 5G ecosystems with 2.7 lakh 5G towers installed. 4G coverage is 99%, investing 38,000 crores for 100% connectivity.



Bharat 6G Alliance

- B6GA's primary objective is to understand and address the business and societal needs of 6G technology beyond technical requirements.
- It aims to foster consensus on these needs and promote impactful open research and development (R&D) initiatives in India.
- B6GA plans to bring together start-ups, companies, and the manufacturing ecosystem to drive the design, development, and deployment of 6G technologies.
- Accelerating standards-related patent creation within India and contributing to international standardization organizations like 3GPP and ITU is a key focus.
- B6GA aims to position India as a leader in 6G innovation and facilitate market access for Indian telecom technology products and services globally.
- The initiative seeks to promote technology ownership, indigenous manufacturing, co-innovation, and reduce imports while boosting exports and Intellectual Property creation.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ALLIANCE:

Technological Advancement: B6GA aims to drive the design, development, and deployment of 6G technologies in India. By participating in cutting-edge research and development, India can stay at the forefront of technological innovation.

Economic Growth: The initiative facilitates market access for Indian telecom technology products and services globally. This can boost the Indian economy, create jobs, and foster indigenous manufacturing capabilities.

Strategic Positioning: By actively contributing to international standardization organizations like 3GPP and ITU, India can position itself as a key player in shaping global telecommunications standards and policies.

Reduced Dependence on Imports: B6GA's focus on indigenous manufacturing and technology co-innovation can reduce India's reliance on imports, making the country more self-sufficient in advanced technologies.

Intellectual Property Creation: The initiative aims to augment the creation of Intellectual Property, fostering innovation and protecting India's interests in the evolving 6G landscape.

Accelerated Innovation Ecosystem: B6GA's collaboration with start-ups, companies, and the manufacturing ecosystem can create a conducive environment for innovation, promoting a culture of technology co-innovation.

ORV - SAGAR NIDHI

CONTEXT: *Bangladesh and Mauritius scientists join India's research vessel 'Sagar Nidhi' for a 35-day joint ocean expedition under Colombo Security Conclave's maritime collaboration.*

BACKGROUND: India wants ORV Sagar Nidhi to bolster its capabilities in oceanographic research and exploration. The vessel enables India to conduct comprehensive studies on marine ecosystems, understand ocean dynamics, and monitor environmental changes. It enhances the country's scientific prowess and contributes to sustainable marine resource management and disaster mitigation efforts.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE ORV:

ORV Sagar Nidhi, a cutting-edge oceanographic research vessel, boasts several key highlights. With a length of approximately 83 meters, it is equipped with advanced scientific instruments to conduct multidisciplinary marine research. The vessel's capabilities include conducting bathymetric surveys, studying marine biodiversity, monitoring environmental parameters, and exploring ocean dynamics.

ORV Sagar Nidhi is owned and operated by the Indian National Centre for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS). The vessel's state-of-the-art facilities and technological sophistication make it an indispensable asset for India's marine research endeavours. Its data collection and analysis contribute to sustainable marine resource management, disaster forecasting and mitigation, climate studies, and facilitating better policymaking in ocean-related matters.

SIGNIFICANCE:

- **Scientific Research:** ORV Sagar Nidhi is a critical platform for conducting multidisciplinary oceanographic research, encompassing geology, biology, chemistry, and climate studies.
- **Marine Resource Exploration:** The vessel plays a pivotal role in exploring marine resources, contributing to India's Blue Economy and sustainable resource utilization.
- **Environmental Monitoring:** Sagar Nidhi collects vital data on ocean parameters, marine life, and seabed features, aiding in environmental monitoring and conservation efforts.
- **National Institute of Oceanography (NIO):** The vessel is operated by NIO, an eminent organization under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, reflecting India's commitment to ocean research.
- **Oceanographic Expeditions:** Sagar Nidhi participates in numerous expeditions, enabling comprehensive exploration of diverse marine ecosystems and processes.

ORV Sagar Nidhi's significance lies in its substantial



contributions to scientific research, marine resource exploration, environmental monitoring, and national security. Its role in capacity building and policy implications showcases India's commitment to ocean research and sustainable marine development.

CHANDRAYAAN-3 MISSION

CONTEXT : Chandrayaan-3 successfully launched from Sriharikota, raising hopes for a moon soft-landing on August 23, amid admiration and anticipation worldwide

BACKGROUND: After the setback of Chandrayaan-2, ISRO persevered with Chandrayaan-3, aiming for a lunar soft landing. The LVM3 rocket's successful launch from Satish Dhawan Space Centre brought hope for India's inclusion in the elite group of Moon landing achievers, comprising the US, Soviet Union, and China.

HIGHLIGHTS: Chandrayaan-3, a sequel to Chandrayaan-2, aims to showcase full lunar landing and roving capabilities. Comprising a Lander and Rover, it launches via LVM3 from SDSC SHAR, reaching 100 km lunar orbit. The propulsion module carries the payload SHAPE for Earth's spectral and polarimetric analysis from the lunar vantage point.

HOW CHANDRAYAAN-3 DIFFER FROM ITS PREVIOUS CHANDRAYAAN-2 MISSION?

Chandrayaan-3 carries a simpler configuration with a lander and rover, unlike Chandrayaan-2, which included an orbiter. The lander is equipped with improved landing cameras and stronger legs for safer touchdown at 2m/second.

Chandrayaan-3 introduces a Laser Doppler Velocity Metre for studying lunar terrain and three velocity vectors. Additional solar panels enhance power generation on landing. Extensive tests using helicopters and cranes ensure robustness.

Chandrayaan-3's propulsion module features the SHAPE payload for Earth's spectral and polarimetric measurements, whereas Chandrayaan-2's orbiter boasted nine in-situ instruments. The LRA passive experiment studies Moon system dynamics, a new addition to the mission.

Chandrayaan-3 focuses on lunar landing and roving capabilities, while Chandrayaan-2 aimed for orbiter and rover missions. The new mission aims to perfect soft landing techniques with advanced cameras and sensor technology.

Chandrayaan-3 demonstrates ISRO's mission

evolution. It prioritizes the landing mission with enhanced equipment like additional fuel, sensors, and solar panels. The propulsion module houses SHAPE and the LRA, widening scientific goals for lunar exploration.

LAUNCH VEHICLE - LAUNCH VEHICLE MARK-III

SPECIFICATIONS:

- LVM3 will be capable of placing the 4 tonne class satellites of the GSAT series into Geosynchronous Transfer Orbits.
- The powerful cryogenic stage of LVM3 enables it to place heavy payloads into Low Earth Orbits of 600 km altitude.
- The C25 is powered by CE-20, India's largest cryogenic engine, designed and developed by the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre.
- LVM3 uses two S200 solid rocket boosters to provide the huge amount of thrust required for lift off. The S200 was developed at Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre.
- The L110 liquid stage is powered by two Vikas engines designed and developed at the Liquid Propulsion Systems Centre.



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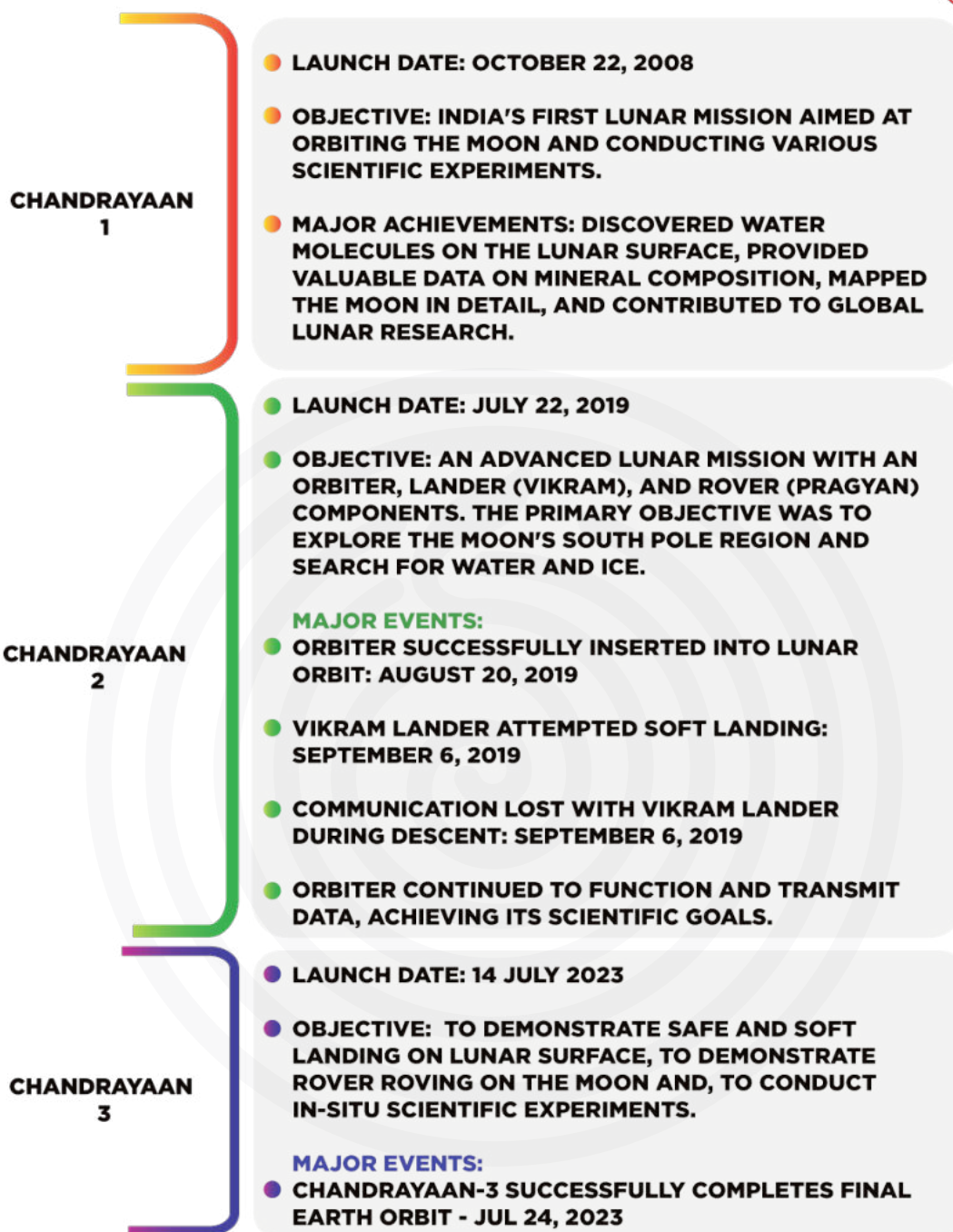


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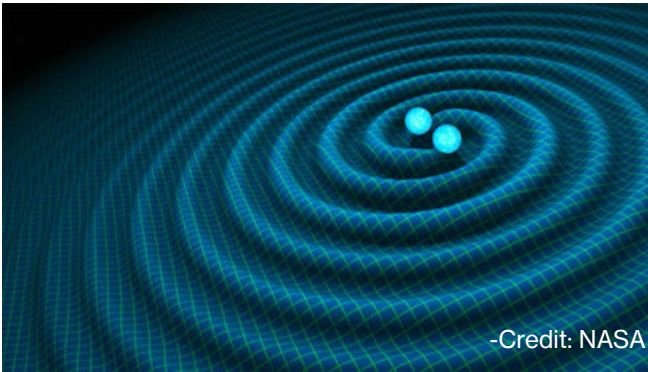
Chandrayaan-3's success propels India towards becoming a prominent player in space exploration, enhancing its scientific prowess and international standing for a promising future in space technology and research.

GRAVITATIONAL WAVES

CONTEXT : Scientists find continuous low-frequency gravitational waves in the universe, promising exciting opportunities to advance our cosmic understanding.

BACKGROUND: Albert Einstein's theory predicted gravitational waves over a century ago, but they were directly observed in 2016 by LIGO, detecting signals from merging black holes. Earlier indirect evidence came from binary pulsars in 1974. LIGO's operation since 2015 made direct detection possible. India's GMRT was among six telescopes contributing data to the latest revelation, unveiling the constant presence of low-frequency gravitational waves, expanding our understanding of the universe.

PROGRESS SO FAR: Scientists' hope of measuring gravitational waves, predicted by Einstein in 1916, became a reality with the construction of the precise ruler, LIGO observatory, operating since the early 2000s. Upgrades in 2010 led to the detection of gravitational waves in 2015, unveiling insights into cosmic events like black hole mergers. By "listening" to gravitational waves, researchers aim to understand the universe's early stages and the formation of black holes, contributing to our knowledge of its creation and evolution.



-Credit: NASA

WHAT IS GRAVITATIONAL WAVES?

Gravitational waves are ripples in the fabric of spacetime caused by the acceleration of massive objects, propagating at the speed of light.

They are produced by cataclysmic events, like colliding black holes or neutron stars. Instruments like LIGO and Virgo use laser interferometry to detect tiny changes in distance caused by passing gravitational waves.

Gravitational waves provide a new way to study the universe, offering direct insights into massive astrophysical events and phenomena. The first direct detection of

gravitational waves in 2015 confirmed Einstein's theory of general relativity.

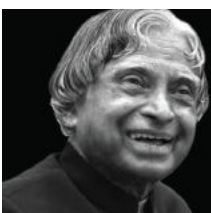
Gravitational waves have allowed scientists to study black holes' properties and understand their formation and evolution. They offer a unique window to explore the early universe, as gravitational waves are not obstructed by matter like light.

WHAT CAUSES GRAVITATIONAL WAVES?

- Binary black hole or neutron star mergers: When two massive compact objects spiral towards each other and merge, they emit gravitational waves.
- Supernova explosions: The core collapse of a massive star generates strong gravitational waves.
- Cosmic inflation: During the early moments of the universe, rapid expansion produced gravitational waves.
- Colliding neutron stars: When neutron stars collide, they release gravitational waves along with electromagnetic radiation.
- Rotating asymmetric neutron stars: A rotating, non-symmetric neutron star emits continuous gravitational waves.

Gravitational waves and Electromagnetic radiation

	Gravitational Waves	Electromagnetic Radiation
Nature	Ripples in the fabric of space-time caused by the acceleration of massive objects.	Consists of oscillating electric and magnetic fields.
Propagation	They travel at the speed of light through space-time.	Can travel through a vacuum (like space) or through a medium (like air or water).
Interaction	Interact very weakly with matter, making them challenging to detect.	Waves interact strongly with matter.
Source	Generated by violent events involving massive objects, such as black hole mergers, neutron star collisions, and supernova explosions.	Produced by a wide range of sources, including stars, galaxies, light bulbs, and electronic devices.
Detection	Specialized detectors like LIGO	Various instruments like telescopes and cameras



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

- A. P. J. ABDUL KALAM



HYDROGEN FUEL-CELL

CONTEXT : *Hydrogen fuel-cell buses likely to be tested in Delhi later this year*

BACKGROUND: Hydrogen-powered buses developed by Indian Oil Corporation and Tata Motors will undergo test runs in Delhi and other states. These buses use fuel cell batteries, producing electricity with no carbon emissions, providing a promising eco-friendly transportation solution with sustained performance as long as they have a steady supply of hydrogen.

DEVELOPMENT SO FAR: Indian Oil Corporation and Tata Motors will deploy indigenously manufactured hydrogen fuel-cell buses in Delhi and other states. The buses use imported fuel cells and produce electricity with no carbon emissions. The project aims to secure route permits, and the first three buses are expected to ply in October, marking a structured scientific process. The company seeks future government funding for more hydrogen-bus projects.

India's first hydrogen-powered truck

Reliance Industries and Ashok Leyland launch India's first Hydrogen Internal Combustion Engine (H₂-ICE) powered heavy-duty truck range. The hydrogen-powered trucks maintain a design similar to conventional diesel engines, enabling a smooth transition to cleaner energy sources at a reasonable cost. The mining truck weighs 55 tons, features three hydrogen tanks, and a 200-km working range with Ballard's 120 kW PEM fuel cell technology.

Hydrogen fuel-cell

Hydrogen fuel cells produce electricity by combining hydrogen and oxygen, emitting only water vapour as a by-product, making them environmentally friendly and a potential alternative to fossil fuels.

Hydrogen fuel cells offer higher energy efficiency compared to internal combustion engines, making them a promising solution for zero-emission transportation and reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Hydrogen fuel cells can be used in various applications, including vehicles, buses, trains, and even powering buildings, providing versatile and clean energy solutions. Fuel cell technology enables longer ranges and quicker refuelling times for electric vehicles, addressing key limitations of traditional battery-powered EVs.

The hydrogen economy's development is essential for energy diversification and achieving sustainability goals,

fostering research into scalable hydrogen production and distribution methods.

Significance to India's Sustainable Energy Transition

Energy Diversification: Hydrogen fuel cells offer an opportunity for India to diversify its energy mix, reducing dependency on fossil fuels. Deploying hydrogen-powered buses in major cities like Delhi and Mumbai can significantly curb air pollution and reduce carbon emissions, contributing to cleaner urban environments.

Decarbonizing Transportation: As a major consumer of fossil fuels, transitioning to hydrogen fuel cells in vehicles can help India reduce its carbon footprint. Fuel cell-powered automobiles, trucks, and even trains can play a vital role in achieving emission reduction targets. Introducing hydrogen-powered trains on busy railway corridors can help electrify the rail network, lowering greenhouse gas emissions and promoting sustainable transport.

Energy Security: India's growing economy demands secure and reliable energy sources. Hydrogen, produced domestically from renewable resources or through electrolysis, provides a stable and indigenous energy option, reducing dependence on imports. Establishing hydrogen production facilities in regions abundant in renewable energy resources like solar-rich Rajasthan can support self-sufficiency in energy production.

Grid Stabilization: Integrating hydrogen fuel cells with renewable energy systems can help address the intermittency issue of renewable power sources. Excess renewable energy can be stored as hydrogen and later used during peak demand periods, enhancing grid stability. Wind and solar farms in coastal regions can use surplus electricity to generate hydrogen, which can then be transported to inland regions for power generation during periods of low renewable output.

Rural Electrification: Remote and off-grid areas in India often struggle with electricity access. Hydrogen fuel cells can provide a clean and reliable power source for these regions, promoting sustainable development and improving living conditions. Implementing small-scale hydrogen-based power systems in remote villages of states in India can offer a viable energy solution to uplift communities and stimulate economic growth.

NATIONAL RESEARCH FOUNDATION

CONTEXT : *Cabinet approves Introduction of National Research Foundation Bill, 2023 in Parliament to strengthen research eco-system in the country*

BACKGROUND: The Union Cabinet, led by Prime Minister, approves the NRF Bill, 2023, to establish the National Research Foundation. The NRF aims to promote R&D, encourage research and innovation in Indian universities, colleges, research institutions, and R&D laboratories.

HIGHLIGHTS:

- The NRF Bill, 2023, to establish the National Research Foundation (NRF) with an estimated cost of ₹50,000 crore over five years (2023-28).
- NRF will provide strategic direction for scientific research as per NEP recommendations, overseen by a

Governing Board led by the Prime Minister.

- The Department of Science and Technology (DST) will administer NRF, governed by an Executive Council chaired by the Principal Scientific Adviser.
- NRF aims to foster collaboration between industry, academia, and government, encouraging increased industry spending on R&D.
- The bill will repeal and subsume the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB) into NRF, expanding its mandate beyond SERB's activities.



SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BILL

Accelerates Research: The NRF Bill promotes a research and innovation culture in India, advancing scientific development, technology, and knowledge creation across universities, colleges, and research institutions.

Strategic Direction: With an apex body overseeing research as per NEP recommendations, NRF ensures efficient utilization of resources, aligning research efforts with national priorities and goals.

Industry Collaboration: NRF's interface mechanism fosters collaborations between industry, academia, and

government, facilitating private sector participation and increased investment in research and development activities.

Policy Framework: NRF focuses on creating a conducive policy framework and regulatory processes, encouraging industry spending on R&D and driving India's progress in science and technology.

Streamlined Administration: Under DST's administration and guidance of eminent researchers on the Governing Board and Executive Council, NRF centralizes research efforts, enabling effective coordination and decision-making for the country's scientific progress.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI)

CONTEXT: The recent rise of Large Language Models and Generative AI sparks global interest in AI's versatile applications.

BACKGROUND: The recent rise of Large Language Models and Generative AI has led to AI's diverse applications in authoring, creative tasks, and passing exams. Interest in AI's progress is widespread, evident from ChatGPT's popularity and discussions on its potential uses. Ethical concerns have lessened as users embrace AI's productivity benefits, but debates on worker replacements and economic growth akin to the Internet's impact continue.

POSITIVE EFFECTS OF AI ADOPTION: (Based on Analysis)

- AI adoption increases productivity, MIT study shows 14% boost and improved consumer satisfaction in customer support agents. AI positively impacts LinkedIn's top 50 companies, 70% reported being faster, smarter, and more productive.
- PwC predicts 14% global GDP increase (\$15.7 trillion) by 2030 due to AI advancements. Goldman Sachs Research reports generative AI could raise global GDP by 7% (\$7 trillion) over ten years.
- Generative AI's human-like output and breaking communication barriers drive positive macroeconomic effects. U.S. and European experts express varied views on AI's impact on per capita income.
- 44% of U.S. experts anticipate substantial increase

in per capita income, 46% are uncertain. 34% of European experts foresee substantial increase, while 62% agree a ban on generative AI chatbots could hinder innovation.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR INDIA:

India faces concerns about AI's impact on employment due to its large population. Regulations may not be the best solution as they could deter investments and opportunities, leading to potential economic consequences.

PwC predicts China to benefit the most from AI's economic gains, highlighting the need for India to focus on AI education and training. Online education, post-COVID-19, presents an opportunity to leverage the demographic dividend.

Globally, AI is seen as a positive force driving productivity and growth. However, experts express gloomy views on its impact on society, raising challenges in areas like labour, politics, data privacy, crime, and warfare.

Governments must address these challenges through strengthened cyber regulations and consider tax policies to balance returns from capital and labour, reducing displacement and distributional effects. Equipping ourselves with the latest AI tools is essential for progress and competitiveness.

ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE

CONTEXT: Two Alzheimer's drugs, donanemab and lecanemab, show promise in slowing the progression of the disease in early treatment.

BACKGROUND: Eli Lilly's trial data showed 47% of early-stage Alzheimer's patients on donanemab had no progression after a year, compared to 29% on placebo. New therapies are welcomed, but questions arise about costs and benefits for Indian hospitals due to their complexity and expense, as stated in a JAMA journal editorial.

WHAT IS DONANEMAB?

Donanemab is a monoclonal antibody that has been developed for the treatment of Alzheimer's disease. It targets a form of beta-amyloid called N3pG, which is believed to play a significant role in the development and progression of Alzheimer's disease.

In Alzheimer's disease, beta-amyloid plaques accumulate in the brain, leading to the destruction of neurons and cognitive decline. Donanemab works by

binding to N3pG and facilitating the removal of these beta-amyloid plaques from the brain.

Clinical trials for donanemab have shown promising results. In a phase 2 trial called TRAILBLAZER-ALZ, donanemab demonstrated a significant reduction in amyloid plaques in the brain, as well as a slower decline in cognition compared to a placebo group.

Status of Alzheimer's disease

- By 2050, India is projected to have 11.44 million people living with dementia, a 197% increase from 2019.
- Factors like population growth, population ageing, smoking, obesity, high blood sugar, and lack of education contribute to this rise.
- Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal, and Pakistan are expected



to have higher dementia burdens compared to India. A 2020 report estimates that 5.3 million people above the age of 60 in India currently have dementia.

- The data is based on the Global Burden of Disease study published in the Lancet Public Health. These statistics highlight the urgent need for preventive measures and improved healthcare infrastructure for dementia in India.

Significance of the Findings in Indian Health Sector

Promising Alzheimer's Treatments: Eli Lilly's donanemab trial data shows potential for slowing disease progression in early-stage patients. If implemented in India, these treatments offer hope for addressing Alzheimer's, a condition without targeted drugs, and improving patient outcomes.

Cost and Benefit Analysis: While the therapies are welcomed, concerns arise over their complexity and expense. India's health sector must assess the feasibility

of introducing these treatments, weighing their benefits against financial implications to ensure optimal patient care.

Impact on Patients, Clinicians, and Payers: The modest benefits seen in the trial may not be questioned by stakeholders if amyloid antibodies are low-risk, affordable, and easy to administer. However, considering their current characteristics, discussions on the overall impact are essential.

Health Policy Considerations: Implementing advanced treatments like donanemab requires a comprehensive health policy approach. Authorities need to explore options to make such therapies more accessible, strike a balance between efficacy and affordability, and ensure equitable healthcare access for Alzheimer's patients in India.

The promising Alzheimer's treatments bring hope for patients, but India's health sector must address complexities and costs for equitable access in the future.

GM MUSTARD

CONTEXT : India's GM crop debate involves environmentalists, scientists, farmers, politicians, and higher judiciary questioning safety, efficacy, and necessity.

BACKGROUND: India has been engaged in a vigorous GM crop debate with various stakeholders, questioning the safety, efficacy, and necessity of GM food. Concerns arose over Bt cotton, the only approved GM crop, with farmers experiencing fleeting benefits and increased costs. Parliament and the Supreme Court conducted independent examinations to address the issue.

HIGHLIGHTS: The Indian government's argument to dismiss GM mustard as herbicide-tolerant (HT) raises concerns over ecological and health risks. The disregard for science-based concerns, opposition, and constitutional issues is alarming. If approved, GM mustard may set a precedent for other HT crops, impacting farming, India's food culture, and heritage. The Supreme Court's decision carries significant implications for the future of agriculture.

What is GM Mustard?

GM Mustard is a genetically modified variety of the mustard plant (*Brassica juncea*) developed through genetic engineering to exhibit specific traits.

Type of Modification: The genetic modification in GM Mustard involves enhancing the process of self-pollination, enabling improved and consistent pollination rates within the plant.

Developed by: GM Mustard, known as Dhara Mustard Hybrid-11 (DMH-11), was developed by a team of scientists at the Centre for Genetic Manipulation of Crop Plants, University of Delhi South Campus, led by Dr. Deepak Pental.

Significance in the context of India

- **Reducing Edible Oil Imports:** GM Mustard's higher yield potential can help India decrease its reliance on edible oil imports, which account for a significant portion of the country's consumption.
- **Enhanced Domestic Production:** By promoting increased cultivation of GM Mustard, India can boost its domestic edible oil production, contributing to food security and reducing foreign exchange expenditure.
- **Cost Savings for Farmers:** Improved self-pollination and higher yields in GM Mustard can lead to cost savings for farmers, making oilseed cultivation more economically viable and profitable.
- **Agricultural Sustainability:** Embracing GM Mustard can support sustainable agriculture practices by utilizing land more efficiently and decreasing the environmental impact associated with large-scale oilseed imports.
- **Meeting Growing Demand:** As India's population

continues to grow, the demand for edible oils is also rising. GM Mustard can help bridge the gap between supply and demand, ensuring a stable and sufficient oilseed supply for the nation. However, it is essential to address safety, regulatory, and environmental concerns while considering its commercial adoption.

Concerns

- **Environmental Impact:** Some experts express concerns about the potential for GM Mustard to crossbreed with wild mustard varieties, leading to unintended consequences on native ecosystems and biodiversity.
- **Seed Control and Monopolization:** The adoption of GM Mustard could concentrate seed control in the hands of a few agribusiness companies, raising issues of monopoly and dependency for farmers.
- **Health and Safety:** Opponents worry about the potential long-term health effects of consuming GM crops and the safety of genetically modified organisms



(GMOs) in the food supply.

- **Disruption of Traditional Farming:** GM Mustard's introduction may disrupt traditional agriculture practices, affecting the livelihoods of small-scale farmers who rely on traditional mustard varieties.
- **Socioeconomic Concerns:** The commercialization of GM Mustard might exacerbate inequalities between large-scale and small-scale farmers, potentially

leading to the marginalization of vulnerable agricultural communities.

Considering India's future perspective, the cultivation of GM Mustard must be approached cautiously, weighing its potential benefits in meeting edible oil demands against the need to address environmental, health, and socioeconomic concerns to ensure sustainable and equitable agricultural practices.

DRUG-RESISTANT TUBERCULOSIS (DR-TB)

CONTEXT : J&J's bedaquiline patent for DR-TB expired, MSF urges them not to enforce secondary patents globally.

BACKGROUND: Johnson & Johnson's bedaquiline patent for DR-TB expired, prompting MSF to urge the company to not enforce secondary patents in TB high-burden countries. MSF calls for J&J to withdraw pending secondary patent applications and commit not to take legal action against generic manufacturers exporting to or from such countries. The recent deal with the Stop TB Partnership/GDF is considered a partial solution as it excludes many high-burden countries in EECA.

What is drug-resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB)?

Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis (DR-TB) is a form of tuberculosis caused by bacteria that have developed resistance to one or more of the standard anti-TB drugs. It is a serious public health concern as it complicates treatment, leading to longer and more complex therapy regimens.

DR-TB arises primarily due to improper or incomplete treatment of standard TB, allowing the bacteria to mutate and become resistant. Multi-Drug Resistant TB (MDR-TB) and Extensively Drug-Resistant TB (XDR-TB) are two major types of DR-TB, with the latter being even more resistant to a wider range of drugs.

DR-TB poses a significant global health challenge, requiring prompt diagnosis, specialized treatment, and comprehensive public health interventions to prevent its spread and manage the disease effectively.

Bedaquiline Tablets

- Bedaquiline is an antibiotic medication used to treat drug-resistant tuberculosis (DR-TB), specifically Multi-Drug Resistant Tuberculosis (MDR-TB) and Extensively Drug-Resistant Tuberculosis (XDR-TB).
- **Targeted Treatment:** Bedaquiline targets a specific enzyme in the TB bacterium, inhibiting its growth and replication, making it a valuable addition to DR-TB treatment regimens.

- **Second-Line Drug:** Bedaquiline is considered a second-line drug, used when standard TB treatments fail due to drug resistance or intolerance to first-line drugs.
- **FDA Approval:** Bedaquiline was approved by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in 2012 as part of combination therapy for MDR-TB cases.
- **Importance in Global Health:** Bedaquiline offers hope for patients with DR-TB and plays a crucial role in combatting the rising challenges of drug-resistant tuberculosis worldwide. However, careful administration and monitoring are necessary due to potential side effects and interactions with other medications.

Significance on Indian Health Sector

Affordable Access: The ending of the patent on Bedaquiline Tablets allows for the production of generic versions, making the medication more affordable and accessible to a larger population in India.

Increased Availability: Generic versions of Bedaquiline can lead to a higher supply in the market, ensuring a steady and sufficient availability of the drug for tuberculosis patients.

Boosting Treatment Coverage: The affordability of generic Bedaquiline enables the Indian health sector to expand treatment coverage, reaching more patients in need of DR-TB therapy.

Competition and Cost Reduction: With multiple manufacturers producing generic versions, competition drives down the drug's cost, further lowering the financial burden on healthcare systems and patients.

Addressing Drug-Resistant TB Burden: Increased accessibility and affordability of Bedaquiline contribute significantly to managing drug-resistant tuberculosis cases, a crucial public health concern in India.

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Médecins Sans Frontières/Doctors Without Borders (MSF)

- Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) or Doctors Without Borders is an independent, international humanitarian medical organization, providing medical aid and assistance to people affected by conflicts, disasters, and epidemics.
- Founded in 1971: MSF was established in France in 1971 by a group of doctors and journalists, driven by the principles of impartiality, neutrality, and independence in providing medical care.
- Global Operations: MSF operates in over 70 countries, delivering emergency medical services, healthcare, and medical supplies to vulnerable populations in crisis situations.
- Emergency Response: MSF responds rapidly to emergencies like natural disasters, armed conflicts, and disease outbreaks, deploying medical teams to provide life-saving care and support.
- Advocacy and Witnessing: Alongside its medical work, MSF advocates for improved access to healthcare and witnesses the suffering of people in crises, sharing their stories to raise awareness and mobilize support.

HIV (HUMAN IMMUNODEFICIENCY VIRUS)

CONTEXT : The Geneva patient likely cured of HIV through stem cell transplant without specific gene mutation in donor.

BACKGROUND: The Geneva patient, sixth HIV case, likely cured after stem cell transplant without specific gene mutation. Doctors found significant reduction in HIV-infected cells, leading to antiretroviral therapy discontinuation. Twenty months later, no viral particles or elevated immune response detected, but susceptibility to HIV remains, raising the possibility of recurrence. Researchers aim to explore new avenues for HIV remission or cure.

HIGHLIGHTS: All six patients achieving HIV remission received stem cell transplants for cancer treatment. First five cases involved donors with CCR5 delta 32 mutation, associated with lower HIV risk. The mutation reduces receptors on CD4 immune cells, hindering virus entry. Only a small percentage of the global population carries this mutation.

What is Stem Cell Transplant?

Stem Cell Transplant: It is a medical procedure that involves the transplantation of stem cells to replace damaged or diseased cells, promoting the regeneration of healthy tissues and treating various conditions.

Source of Stem Cells: Stem cells can be obtained from bone marrow, peripheral blood, or umbilical cord blood, either from the patient (autologous) or a matching donor (allogeneic).

Treatment of Diseases: Stem cell transplants are used to treat conditions like leukemia, lymphoma, and certain genetic disorders, where the replacement of abnormal cells is essential for recovery.

High-Dose Chemotherapy: In many cases, the procedure involves administering high-dose chemotherapy or radiation to eliminate diseased cells before introducing the healthy stem cells.

Post-Transplant Care: After the transplant, patients require close monitoring and supportive care to prevent complications and facilitate the successful engraftment of the transplanted stem cells.

Can stem cell transplant become routine treatment for HIV?

- **Possibilities**: Stem cell transplant shows potential as a treatment for HIV due to the ability of certain stem cells to resist HIV infection and repopulate the immune system with HIV-resistant cells.
- **Challenges**: The procedure is complex, costly, and carries significant risks, limiting its suitability for widespread use as a routine treatment for HIV.
- **Compatibility**: Finding suitable stem cell donors with the rare genetic mutation that confers HIV resistance is challenging, restricting the availability of compatible donors.
- **Side Effects**: Stem cell transplant involves high-intensity conditioning regimens that can lead to severe side effects and complications, making it inappropriate for all HIV patients.
- **Antiretroviral Therapy (ART) Success**: Current antiretroviral therapies have been highly effective in controlling HIV, making stem cell transplant a less practical option for routine treatment, except in specific cases or research settings.

Significance on Indian Health Sector

- The success of HIV remission through stem cell transplantation highlights the potential for personalized treatments in India, where drug-resistant HIV cases are a concern.
- Understanding the role of CCR5 delta 32 mutation in HIV resistance can lead to targeted therapies for Indian patients, improving treatment outcomes.
- Genetic research on HIV susceptibility can aid in developing preventive measures and tailored interventions for high-risk populations in India.
- Collaborating with global research efforts enhances India's knowledge base on HIV remission, fostering advancements in healthcare practices.
- Integrating oncology and HIV care in India can lead to better patient management and outcomes, encouraging multidisciplinary approaches in healthcare.



India HIV Estimates 2021

- Estimated adult HIV prevalence in India declined from 0.55% in 2000 to 0.21% in 2021, with the northeast region having the highest prevalence. The total number of People Living with HIV (PLHIV) is around 24 lakhs, with Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, and Karnataka having the largest numbers.
- Annual New Infections (ANI) decreased by 46.3% nationally from 2010 to 2021. Most states showed a declining trend, with Himachal Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, and Telangana experiencing the most rapid declines. However, some northeast states and Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu reported an increasing trend.
- AIDS Related Deaths (ARD) in India estimated at 41.97 thousand in 2021, declining by 76.5% from 2010-2021. All states/UTs, except Puducherry, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, and Tripura, witnessed a declining trend. Chandigarh, Telangana, and West Bengal showed the highest decline in ARD.
- PMTCT (Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission) need estimated at 20,612 in 2021. Maharashtra, Bihar, and Uttar Pradesh have the highest need, accounting for the top three states.

-Credit : National AIDS Control Organization & ICMR-National Institute of Medical Statistics (2022)

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CSAT





READING COMPREHENSION



In reading comprehension, it is one's capacity to understand and reasoning ability that is being assessed. The skills to hone are one's ability to grasp the main ideas from a passage, linking the various ideas in a given passage and being able to infer and draw conclusions. For this one requires an extensive vocabulary and advanced reading skills. Since there is no syllabus to fall back on, aspirants have to rely on their skills to be able to tackle passages they have never seen.

There needs to be a **focus on grammar**, at least in the initial stages of preparation as it is the first step to understanding any language. A strong grammatical basis provides a foundation to build advanced skills on. Once the candidates have a strong hold on their grammar, the focus should shift to reading comprehension. For this the more one reads, the more their confidence will increase.

One thing aspirant must remember even before reading a passage is recognising the difference between an author's opinion and their own thoughts about a subject. Unless the passage asks for it, it is the author's opinion the aspirants must stick to. What is being assessed here is the ability to comprehend and assimilate information presented in front of the reader. This might take some practice as students are often hardwired to stick to their preconceived thoughts. Since too much time cannot be spent on a single passage to differentiate between author's opinion and student's thoughts, the passages should be approached in a blank manner, only taking in what the passage is giving.

Steps to Approach a Passage:

1. Read the questions carefully: In the questions, the aspirant will get instructions regarding what to look for in the passage.
2. Read the passage with the questions in mind: reading the passage after having read the questions streamlines the process. The passage should be approached according to the demand in the question.
3. Consider the Options: the aspirant should look at the options next and correspond them with their answer to find the closest match.

Terminology to Remember

1. Assume: to accept something as true without proof
2. Assumption a thing that is accepted as true without proof
3. Conclude: to arrive at an end
4. Conclusion: the final outcome or result
5. Crux: the most important point of an issue
6. Imply: indicating/ pointing towards something that is not explicitly stated
7. Implication: to draw a conclusion from something although it is not explicitly stated
8. Inference: to draw a conclusion based on evidence.

Types of Questions

1. Assumptions of the author

The questions are based on the author's opinions and thoughts while writing the passage. The answer in this case is not directly in the passage and requires critical thinking on the part of the student. It is important to note that it is the author's opinion that is being asked and aspirants need to remove their thoughts and opinions and focus solely on the author. It is important to note the writing

style while trying to solve these questions; how the author is describing things, whether he is making a statement or posing questions. The key words to look out for in these types of questions are "assumed", "assumptions made", "According to the passage/author".

Example Passage:

A central message of modern development economics is the importance of income growth, which means growth in Gross Domestic Product (GDP). In theory, rising GDP creates unemployment and investment opportunities. As incomes grow in a country where the level of GDP was once low, households, communities, and governments are increasingly able to set aside some funds for the production of things that make for a good life. Today GDP has assumed such a significant place in the development lexicon, that if someone mentions "economic growth", we know they mean growth in GDP.

With reference to the above passage, the following assumptions have been made:

1. **Rising GDP is essential for a country to be developed country**
2. **Rising GDP guarantees a reasonable distribution of income to all households.**

Which of the above assumptions is/are valid?

- a. 1 only
- b. 2 only
- c. Both 1 and 2
- d. Neither 1 nor 2

Answer and Explanation:

The passage is discussing the perceived importance of GDP in today's world. Since the question has asked for assumptions made, you need to focus on the opinions of the author instead of your own thoughts. Of the two assumptions given as part of the question, the first seems to be reflected in the passage. The second option has the word 'guarantees' meaning an assurance or a promise. However the passage has the phrase "in theory" which is used in describing something that is supposed to happen but may or may not happen. The connotation or implication is usually towards the negative. So option no. 2 is not an assumption. Option no. 1 is the only assumption that has been made by the author. The answer thus is (a).

Note: Make sure to read the question carefully. It could ask what assumptions have been made and also what assumptions can be made. The first indicates assumptions of the author; the second refers to assumptions that can be made after reading the passage (by you). The answer may differ based on this technicality.

2. Explicit Information

These are direct questions and perhaps the easiest to solve because of their direct nature. The answers are fact based and are found within the passage itself. For these questions the details need to be focused on. It is also important to read the question properly as many times they are negative. The question may ask what the passage is NOT saying. Either way, for these questions the second reading of the passage needs to be detail oriented. The questions are direct or may ask which of the given options are true.



Example Passage

The sugar maple is a hard maple tree. It can grow as tall as 100 feet and as wide as 4 feet. The sugar maple is commercially valued for its sap, which is used in making maple syrup. Two northeastern states, Vermont and New York, rank as major producers of maple syrup. In Canada, Quebec's annual syrup production surpasses 2.5 million gallons. To make pure maple syrup, holes are made in the trunk of the tree at the end of winter or in early spring. The water-like sap seeps through the holes and runs through a plastic spout that is put into the hole. Afterwards, the collected sap is transferred into tubes that are hooked up to a tank kept in the sugar house. Then, the sap goes through the boiling process. Boiling enhances flavour and adds colour to the sap. Once the sugar content of the sap is about 65%–66%, the sap is ready to be strained and marketed. Maple syrup found in supermarkets, however, is usually not pure and has other additives. The colour of pure maple may range from golden honey to light brown. Between 35 to 50 gallons of sap is needed to produce 1 gallon of maple syrup. Also, popular for the strength and finish of its wood, the sugar maple tree has been put to use in furniture, interior woodwork, flooring, and crates.

According to the passage, which of the following periods is ideal for sapping?

- (a) End of winter or in early spring
- (b) Beginning of winter or in early spring
- (c) End of winter or late spring
- (d) Throughout the year

Answer and Explanation

This is a question where the answer is explicitly given in the passage. So after reading the passage a cursory reading, re-read the passage carefully looking for the answer. These questions are a sure way to score some marks. Based on the information in the passage, sapping takes place at the end of winter and in early spring. Hence, the correct answer is (a).

3. Implicit Information

This is the direct opposite of explicit information in that the answers to these types of questions are not given directly within the passage. They need to be deduced from the passage after a close reading. They test the aspirant's reasoning ability along with their comprehension skills. The implied idea will not be found by merely evaluating the options. The key words to look out for are "implied" or "implications". While reading the passage, the aspirant should think about the consequences of the passage, what the passage is saying and also what the passage is not saying.

Example Passage

In the immediate future, we will see the increasing commodification of many new technologies— artificial intelligence and robotics, 3D manufacturing, custom made biological and pharmaceutical products, lethal autonomous weapons and driverless cars. The moral question of how a driverless car will decide between hitting a jaywalker and swerving and damaging the car has often been debated, the answer is both simple- save the human life - and complex. At which angle should the car swerve- just enough to save the jaywalker or more than enough? If the driverless car is in Dublin, who would take the decision? The Irish Government, or the car's original code writer in California, or a software programmer

in Hyderabad to whom maintenance is outsourced? If different national jurisdictions have different fine print on prioritising a human life, how will it affect insurance and investment decisions, including transactional ones?

Which of the following statements best reflect the rational, plausible and practical implications that can be derived from the passage given above?

- 1. Too much globalisation is not in the best interest of any country.
- 2. Modern technologies are increasingly blurring the economic borders.
- 3. Innovation and capital have impinged on the domain of the State.
- 4. Public policy of every country should focus on developing its own supply chains.
- 5. Geopolitics will have to reconcile to many ambiguities and uncertainties.

Select the correct answer using the code given below:

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

Answer and Explanation

This passage is about the moral conundrum of new technologies. It is full of examples and you need to focus on the main idea. It is important to note that the passage is not criticising new technologies, nor is it offering any solutions. It is merely stating that new technologies have caused new problems. Option 1 is a direct critique of globalisation. Since the passage is not a critique of globalisation, Option 1 gets immediately negated. All the options except (c) have option 1 in them. So the third option is the correct answer.

4. Inference/Conclusion based questions

These questions ask the aspirant to infer from the information given in the passage or draw a conclusion. The conclusion could be directly given in the passage or it could be that the aspirant needs to draw the inferences themselves. Inferences can usually be drawn from anywhere within the passage while conclusions will focus on the last few lines. The words to look out for are "concluding remarks", "infer", "inference".

Example Passage

Our cities are extremely vulnerable to climate change because of large concentrations of populations and poor infrastructure. Moreover, population densities are increasing in them but we have not yet developed the systems to address climate change impacts. Our cities contribute to 65 percent of the GDP, but there are not enough facilities to address the issues of air quality, transport, etc., that are vital to identifying sustainable solutions. We need to involve citizens in city planning and create an ecosystem that meets the needs of the people.

Which of the following is the most logical and rational inference that can be made from the passage given above?

- a. Our cities need to have well-defined administrative set-



up with sufficient autonomy.

b. Ever increasing population densities is a hindrance in our efforts to achieve sustainable development.

c. To maintain and develop our cities we need to adopt sustainability related interventions.

d. Public-private Partnership mode of development is the viable long-term solution for the infrastructure and sustainability problems in India.

Answer and Explanation

This passage is about cities that are being affected due to climate change. Since inference-based questions require critical thinking by you, you need to read the passage very carefully to determine the most logical inference. After reading the passage, think about what the passage is indicating since the answer is not directly there in the passage. Here while options a), b) and d) are all true statements, option c) is the most appropriate option.

Vocabulary

By now it should be clear to you how important having a strong vocabulary is.

To have even a basic understanding of comprehension passages it is important to first understand the words. However, building up one's vocabulary requires rigorous practice.

1. Read, Rinse and Repeat: Reading is an essential, unavoidable step of the process. In order to get familiar with important words that might come up in comprehension passages, making a habit of reading newspapers is helpful. Some good examples include Indian Express, The Times of India and The Hindu. Everytime you come across a new word, it is a good idea to underline or highlight it and relate it to your own life. Make a note of each new word you come across to refer to later.
2. A Separate Notebook: It is a good idea to have a separate space to write down all the new words that you come across. As you come across more words, it is likely that some might escape your memory. Having them all written down in one place for reference later can be particularly helpful for active recall.
3. Construct Sentences: Memorising a list of new words will only get you so far. Writing sentences with unfamiliar words you come across makes you actively engage with each word, which each in turn helps retain it in your memory for much longer. It is also extra grammar practice that will help you write better essays in future.
4. Flashcards: Flashcards help in active recall which has been proven to improve one's memory.
5. Word games: Playing word games could be a way to build your vocabulary while relaxing. However, be careful to not use this as an excuse to use your phone to procrastinate.

Important Note: These lists are only starting points meant to give you a head start. Only memorising these will not be enough. It is important you form a habit of practising as much as possible. A general tip for gaining confidence with unseen passages widely. This not only helps in increasing the vocabulary but it allows aspirants to grow familiar with the English language, an essential skill to possess. Since

the passages come from a variety of topics dealing with current affairs, reading widely, across different kinds of reading media, like (newspapers, novels, blog posts) can help ease one's fear of unfamiliar passages.

Practice Questions

Read the following passages and answer the questions given below:

1. Though top leaders of the nationalist movement were the policy makers, the immediate day-to-day leadership was provided by the middle-class intellectuals. The rural origin of the industrial labour force together with rampant illiteracy and their simplistic docility attracted social workers, mainly drawn from the middle-class intellectuals. They had an obvious advantage. Not being employees, the leaders were free from fear of victimisation and immune towards the risks of leadership. Being generally well educated, they had a better perspective and sense of organisation. They could see the issue in a broader context. They belonged to a higher social plane than the workers and with good education and intellectual development comparable to the best among the employers they could meet the employers on their own plane and carry on negotiations on an equal footing. According to the Royal Commission on Labour in India, 'the effect of this surge was enhanced by the political turmoil which added to the prevailing feelings of unrest and assured to provide willing leaders of a trade union movement'. But outside leadership had led to the politicisation of the movement.

What conclusion can be drawn based on the passage given above?

I. The middle class intellectuals were active participants in the Nationalistic movement because the workers did not want to choose a leader among themselves.

II. The integration of middle class intellectuals as political leaders caused the movement to become politicised.

- a. Only (I)
- b. Only (II)
- c. Both (I) and (II)
- d. Neither (I) and (II)

2. Inequality is visible, even statistically measurable in many instances, but the economic power that drives it is invisible and not measurable. Like the force of gravity, power is the organising principle of inequality, be it of income, or wealth, gender, race, religion and region. Its effects are seen in a pervasive manner in all spheres, but the ways in which economic power pulls and tilts visible economic variables remain invisibly obscure.

On the basis of the above passage, which of the following best articulates the crux of the passage?

- a. Economic power can be analysed more through its effects than by direct empirical methods
- b. Inequality of different kinds, income, wealth, etc. reinforces power.
- c. The nature of economic power, the driving force behind all kinds of inequality, is obscurity.
- d. Economics power is the only reason for the existence of inequality in a society.



3. A majority of the TB infected in India are poor and lack sufficient nutrition, suitable housing and have little understanding of prevention. TB then devastates families, makes the poor poorer, particularly affects women and children, and leads to ostracization and loss of employment. The truth is that even if TB does not kill them, hunger and poverty will. Another truth is that deep-sealed stigma, lack of counselling, expensive treatment and lack of adequate support from providers and family, couples with torturous side-effects demotivate patients to continue treatment- with disastrous health consequences.

On the basis of the passage above, which one of the following assumptions can be made?

- The circumstances in India makes TB an incurable disease in India.
- Basic amenities like proper nutrition, housing can alleviate the current TB situation in India.
- The stigma caused by TB is worse than the disease itself.
- The poverty stricken people of India are unwilling to seek medical help to cure TB because of the harmful side effects and high cost of treatment.

4. The plunder of Latin America left 70 million indigenous people dead in its wake. In India, 30 million died of famine under British rule. Average living standards in India and China, which had been on par with Britain before the colonial period, collapsed. So too did their share of world GDP, falling from 65 percent to 10 percent, while Europe's share tripled. And mass poverty became an issue for the first time in history, as European capitalism - driven by the imperatives of growth and profit - prised people off their land and destroyed their capacity for self-sufficient subsistence. Development for some meant underdevelopment of others.

Consider the following statements

- European capitalism is the root cause of mass poverty
- Colonialism caused displacement of indigenous population.
- Europe's status as a wealthy nation is based on the destruction of third world countries.

Which of these statements can be inferred to be true based on the passage above?

- A and B only
- B only
- A and C only
- A, B, and C only

5. The world map of inequalities reveals that national average income levels are poor predictors of inequality – among high-income countries, some are very unequal (such as the US), while others are relatively equal (Sweden). "The same is true among low- and middle-income countries, with some exhibiting extreme inequality (Brazil and India), somewhat high levels (China) and moderate to relatively low levels (Malaysia, Uruguay)," stated the World Inequality Report. The report noted that income and wealth inequalities have been on the rise nearly everywhere since the 1980s,

following a series of deregulation and liberalisation programmes which took different forms in different countries. "The rise has not been uniform: certain countries have experienced spectacular increases in inequality (including the US, Russia and India) while others (European countries and China) have experienced relatively smaller rises," it said.

The report pointed out that in 2021, after three decades of trade and financial globalisation, global inequalities remain extremely pronounced. "They are about as great today as they were at the peak of Western imperialism in the early 20th century," it said. Lucas Chancel, lead author of the report, said the COVID crisis has exacerbated inequalities between the very wealthy and the rest of the population. "Yet, in rich countries, government intervention prevented a massive rise in poverty, this was not the case in poor countries. This shows the importance of social states in the fight against poverty," he said.

What is the most logical inference that can be drawn from the above passage?

- The involvement of the state is essential to the alleviation of the poor.
- The COVID crisis has caused the rich to become richer and poor to become poorer.
- High income countries are more unequal than low income countries
- The World Inequality Report states that income levels are not good indicators of inequality.

6. Scientists have warned that global warming will keep getting worse until humanity reaches "net zero" emissions globally – that is, the point at which we are no longer pumping any additional greenhouse gases into the atmosphere. So in recent years a growing number of countries and businesses have been pledging to "go net zero" by various dates. But the concept can easily be abused. It's one example of climate terminology that can be hard to decipher.

What are the most appropriate implications according to the passage given above?

- The solution to global warming is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- The language surrounding climate change leaves room for loopholes that are misused.
- Businesses and countries pledging environmental goals will help making lasting impact on climate change issues
- Climate change policies require cooperation on a global scale.
- Businesses pledging "go net zero" are contributing to rising temperatures globally.

- Only (IV)
- (II), (IV) Only
- (I),(II),(III),(V) Only
- (II),(III),(V) Only

7. No superhuman brain is required to avoid the various



foolish opinions that many of us hold. A few simple rules will keep you away not from all errors, but from silly errors. If the matter is one which can be settled by observation, make the observation yourself. Aristotle could have avoided the mistake of thinking that women have fewer teeth than men, by the simple method of counting the teeth of Mrs. Aristotle. Thinking that you know, when in fact, you do not know, is a bad mistake to which many of us are prone.

Based on the passage above, which of the following assumptions has been made by the author?

- a. Even great people like Aristotle can make a mistake
- b. Silly mistakes can be avoided by resorting to thinking.
- c. One does not have to be exceptionally clever to avoid making silly mistakes.
- d. We are prone to making avoidable mistakes since we do not care to think for ourselves.

8. Those who pay attention to the Olympics tend to view them from one end of a telescope or the other. Most who tune in for the sporting event every couple of years love the suspense. They may know, in the recesses of their minds, that the spectacle disguises a rusty and corrupt system, prone to vote buying in the selection of host cities, appeasement of dictators and unkept promises. To the fans of the Olympics, the positives outweigh the negatives.

Those who analyse the Olympics more broadly see the balance in reverse. They may appreciate the athletic achievements, but not enough to outweigh concerns about damage inflicted by the Olympics.

Which of the following options best reflects the central message of the passage given above?

- a. The Olympic games are a testament to the world's athletic talent
- b. Analyses of the Olympic games reveals a lot of corruption in the host cities
- c. Despite the athletic marvels showcased in the Olympics, its many drawbacks cannot be ignored
- d. The Olympics are a polarising event in today's society

9. Books today have become mere adjuncts to the world of the mass media, offering light entertainment and reassurances that all is for the best in this, the best of all possible worlds. The resulting control on the spread of ideas is stricter than anyone would have thought possible in a free society. The need for public debate and open discussion, inherent in the democratic idea, conflicts with the ever-stricter demand for total profit.

Which of the following implications is correct based on the passage above?

- a. The false sense of security provided by conformist literature can be detrimental to free thought
- b. Light entertainment can be harmful to the democratic idea of a free society in the long run
- c. The most important idea in democracy is dissent
- d. Books published earlier used to be more critical of society as opposed to the light entertainment we get today

10. Cause and effect assumes history marches forward, but history is not an army. It is a crab scuttling sideways, a drip of soft water wearing away stone, an earthquake breaking centuries of tension. Sometimes one person inspires a movement, or her words do decades later, sometimes a few passionate people change the world; sometimes they start a mass movement and millions of others; sometimes those millions are stirred by the same outrage or same ideal, and change comes upon us like a change of weather. What all these transformations have in common is that they begin in the imagination, in the hope.

What is the crux of the passage given above?

- a. Imagination is the breeding ground for ideas that change the world
- b. History is not a linear movement
- c. Mass movements can be sparked by a single person
- d. History should be approached in a holistic manner instead of a cause and effect manner

11. The concept of sustainability has often been distorted, co-opted, and even trivialised by being used without the ecological context that gives it its proper meaning. What is sustained in a sustainable community is not economic growth, competitive advantage, or any other measure used by economists, but the entire web of life on which our long-term survival depends. The first step toward a sustainable community, naturally, must be to understand how nature sustains life. This involves a new ecological understanding of life, or "ecoliteracy", as well as a new kind of systemic thinking - thinking in terms of relationships, patterns and context.

What is the most plausible, logical inference drawn from this passage?

- a. Ecoliteracy is essential to the understanding of climate change policies
- b. Nature and naturalistic living needs to be given more importance over a demand for total profit
- c. Separating sustainability from its ecological context has led to the reduction of its importance.
- d. Ecological understanding of life is essential for a sustainable future.

12. Education plays a transformatory role in life, particularly so in this rapidly changing and globalising world. Universities are the custodians of the intellectual capital and promoters of culture and specialised knowledge. Culture is an activity of thought, and receptiveness to beauty and human feelings. A merely well informed man is only a bore on God's earth. What we should aim at is producing men who possess both culture and expert knowledge. Their expert knowledge will give them a firm ground to start from and their culture will lead them as deep as philosophy and as high as art. Together it will impart meaning to human existence.

On the basis of the above passage the following can be said to be true

- I. Without acquiring culture, a person's education is not complete
- II. A society of well educated people cannot be transformed into a modern society



III. It is essential that a society has cultured as well as intellectual people.

Which is/are valid?

- a. I only
- b. II only
- c. I and II only
- d. I and III only

13. Global population was around 1.6 billion in 1990- today it is around 7.2 billion and growing. Recent estimates on population growth predict a global population of 9.6 billion in 2050 and 10.9 billion in 2100. Unlike Europe and North America, where only three to four percent of the population is engaged in agriculture, around 47 percent of India's population is dependent upon agriculture. Even if India continues to do well in the service sector and the manufacturing sector picks up, it is expected that around 2030 when India overtakes China as the world's most populous country, nearly 42 percent of India's population will still be predominantly dependent on agriculture.

Which of the following reflects the most logical inference based on the passage above?

- a. Indian economy greatly depends on its agriculture
- b. Prosperity of agriculture sector is of critical importance to India
- c. India's farming communities should switch over to other occupations to improve their economic conditions
- d. India should take strict measures to control its rapid population growth.

14. All political systems need to mediate the relationship between private wealth and public power. Those that fail risk a dysfunctional government captured by wealthy interests. Corruption is one symptom of such failure with private willingness-to-pay trumping public goals. Private individuals and business firms pay to get routine services and to get to the head of the bureaucratic queue. They pay to limit their taxes, avoid costly regulations, obtain contracts at inflated prices. If corruption is endemic, public officials - both bureaucrats and elected officials - may redesign programmes and propose public projects with few public benefits and many opportunities for private profit. Of course, corruption is only one type of

government failure. Efforts to promote good governance must be broader than anti corruption campaigns. Governments may be honest but inefficient because no one has an incentive to work productively, and narrow elites may capture the state and exert excess influence on policy. Bribery may induce the lazy to work hard and permit those not in the inner circle of cronies to obtain benefits. However, even in such cases, corruption cannot be confined to 'functional' areas. It will be a reasonable response to a harsh reality but, over time, it can facilitate a spiral into an even worse situation.

Consider the following statements

I. Productivity linked incentives to public/private officials is one of the initiatives of an efficient government.

II. The governments which fail to focus on the relationship between private wealth and public power are likely to become dysfunctional

Which of the statements given above is/are valid?

- a. Only (I)
- b. Only (II)
- c. Both (I) and (II)
- d. Neither (I) nor (II)

15. All actions to address climate change ultimately involve costs. Funding is vital in order for countries like India to design and implement adaptation and mitigation plans and projects. The problem is more severe for developing countries like India, which would be one of the hardest hit by climate change, given its need to finance development. Most countries do indeed treat climate change as a real threat and are striving to address it in a more comprehensive and integrated manner with the limited resources at their disposal.

What implications can be drawn from the passage above?

- a. Climate change is a complex issue that requires developing countries to adapt their financial policies
- b. Climate change does not affect developed countries
- c. Climate change will affect India more than other countries because of its tropical climate
- d. Climate change is not taken seriously by most countries



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ETHICS



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**ETHICS, VALUES AND CORPORATE
GOVERNANCE**



ETHICS, VALUES AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

The balance of pursuing market opportunities while maintaining accountability and ethical integrity has proved a defining challenge for business enterprise since the arrival of the joint-stock company in the early years of industrialism. The accountability and responsibility of business enterprise is constantly subject to question. The manifest failures of corporate governance and business ethics in the global financial crisis has increased the urgency of the search for a better ethical framework and governance for business. A substantial increase in the range, significance and impact of corporate social and environmental initiatives in recent years suggests the growing materiality of a more ethically-informed approach. However challenging the prospects, there are growing indications of large corporations taking their social and environmental responsibilities more seriously, and of these issues becoming more critical in the business agenda.

INTRODUCTION

Since the origin of commerce, the ethical basis of business has been in question. In the ancient Greek civilisation Aristotle could readily distinguish between the basic trade required for an economy to function, and trade for profit which could descend into unproductive usury. Most major world religions cast a sceptical eye on business, including Christianity, Islam and Confucianism. Shakespeare immortalised the potential venality of business in *The Merchant of Venice*, "All that glitters is not gold." Frentrup (2003) graphically records how greed, speculation, deceit and frequent bankruptcy punctuated the fortunes of the earliest of the great trading companies, beginning with the Dutch East India Company. Adam Smith in 1776 in *The Wealth of Nations* made a withering comment on company management that would echo through the ages: "Being managers of other people's money than their own, it cannot well be expected that they should watch over it with the same anxious vigilance with which the partners in a private co-partner frequently watch over their own ... Negligence and profusion, therefore, must always prevail more or less in the management of the affairs of a joint-stock company".

As technological change advanced with the industrial revolution, there occurred a wider diffusion of ownership of many large companies as no individual, family or group of managers could provide sufficient capital to sustain growth. Berle and Means chronicled the profound implications of this separation of ownership and control: "the dissolution of the old atom of ownership into its component parts, control and beneficial ownership". Berle and Means expressed hope that with this different concept of a corporation there might develop a much wider accountability to the community, recognising the significance of the diffusion of ownership and the concentration of control in the modern corporation: "The economic power in the hands of the few persons who control a giant corporation is a tremendous force which can harm or benefit a multitude of individuals, affect whole districts, shift the currents of trade, bring ruin to one community and prosperity to another.

However any hope of a wider sense of fiduciary duty in corporations was eroded away in the later decades of the twentieth century in the Anglo-American world, as capital markets became more aggressive and unstable, and executive compensation was propelled upwards by stock options. A succession of cycles of booming economies, followed by market collapse and recession, culminated in 2007–2008 in the first global financial crisis, which was also a crisis in governance and regulation. The most severe

financial disaster since the Great Depression of the 1930s exposed the dangers of unregulated markets, nominal corporate governance, and neglected risk management. What also appeared in stark relief were an economic system and corporations and managers singularly lacking in any moral compass.

It has been argued that the dominant logic in this era, in both finance and law of agency theory, had reduced managers to mere agents of shareholder principles. Agency theory asserts that shareholder value is the ultimate corporate objective which managers are incentivised and impelled to pursue: "The crisis has shown that managers are often incapable of resisting pressure from shareholders. In their management decisions, the short-term market value counts more than the long-term health of the firm". Agency theory has become "a cornerstone of ... corporate governance". As governments, regulators, and financial institutions examined what had gone wrong during the crisis, a new sense of the importance of robust regulation, alert corporate governance, and stronger ethical guidelines became widespread. In effect what is now emerging is an integration of corporate governance, corporate social responsibility and corporate sustainability which potentially offers a new framework for ethical business.

This newly-emerging ethical framework for business provides a stronger base for the exercise of moral values and ethical reasoning. "People in business are ultimately responsible as individuals, but they are responsible as individuals in a corporate setting where their responsibilities are at least in part defined by their roles and duties in the company ... businesses in turn are defined by their role(s) and responsibilities in the larger community ...". This suggests an ethical alignment of individuals, corporations, and the economic system, which is captured in the definition of corporate governance offered by Cadbury, and adopted by the World Bank:

Corporate governance is concerned with holding the balance between economic and social goals and between individual and communal goals. The governance framework is there to encourage the efficient use of resources and equally to require accountability for the stewardship of those resources. The aim is to align as nearly as possible the interests of individuals, corporations and society.

This definition highlights the importance of corporate governance in providing the incentives and performance measures to achieve business success, and secondly in providing the accountability and transparency to ensure the equitable distribution of the resulting wealth. Finally the significance of corporate governance in enhancing the stability and equity of society recognises a more positive and proactive role for business. Rather than corporate governance and regulation being inherently restrictive, they can be a means of enabling corporations to achieve the highest goals of corporate achievement. Equally a more positive approach to business ethics can be imagined:

Business ethics is too often conceived as a set of impositions and constraints, obstacles to business behaviour rather than the motivating force of that behaviour ... properly understood, ethics does not and should not consist of a set of prohibitive principles or rules, and it is the virtue of an ethics of virtue to be rather an intrinsic part and the driving force of a successful life well lived. Its motivation need not depend on elaborate soul-searching



and deliberation but in the best companies moves along with the easy flow of interpersonal relations and a mutual sense of mission and accomplishment.

HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF CORPORATE GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY

The balance of pursuing market opportunities while maintaining accountability has proved a defining challenge for business enterprise since the arrival of the joint-stock company in the early years of industrialism. The accountability and responsibility of business enterprise was constantly subject to question, and historically failed this test—often in the view of the public. Maurice Clark deplored how business “inherited an economics of irresponsibility” from the laissez-faire beliefs and practices of early industrialism. He argued that business transactions do not occur in isolation, but have wider social and economic consequences which need to be considered, impacting directly on employment, health and the environment. He insisted that legal regulation may be required to ensure protection from abuses, but that this could never replace a general sense of responsibility in business that goes beyond the letter of the law, preventing competitive forces from leading to a race to the bottom. Hence the periodic outbreak of destructive competition needed to be restrained in Clark’s view by “an economics of responsibility, developed and embodied in our working business ethics”.

The debate concerning the true extent of the accountability and responsibility of business enterprise has continued to the present day, punctuated by occasional public outrage at business transgressions, and calls for greater recognition of the social obligations of business. At the height of the economic depression in the United States in 1932, Dodd made a dramatic plea in the pages of the Harvard Law Review: “There is in fact a growing feeling not only that business has responsibilities to the community but that our corporate managers who control business should voluntarily and without waiting for legal compulsion manage it in such a way as to fulfill these responsibilities.” This resonated with Berle and Means’ insistence that large corporations “serve not alone the owners or the control, but all society.” Though Berle subsequently commenced a prolonged debate with Dodd on the subject of For Whom Are Corporate Managers Trustees, he (Berle) (1955) later conceded to Dodd’s argument that management powers were held in trust for the entire community.

Such forthright views did not remain at the level of academic speculation, but often were translated into legal, policy and business interpretations and practice. For example in *Teck Corp Ltd v. Millar*, the Supreme Court of British Columbia, while retaining the identification of company interests with those of shareholders, nonetheless was prepared to grant directors a licence under their fiduciary duties to take into account wider stakeholder interests:

The classical theory is that the directors’ duty is to the company. The company’s shareholders are the company ... and therefore no interests outside those of the shareholders can legitimately be considered by the directors. But even accepting that, what comes within the definition of the interests of the shareholders? By what standards are the shareholders’ interests to be measured? A classical theory that once was unchallengeable must yield to the facts of modern life. In fact, of course, it has. If today the directors of a company were to consider the interests of its employees no one would argue that in doing

so they were not acting bona fide in the interests of the company itself. Similarly, if the directors were to consider the consequences to the community of any policy that the company intended to pursue, and were deflected in their commitment to that policy as a result, it could not be said that they had not considered bona fide the interests of the shareholders.

Wedderburn (1985, 12) documents an equivalent deep-seated and practical commitment of corporate responsibility to a wide constituency in the post-war beliefs of leaders of the British business community. A lively debate continues world-wide concerning the scope of directors’ duties. In Australia, the Corporations Act Section 181 obliges directors and other corporate officers to exercise their powers and discharge their duties:

in good faith and in the best interests of the corporation; for a proper purpose.

Under common law directors are obliged to act in the interests of “the company as a whole.” Traditionally this phrase has been interpreted to mean the financial well-being of the shareholders as a general body (though directors are obliged to consider the financial interests of creditors when the firm is insolvent or near-insolvent). A recent generation of financial economists helped to translate this broad shareholder primacy principle into a narrow pursuit of shareholder value. This restrictive definition of shareholder value has often been associated with short-termism and a neglect of wider corporate responsibilities in the interests of immediate profit maximisation. Concerns have arisen that directors who do wish to take account of other stakeholder interests may be exposed. However there is a wider interpretation of shareholder value which suggests that only when all of the other constituent relationships of the corporation—with customers, employees, suppliers, distributors and the wider community—are fully recognised and developed, can long-term shareholder value be released.

In 2007–2008 the first global financial crisis exposed the dangers of unregulated markets, nominal corporate governance, and neglected risk management

Traditionally, commercial law in many European countries has supported a sense of the wider social and environmental obligations of companies, which continues despite a recent enthusiasm for the principle of shareholder value as some large European companies for the first time seek the support of international investors. The United Kingdom has stood apart from Europe as an influential exponent of the Anglo-American market-based approach to corporate governance. However, in an effort to jettison the company-law rhetoric instituted in the 19th century, and to make the law more accessible, a Company Law Review (CLR) steering group was established. The ensuing consultative document *Modern Company Law for a Competitive Economy: Developing the Framework* (2000) proposed for the first time that there should be a statutory statement of directors’ duties (in the past the core components of those duties was found in case law), and made a significant step in the direction of endorsing fuller corporate social and environmental reporting (CLR 2000, 180–181):

Current accounting and reporting fail to provide adequate transparency of qualitative and forward-looking information which is of vital importance in assessing performance and potential for shareholders, investors, creditors and others. This is particularly so in the modern environment of technical change, and with the growing



importance of “soft,” or intangible assets, brands, know-how and business relationships. The full annual report must be effective in covering these, both as a stewardship report and as a medium of communication to wider markets and the public ... we believe the time has come to require larger companies to provide an operating and financial review, which will cover the qualitative, or “soft,” or intangible, and forward-looking information which the modern market and modern business decision-making require, converting the practice of the best-run companies into a requirement for all.

These issues were extensively considered in the United Kingdom for several years in the deliberations of the Modern Company Law Review. Two approaches were considered:

1. a pluralist approach under which directors' duties would be reformulated to permit directors to further the interests of other stakeholders even if they were to the detriment of shareholders;
2. an enlightened shareholder-value approach allowing directors greater flexibility to take into account longer-term considerations and interests of various stakeholders in advancing shareholder value.

In considering these approaches, the essential questions of what is the corporation, and what interests it should represent are exposed to light, as Davies eloquently argues (2005, 4):

The crucial question is what the statutory statement says about the interests which the directors should promote when exercising their discretionary powers. The common law mantra that the duties of directors are owed to the company has long obscured the answer to this question. Although that is a statement of the utmost importance when it comes to the enforcement of duties and their associated remedies, it tells one nothing about the answer to our question, whose interests should the directors promote? This is because the company, as an artificial person, can have no interests separate from the interests of those who are associated with it, whether as shareholders, creditors, employers, suppliers, customers or in some other way. So, the crucial question is, when we refer to the company, to the interests of which of those sets of natural persons are we referring?

As a member of the Corporate Law Review Steering Group, Davies goes on to defend the enlightened shareholder-value view suggesting that the pluralist approach produces a formula which is unenforceable, and paradoxically gives management more freedom of action than they previously enjoyed. An Australian legal expert, Redmond, endorses this critique of widening the scope of directors' duties too greatly (Redmond 2005, 27):

The pluralist or multifiduciary model rests on a social, not a property, view of the corporation. It identifies the corporate purpose with maximizing total constituency utility. This is an indeterminate outcome measure which poses particular difficulties in translation into a legally enforceable duty. The indeterminacy of the criteria for decision and performance measurement also points to a probable loss of accountability for directors since it offers broad scope to justify most decisions. It is difficult to resist the conclusion of the British discretion that either it confers a broad unpoliceable policy discretion on managers themselves or just gives a broad jurisdiction to the courts. The model needs either practical rehabilitation or a superior performance metric. It is not clear where either might be found.

In the resulting British Company Law Reform Bill (2005) the enlightened shareholder-value view has prevailed in clause 156, which defines the essential directoral duty as:

Duty to promote the success of the company

1. A director of a company must act in the way he considers, in good faith, would be most likely to promote the success of the company for the benefit of its members as a whole.
2. Where or to the extent that the purposes of the company consist of or include purposes other than the benefit of its members, his duty is to act in the way he considers, in good faith, would be most likely to achieve those purposes.
3. In fulfilling the duty imposed by this section a director must (so far as reasonably practicable) have regard to:
 - the likely consequences of any decision in the long term,
 - the interests of the company's employees,
 - the need to foster the company's business relationships with suppliers, customers and others,
 - the impact of the company's operations on the community and the environment,
 - the desirability of the company maintaining a reputation for high standards of business conduct, and
 - the need to act fairly as between members of the company.
4. The duty imposed by this section has effect subject to any enactment or rule of law requiring directors, in certain circumstances, to consider or act in the interests of creditors of the company.

This clause replaces the discretion of directors to have regard for stakeholder interests with a duty for directors to do this (Davies 2005, 5):

As far as directors' duties are concerned, this is the heart of the enlightened shareholder-value approach. The aim is to make it clear that although shareholder interests are predominant (promotion of the success of the company for the benefit of its members), the promotion of shareholder interests does not require riding roughshod over the interests of other groups upon whose activities the business of the company is dependent for its success. In fact, the promotion of the interests of the shareholders will normally require the interests of other groups of people to be fostered. The interests of non-shareholder groups thus need to be considered by the directors, but, of course, in this shareholder-centred approach, only to the extent that the protection of those other interests promotes the interests of the shareholders. The statutory formulation can be said to express the insight that the shareholders are not likely to do well out of a company whose workforce is constantly on strike, whose customers don't like its products and whose suppliers would rather deal with its competitors.

In this way the Company Law Reform Bill treads a fine legal line between a sense of “enlightened shareholder value” which is becoming best practice in many leading companies, and more radical claims for company law to adopt a more “pluralist” sense of the ultimate objectives of the enterprise and the interests to be served. The reform manages this balancing act by suggesting that the pluralist objectives of maximizing company performance



to the benefit of all stakeholders can best be served by professional directors pursuing commercial opportunities within a framework of standards and accountability:

The overall objective should be pluralist in the sense that companies should be run in a way which maximizes overall competitiveness and wealth and welfare for all. But the means which company law deploys for achieving this objective must be to take account of the realities and dynamics which operate in practice in the running of a commercial enterprise. It should not be done at the expense of turning company directors from business decision-makers into moral, political or economic arbiters, but by harnessing focused, comprehensive, competitive decision-making within robust, objective professional standards and flexible, but pertinent accountability (CLR 2000, 14).

The reform supports the ultimate power of shareholders to appoint or dismiss directors for whatever reasons they choose, and to intervene in management to the extent the constitution permits, and confesses: "There is clearly an inconsistency between leaving these powers of shareholders intact and enabling or requiring directors to have regard to wider interests ... the effect will be to make smaller transactions within the powers of directors subject to the broad pluralist approach, but larger ones which are for shareholders subject only to the minimal constraints which apply to them" (CLR 2000, 26).

It is likely that the modern company law proposals will over time facilitate the wider and more conscious adoption by British companies of social and environmental commitments, and the willingness to report fully on them. In time it is possible that such social and environmental commitments will become part of widespread company and management best practice, in the way that the commitment to quality in the production of goods and services has become universal. Moreover, just as the United Kingdom in the publication of the Cadbury code of corporate governance ultimately influenced a considerable number of other countries to adopt a similar code, it is possible that other countries, particularly that share a common law tradition with the United Kingdom, will begin to review their company law with similar objectives in mind.

Moral liability occurs when corporations violate stakeholder expectations of ethical behaviour in ways that put business value at risk

One reason why the agenda of corporate responsibility is increasingly irresistible is that while legal liability of corporations is deepening, what has been described as an emerging and hardening moral liability is exerting increasing influence. In this respect the legislative process lags behind what society thinks, values and respects. Moral liability occurs when corporations violate stakeholder expectations of ethical behaviour in ways that put business value at risk. There is an increasing convergence between these two forms of liability, as corporations come under scrutiny both by the law and – often more immediately and pointedly – by public opinion.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

The narrow focus of corporate governance exclusively upon the internal control of the firm and simply complying with regulation is no longer tenable. In the past this has allowed corporations to act in extremely irresponsible ways by externalising social and environmental costs. Corporate objectives described as "wealth generating" too frequently have resulted in the loss of well-being to communities and the ecology. But increasingly in the future the license to operate will not

be given so readily to corporations and other entities. A license to operate will depend on maintaining the highest standards of integrity and practice in corporate behaviour. Corporate governance essentially will involve sustained and responsible monitoring of not just the financial health of the company, but the social and environmental impact of the company.

A substantial increase in the range, significance and impact of corporate social and environmental initiatives in recent years suggests the growing materiality of sustainability. Once regarded as a concern of a few philanthropic individuals and companies, corporate social and environmental responsibility appears to be becoming established in many corporations as a critical element of strategic direction, and one of the main drivers of business development, as well as an essential component of risk management. Corporate social and environmental responsibility (CSR) seems to be rapidly moving from the margins to the mainstream of corporate activity, with greater recognition of a direct and inescapable relationship between corporate governance, corporate responsibility, and sustainable development.

The burgeoning importance of this newly revived movement is demonstrated by the current frequency and scale of activity at every level (Calder and Culverwell 2005, 43). Among international organizations the United Nations is coordinating a public-private partnership between UNEP and 170 banks, insurers and asset managers world-wide including Deutsche Bank, Dresdner Kleinwort Wasserstein, Goldman Sachs, HSBC and UBS to explore the financial materiality of environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues to securities valuation (UNEP 2004). Early in 2005 the UN convened a group of 20 of the world's largest institutional investors to negotiate a set of Principles for Responsible Investment, and published a Working Capital report in early 2006 as a guide to the investment community on how to incorporate environmental, social and governance issues into their investment decision-making and ownership processes. This builds on the work of the UN Global Compact with more than 1,500 corporate signatories, which is working with the world's leading stock exchanges and the World Federation of Exchanges to advance the principles of corporate responsibility in capital markets and with public corporations (UN 2000).

In 2005 institutional investors representing US\$21 trillion in assets came together for the third Carbon Disclosure Project meeting, collectively requesting the world's largest corporations to disclose information on greenhouse-gas emissions and their approach to the management of carbon risks (UNEP FI 2005). Finally, 36 of the world's largest banks, representing more than 80% of the global project finance market, have adopted the Equator Principles, a set of voluntary principles outlining environmental, social and human rights disciplines associated with project finance above US\$50 million (Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer 2005). The principles originally were developed by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), the private sector investment arm of the World Bank. The OECD also is active in the promotion of CSR in its guidelines for the operations of multinational corporations; and the European Union is actively encouraging CSR as the business contribution to sustainable development (OECD 2000; European Commission 2003, 2004). At the national level a growing number of governments in Europe, and across the globe, have identified strongly with the call for corporate social and environmental responsibility, even with the evident difficulties in applying the Kyoto Protocol and creating an effective international climate-policy regime.

TOPICS OF THE MONTH



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CRONY CAPITALISM – A THREAT TO DEMOCRACY

With the dawn of era or enlightenment, human civilisation underwent phenomenal radical changes in political, economic, social spheres. Many revolutions such as The Glorious Revolution, French Revolution a many other forces broke the shackles of despotism, feudalism, monopoly, class privilege etc. New ideas such as equality, justice, fraternity, freedom, individualism etc. caught the imagination of the mass. But simultaneously with industrial revolution causing the rise of bourgeoisie and capitalism; the self-serving, profit maximising greed tried to have political influence. This industry-government nexus also called crony capitalism grossly undermined the evolving modern ideas of democracy and its attributes such as equality, liberty, freedom etc. Its widespread presence and horrendous impact both in the past and present have raised many loud voices against it to safeguard democracy.

In simple term, crony capitalism means an economy where success depends on your proximity to political bosses. Wealthy corporate giants always desperate to protect to have their interest, try to have political influence to have legislations, regulations etc. meeting their own end. This opportunity comes to them through substantial electoral funding in a quid pro quo arrangement. This favour is often returned through generous tax exemption, subsidy, no-bid contracts, suited legislations, bail out, tariff protection etc. Yet ironically these crony capitalists claim to be the champion of free market.

This might occur also because of excess state intervention in economy through regulation, licence, clearance etc. Appointing regulators to monitor a particular market by giving extensive power to control industry, leaves the door wide open for lobbying, favour, nepotism etc. Such understanding for favouring a few business group blocks new entrants thus reducing competition and establishing monopoly and distortion of market. The burden of huge number of licences and clearances inevitably makes the process long drawn, cumbersome and opaque. Middleman, contact(jugaad), bribe, kickbacks etc become effective tools to bypass all these headaches. The example of 'licence raj' would be and apt example here stifling the Indian economy just two decades ago. With modern day globalised, integrated and giant economy, it's virtually impossible for state machinery to go into the nitty-gritty of every sphere. Thus excess state intervention always causes more harm than good.

This is a worldwide phenomenon cutting across developed and developing nations; large or small; democracy or authoritarian regime. Freedom and means to pursue ideas, innovation through entrepreneurship with availability of resources (land, capital, labour) on competitive basis are the very basis of any sound economic system. All these conducive environments had first unleashed industrial revolution in Britain. But the wealthy individuals spawned by this era are now the biggest obstacles of the economy. Corruption at highest government level is its direct offspring. In recent years there are loads of such examples in public domain; god knows how many more are there still uncovered. Be it 2G, Coalgate where precious natural resources were allocated at throw away prices in a reckless manner. In lieu of merit; bribes, proximity to leaders decided the beneficiary with powerless common people being the casualties. A case of alleged understanding between Reliance and the outgoing government had raged a further debate on crony capitalism. All these things were further corroborated when India ranked 9 in crony capitalism index, a survey done by Economic Times. And factor in, India is also one of the worst performer in

Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index.

Not only India, many other nations such as our BRICS partners Russia and China are also host of crony capitalism. State hegemony in economic sphere in such large economies might be an explanation. Many high incomes developed countries such as Singapore, Hong Kong etc. are no exception to this; in fact, they are the forerunners. And how is this that the undesired outcome of capitalism would not affect its staunch propagators in both sides of the Atlantic i.e. US, UK, other west European nations. So considering all these analyses it can be safely said that crony capitalism is a global phenomenon but is it a global problem? The nexus between government and corporate individuals stifles competition in the economy thus creating insurmountable barriers for new entrants, Lack of competition and monopoly or oligopoly inevitably caused poor quality goods and services, price control in market, thus attacking the very vitals of free market. It also hinders development of better management practice, technological development and innovation. Accumulation of profits in the hands of few individuals causes drainage of wealth from many to a few. The continuous transfer of wealth gradually but certainly impoverishes common man widening economic inequality pushing many to the verge of poverty. This deprivation of common people reduces demand for goods. With surplus production causing deflation, the stage is set for a global recession. The telling story of 1930s(The Great Depression) had been the most dreadful economic experience of last century. More examples can be found in Asian financial crisis.

So at the end of the day, common people are suffering. But they are at the centre stage of any democracy. If sovereign power lies in their hands and the government is only their representative reflecting their will then this is a problem for democracy itself. Their nexus and collusion with our political representatives hijacks our political power. Now legislations are passed primarily to serve the interest of corporate giant with public interest being subservient to it. The government's haste to bring in Genetically Modified Crop(GMO) without due consultation, safety assessment speaks a volume about it. With no legislative control common people are left with their own wounds. Corporate of election leaves our political parties with little option but to serve their own interest to ensure their economic lifeline. Quite often Parliamentarians using or to say abusing their Parliamentary Privileges to vote in their favour is a disturbing phenomenon. Undermining our supreme democratic institution. Not only Parliament, other democratic institutions such as SC(pressure or influencing judges in Sahara- SEBI case), CAG(initial denial of Reliance for performance auditing in KG-D6 issue) are undermined by such unscrupulous individuals. Accumulation of wealth in few families, ensuring their growth by unnecessary grants, tax exemption, tax holiday places further burden on common people. Nepotism and favouritism being the song of the day, meritocracy is severely undermined. This further aggravates the problem of corruption and inefficiency. An essential outcome of this being poor public service delivery which further intensifies poverty and other related problems such as hunger, economic, social and educational backwardness. This also provides fertile ground for some undemocratic activities such as Maoist insurgency, armed conflict etc. A democracy espousing socialist ethos assuring equality and dignity to every individual, is it not an irony? Poor tribal people taking to arms, after decades of negligence; does it not confirmed that their faith in democracy is shaken?



We just need to ask a few questions to ourselves. A vigorous campaign against corruption with nationwide support, especially youths, the meteoric rise of new political parties with anti-corruption being its core agenda, no voting pattern in identity pattern, decimation of the incumbent government in the recent election, corruption and its companion constantly acquiring media space; what are all these pointing to? If this can be read as frustration and valid anger of people, then end to all this meaning an end to crony capitalism in sine qua non which is at the heart of the problem Radical electoral reform, more transparency in governance, more decentralisation of power to local level, a robust and efficient investigative agency with an equally robust judiciary etc are well known methods which will shield our nation from this greatest threat our democracy has ever faced.

Crony Capitalism has the potential to draw revolutions, naxalisms, tragedies and civil wars. People stop respecting democratic means and revert to other ideas. It contaminates the morals, thoughts, emotions and actions of the people in power. They tend to neglect their responsibilities, avoid hearing people 's voices and indulge in mixing public interests with private ones. Let us take a view of various areas, where crony-ism has embarked its presence.

Although, every government decision comes as policy but there are other areas too, where this malaise enters. One such area is Law Making. The state is entrusted with the power of making laws, which shall be enforceable in the jurisdiction of the nation. Crony-ism leads to the state making favourable, lengthy, complex and tardy laws, which have hidden clauses, invisible inferences and interpretations. This complexity is brought to benefit some stakeholders 'which are in a position to manipulate the regulations and escape on the pretext of these clauses. A legitimate veil is clothed on the capitalistic interests in the name of public interest.

An example for this can be the Land Acquisition. Huge policy frameworks are built around this area. But it is often found in ground realities, that people suffer and their interests are compromised with. Large number of scams and collusions with business worlds have revealed such takes in the past. The poor peasants, backward tribal, farmers, and other non-influential groups face the wrath of eviction, cheating and inappropriate compensation. Numerous examples can be stated like eviction of tribes from Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Orissa etc. Clever methods of transferring the lands by converting them from agricultural lands to commercial lands is found and have surfaced in media in recent years.

So what comes as an aftermath? People are cheated. Police is used to disperse them. Their freedoms and rights guaranteed are crushed by using power. Even they have to face laathis, atrocities, teargas and arrests. Thus democracy is crushed. Phenomenon like Naxalism also have some bit of their cause in such faulty eviction and lack of development. What should have been the recourse ? Government, taking the responsibility should ensure that people are not cheated. Some tough decisions if needed to take place in public interests, then proper consultations, deliberations, and confidence building measures need to be taken to save democratic principles and rights of people.

The Stock market scams in last decades, burgeoning of Mafia 's like Sand, Property and speculations in Foreign Exchange market etc. are also a result of Crony Capitalism. They occur because the regulators and the law enforcers are not acting against them, rather they

collude with the guilty. The Nira Radia Tape scam poured out the unhealthy show of the corporate-politics nexus. It was revealed, how the people in corporate world make a mockery of democratic institutions and government decision making.

Inflation is generated by black marketing, hoarding, blocking supplies in PDS shops. How do such elements become successful? It is due the failure of police and law enforcers. Local MLA 's , police and administration have been found in the recent past, indulging with the local business circles and gaining riches by siding with them. Large number of officials, bureaucrats, politicians, and people in power have their assets burgeoning in few years. The cause is the same. You may call it corruption in simple terms. But is a derivative of the same monster which attacks upper echelons, i.e. Crony Capitalism.

Crony Capitalism is one of the main culprits which breeds corruption. It contaminates the minds of people in power, it adulterates their morals and allures them for further corruption. This corruption takes many forms and ways and reaches out in different levels and degrees. All of this hurts the democratic norms and principles. People who pay their taxes as their share towards the country 's development, feel cheated. The natural resources, rights and every other possession of the state is a collective asset of the people. Public Interest should be supreme and control the decision making. But crony- capitalism hits on this very aspect and associated with private interests on the contrary.

Recently, large number of colleges were de-recognised as deemed colleges by the UGC, on the grounds of lack of qualification. How were they given recognition earlier? What sort of standards would have they maintained? Will a below standard institute care about proper recruitment, teachers and student's education or Will it be more concerned about its profit? All such questions come when crony-ism in education sector is assessed. Large number of private institutions have propped up in last decade. Even fraud degrees have been distributed by non-existent institutes.

A school in Bihar, witnessed large scale casualties of its students owing to contaminated food given in the Mid-Day Meal scheme. The intention of scheme is not questioned, but what about the procurement of the same? Is it also transparent? Are other procurements correct and safe from crony-ism? Procurement has been at the fore front when it comes to corruption in the form of crony capitalism. Starting from Bofors to Fodder Scam and Augusta- Westland case, all have been alleged with favours and bribes. There are many other instances where such type of mis-governance can be traced.

Then comes the issues regarding Health and Social Security. Crony-ism impinges here also. The clinical trials of medicines, the placement of nuclear power plants, the field trials of GMO crops etc. All have faced charges of favours. The Bhopal Gas Tragedy has been the worst scar on India 's past. Firstly, the safety norms were not enforced by the company and the owing to its political milieu, the owner was able to escape from India and law. Large scale deaths and injuries took place, which have their consequences even today.

Various voices are raised against these events. Some are heard and some are ignored. Some decisions are withheld, but some previous mind maps are still enforced owing to the pressures of crony- deals. Mafia 's has risen owing to their political clout. Even an IAS officer was killed,



who challenged them. RTI Activists are often found under such attacks and not spared. Therefore, Crony-Capitalism has its reach at every level in various forms. Be it Politicians, Administrators, Police officers, IT officials, Custom department etc, all have their share, when it comes to degenerating their authorities. Their authorities have its source in democratic power of people. Constitutional provisions mandate certain principles and duties on the part of state, which is compromised when it indulges in Crony-ism. Hence having multiple linkages and side effects, crony- capitalism leads to dilution of democracy on many fronts. Thus, like an affair threatens the marriage, crony-capitalism threatens the democratic relations and democracy itself.

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

Knowledge, truth, wisdom and intellect are many a times found juxtaposed while mankind tries to articulate the highest goals of a meaningful life. Any living species on earth has knowledge needed for its survival and over the centuries all life forms have adapted and evolved, showing a universal propensity to learn.

Men, of all life forms, have the most developed brains. Their ability to learn, to use the acquired knowledge and to prosper is unmatched. Nature gave all living creatures some natural strength to survive in thickest of the forests. If some had a sharp smelling power, some were quick to run and hunt, somewhere agile and some strong. Men were probably the weakest and with their multitudinous inabilities, they were probably the easiest prey in the jungle. But it was the brain that made them discover fire, learn to live in caves and pain the walls, learn to speak, and from hunter gathers become civilized and build big cities. One may be amazed to think how the pyramids of Egypt were probably built and how the knowledge of trigonometry and measurement were evolved in those days.

What we seek, while we speculate and meditate is the gradual end to our ignorance. We have come a long way from worshipping the forces of nature to the present day scientific feats of our ability to get high resolution pictures from the surface of Mars. From the speculation of Heraclitus, Pythagoras, Socrates to renaissance of enlightenment ages, we have walked a long road studded with numerous battles, catastrophes, challenges and difficulties.

The society of us men and women, made classes and hierarchies in almost all parts of the world. The sense of the knowledgeable and strong being superior to the others percolated with time as our common sense. Clergy, Nobles and peasants became almost universally accepted rungs of society. Inequality, injustice, slavery and destitution for many amidst opulence, pomp and show of some, time and again made many men to think about the best way of living and social order. Law books were written and treaties of administration were mulled upon by sagely men and women. Many speakers of truth and philosophers of conviction saw the alters of slaughter house. Many Godly men were killed and the strife between the truth and the evil continues till date.

Amidst all this, views like satyamev jayate, and the infallibility of truthful person became accepted as norm. God were seen as beings of greatest knowledge and men had to aspire to be one with God through their penance and sacrifices.

The love for knowledge and the dying desire to know the truth led to numerous religions and scriptures across the world. And while a large section of the masses found these high sounding books of ultimate knowledge as acceptable sometimes because of devotion and on the other because of fear, some divulged and we also see Charvakas and Ajivika sects. The idea of truth being somewhere hidden beyond the skies and in the centers of Universe saw their

contrast in the wild naked dance of materialists who saw truth in rejoicing the short life.

Education of men and women by the educated became the well accepted tenet of any society. Education of the religious beliefs, social practices and sciences. Education of moral and ethical values. Education of poetry, dance and cultural practices. Education leading to a light. Education that emancipates and makes one a better being. All this and more became the mortars to hold the building blocks of emerging civilizations.

And to communicate this education was need of language. Language has evolved in tandem with this evolution of mankind from age of isolation to present day age of globalization. If Shakespeare wrote ceaseless till his death and Dostoevsky had to hire typists to type his magnanimous novels, today we have come to the age of Twitter, were the 140-word limit captures the thoughts of people worldwide for myriad readers. Language has evolved, with the needs of society and has been the sole carrier of knowledge from one generation to another. Though Indian Philosopher may not totally agree with that and say that knowledge is acquired by four different ways: Intuition, Inference, Comparison, or Verbal testimony (pratyaksha, anumana, upama and shabd) yet without language education can be unthinkable.

What do we educate ourselves with when we learn? The mystic poet Rumi may say: you know all already, it is just about seeing that which was left in the dark. And he may be very right. The true role of an educator is many a times, to show the pupil where to look rather than what to look for. If ignorance is darkness, then education is the candle. And what does it illuminate? What comes to light? Our own knowledge that was hidden from us!

When Albert Einstein was sitting at his desk in patent office at Bern and was gazing out his window, he performed his famous mind experiment. He thought what will happen if he walks along the beam of light coming from the clock tower at the same speed. He was stunned to realise that time will not change for him and the whole beam of light will be like a photograph. Whole reality will alter and he will see only one thing for the rest of his life! Was this knowledge new to mankind? Or was it there but no one was looking? What got illuminated by this seemingly simple experiment was a fact that was there with the universe from the very beginning.

Take another example. A match stick in a match box has all the chemicals at its tip that can burn the wooden handle to ashes and yet unless one ignites it through a mechanical stroke against a rough surface, it remains as is. The knowledge of light and fire and the chemical reactions remain hidden. Education has such a role. It ignites our mind and gives us the wings of fire as A P J Abdul Kalam Azad would lovingly say to children.

Education has an enabling role. It enables us to know what we know in a better way and know what we can



know by our mental prowess. It can make a student a doctor or an engineer. Both might be equally good and yet both may acquire knowledge as different as needed to perform a cardiovascular operation or to send a robot on moon. Education shines the light on different centers of darkness and we through our mental abilities and motivations rise higher from we stand. Einstein once said that he could see father because he stood at the shoulders of the giants. Each new generation has the privilege to stand on a tall generation and sees a little farther than the previous generation. If painters painstakingly sketched the surface of moon using telescope 200 years back, today we take high resolution photographs almost every day. If calligraphers copied numerous copies of books all their lives few centuries back, today fast laser printer and publishing houses have flooded the market with numerous books in fine print.

We have been discovering our own full potentials through the torch of education. As this torch marches in this marathon of evolution, we are invention, innovating and discovering plethora of known and unknown knowledge in finer details. We are using our ability to know to predict natural disasters, to make safer vehicles, to study climate changes, to find better seeds, to cure diseases and find vaccines, to increase our life span, to find ways of making the world a better place. We are doing all this and more, in the light of our ignorance of yester years. We are accepting the mistakes and walking ahead.

And yet we also see superstitious practices of dark ages continuing in 21st century. Blasphemy is still considered a crime in many parts of the world according to orthodox tenets and men and women are still stoned to death for surreal offences. Narendra Dabolkars are still shot dead for raising voice against superstition.

Ours' is population of over 7 billion men and women and we surely are not a monolith. We all live in our own wells. Vivekananda asked us to come out these wells and see the ocean of knowledge. It is the long rope of education that can pull us out from these wells of our creation.

Education has an enabling role to play in human prosperity. Many ills of society can be cured by educating men and women. Amartya Sen argues in several of his essays, that educating women and developing the agency of women is directly linked with improvement in IMR, MMR and sanitation problems that we face today. He argues that education is not only a means of achieving our developmental goals it is very much the end as well. For what development is development without building an educated society? Ignorance makes people narrow minded and social ills continue to exit in absence of light. Dowry, honour killing, rape, communal riots etc. are major social concern that we have today in our Indian society. An educated society can be more capable to looking into their own problems and finding their own solutions in an amicable way.

It is this ignorance that is exploited by hard liners and communal hater is spread through propaganda. Media too participates in hurling the masses as herds of sheep in the direction of oblivion under the influence of people having self-interests. The sufferings of humanity are many times rooted in ignorance and wrong perceptions. Only education can be the saviour in these cases.

Gautama Buddha when uttered his first words of wisdom after his revelation of truth, stressed on the eight-fold path to nirvana. Right knowledge and right perception is what a Buddhist sage tries to meditate for whole his life. It is the wrong perception because of ignorance that is seen as

the root cause of all suffering and strife. Those who are illuminated.

Those whose mind sees beyond the dark and light skins of men, speak of equality and sound hopes of [we shall overcome]. Those men like Martin Luther King, talk about their dream. Those poets like, Rabindranath Tagore talk about a country where the head will be held high and mind will be without fear. Such loving messages percolate only from the clouds of knowledge and knowing.

The lesser men talk like Hitlers and use concentration camps to kill people. At this point, it should be made clear that being educated might have to do nothing with school or college degrees. A civilised America can drop bombs of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and an uncivilised Bushman can save the life of a dying tourist in the jungles of Kalahari. Education can come from observation. Yes, schooling is very important, but ethical and moral values can be inculcated through family. Family, thus is accepted as the first school of a child.

What we must aim at thus, is deepening of the roots of education through collective effort and guidance from higher souls. Nehru understood the importance of education in nation building and the institutions of learning of today 's India owe a lot to his vision. The National Knowledge Commission was recently set up with similar vision, to usher the second wave of institution building in India. Knowledge is going to become the key for any nation that seeks to become a super power in further. A knowledgeable society will be in a better position to tackle with the upcoming challenges of water scarcity, food security and meeting the energy needs of tomorrow. Also, with the spread of Information and Communication Technology, an ignorant society will be easier for the terrorist groups to terrorise and polarise. Education has to play a major role to save our civilization in coming century. In absence of its light mankind repeats the mistakes and history repeats itself remains one of the of repeated phrases in history books.

In India, though the government has given education an increased attention in recent past and passage of RTE Act was a historic moment in our Constitutional history, a lot needs to be done. Ignorance fetters us and cannot walk with our growing population and myriad challenges as we eye towards the future that was once dreamt by Tagore and Gandhi. Education has to spread and women education has to be given increased attention. As we are becoming less and less dependent of agriculture, skill development and capacity building is also a major challenge that needs to be addressed. We have long given reservation to the educationally backwards classes of our society and we need to build institutions to fast track the process. Without an educated society, inclusive growth may remain a distant dream.

And yet, such a talk is self-emancipatory in nature as we seek to remove our own ignorance. Mankind, in a global world, needs to know each other problems and come out with help so as to sustain life on this planet earth and do not burn our house living in wrong perceptions and ignorance. A progressive society must progressively end its ignorance through collective and individual effort.

We see that humankind is evolving and many new dimensions keep on adding to the education system, and the level of ignorance keeps on reducing. Humankind is ignorant in those areas, which it has no knowledge or false knowledge, but further discovery through educational system helps him to become more rational.



Education has a deep impact on the life of humans. It is through education, that humans are able to think about the righteousness and wrongness of their acts. Education empowers them to shed out their wrong beliefs 'which were right due to lack of education. Thus education also helps them in self-discovery and introspection, through which new ideas are generated. These ideas further refine the base of education. Education system preserves and passes the knowledge from one generation to the other, and with each successive discovery 'the ignorance 'level drops and knowledge base of human's increase. Thus, Will Durant has rightly said that —Education is the progressive discovery of our own ignorance.

PREPAREDNESS OF OUR SOCIETY FOR INDIA'S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP ROLE

Since 15th August 1947, when India got independence and our leaders decided to remain not only out of the bipolarity of world order, but also to give a unique set of principles, which were never thought before by any other in the world, the Non Alignment, which became a movement and popularly called NAM, came into existence. That, I believe, was the first message to the modern world superpowers that how strong Indian value system is. When a country, which itself was not free till few years back, was taking the biggest stand against the super powers of the world. If we imagine the scenario for a movement only, we can understand how tough that decision could have been. When we needed support for our economy, our people, and especially when getting into groupings was equal to getting set of privileges, India decided to remain out of this dividing world order.

I believe, that moment gave us a moral courage and a strong mark in the world history that this country going to make its own path and others will come along with it. We can experience results of that to a larger extent in the second decade of 21st century, where world is looking at us with hope. World leaders say that 21st century belongs to Asia and world would be led by India indeed. But let us pause for a second and think that are we ready for this role? There are various areas to talk about when we look at the leadership role that India could play in future. However, we will limit our discussion on the preparedness of our security forces for the India 's leadership.

Indian Army, Air force and Navy together make the triad of Indian external security system. Indian Army is considered as one of the world 's top five forces. Our Air force is credited with the successful completion of numerous almost impossible operations, be it in wartime or in peacetime and it has world 's most sophisticated air transport system with it. Indian Navy has been playing a key role in securing sea lanes of communications from piracy and other disruptions since a long time. Indian navy is also among the top five navel superpowers in the world.

So, with the above brief description, should we think that India is ready to take up the role of leader of the world? Let us not rush to answer now and explore the question further. More important question which I would like to explore would be, will India become successful in keeping the position if it takes the same? Meaning of this is, earlier also some nations claimed themselves to be leaders of the world, but none of them remain at that position for a long time, their authority has been constantly challenged by the internal and external factors. We will also explore the strengths and weaknesses of our security forces and the challenges in front of them and how these can be overcome to take India to the top position.

Terrorism is one of the biggest challenges in front of Indian Armed forces and it would not amount to an exaggeration if we term terrorism as the only challenge to Indian state and its forces. Since when the India got Independence, our security forces are in continuous engagement with the terrorists especially from our neighbours on all the sides. If we analyse the gains of last

67 years, we would be very sorry to know that we have gained nothing but lost much, be it in the form of a part of our country or our brave soldiers in the fight with terrorists. Due to this India never got a chance to focus on its other international roles that could have been possible if the problem of cross-border terrorism would not have been there.

Indian armed forces are large enough to give a full blow to the any state force of the world now, however, it is facing challenges from the non-state force of terrorism which is neither a consolidated army nor a problem of one time. Its different phases have kept our efforts without much result. Indian armed forces must be credited with the way they have checked growth of terrorism, because we can imagine the horrors of a situation in the absence of such a strong army.

There is also a saying that a world champion, if not played against the best since long, he would probably end up as a loser. Here the emphasis is on putting the champion in the situation of the battle, which has earlier made him the winner. Indian armed forces have been engaged in continuous war with terrorism and we had battles with Pakistan and china only. I should not be considered as a sceptic here, but the situation is suggesting somewhat similar. Indian armed forces have never been tested against other world powers not even in the minor skirmishes and in such scenario it would be very boastful to say that we have one of the best of the forces. It is like having best weapons, with unbroken seals. We really can 't know how these weapons going to perform in a real situation. I am an optimist but a little caution makes us more aware about the situation.

When this kind of confusion arises, I choose to look into the history, because history always gives us the path to find the solution to our current problems. Let us take a flick from the Indian freedom struggle. When INC was working towards some kind of struggle to get a rightful place in the British government, Mahatma Gandhi came into the scene and took the masses with him and made them the real stakeholders in the freedom struggle. Earlier, the leaders have not tested the strength of the masses and hence not believed in them. But Gandhiji did and that faith proved the ultimate weapon of India 's freedom. Because when people of India refused to cooperate the Britishers, they had no option but to leave. I have sited this example as a loose analogy to give a thought that untested strength can be proved very powerful but the need is to have such leaders in the politics, forces and society who can instil the belief in our strength.

So, the question remain unanswered, are Indian security forces ready to take up the role of world security forces if India take up the role of world leader? The answer to this question cannot be a straightforward yes or no. we have to understand the world security challenges and limitations of any one country to play the most important role in the global scenario.

Rather, I see the leadership would be shared



among the various developed and developing nations and would bring more harmony to the world in that scenario because in the world of this century of technology, it would be not possible for India alone to assume the leadership role and there are many reasons for this, such as, India has to resolve its immediate disputes first effectively because earlier also these disputes played very important and somewhere decisive role in diplomatic relations of India with other powers of the world. Before taking up the role of world leader, India security forces also have to make them ready for the bigger challenges and this is both physically and psychologically.

Instead of thinking about the global leadership role, first India should play the role of Regional leader in Asia and put its security forces to the real challenges of the world security. Then only India and its security forces would be real ready to take up the bigger challenges of the world.

The Dawn of 21st century marked a shift from unilateral to multilateral global order. An array of opportunities opened with this turn of order that redefined the space for many countries. What was remarkable about this gala was it provided opportunities to hitherto deprived nations especially emerging economies of Asia. India, that already started a structural adjustment programme from 1991, was uniquely placed in this emerging order to carve a niche for it.

The changing global order has its own set of boons and banes for India. While we carry a baggage of cultural history that has no parallel in the world, our clumsiness to tackle emerging challenges that became a part of our culture due to colonial legacy created an equally humongous challenge for us. Under these tearing tensional effect of tectonic proportion India began a journey to carve a role for it in emerging order. The 21st century opened a motely set of opportunities spanning over social-cultural, economic, political, security and multiple other domains for India to define the contours of its role. This opportunity needed a vigorous yet calibrated approach.

Indian civilisation is considered as the fountain head of Asian culture. Whether it was the Ajanta paintings, the Indus Valley Civilisation or the land revenue system of Todar Mal; our culture left an indelible mark on the evolution of society. From individual self to establishing relation with supreme one we have solution to most of the societal problems. Ayurveda, Yoga, Siddha, Naturopathy etc offer a system of medication and tells a way to live a healthy and happy life in this chaotic world. The four great religions of world namely Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism evolved in India. These religions with their distinctive philosophies have laid a down a path to achieve both physical and metaphysical world. Turning of the world towards India to get answers for inner chaos and in the pursuit of serenity is just a hint of the role India is going to play to establish peace and tranquillity in this world.

Our modern polity has an umbilical link with our ancient Janpadas and Mahajanpadas. Arthashastra offers a governance code while there are ample evidences of sangathi (a form of democratic council). Even if we leave behind this baggage, our thriving democracy, despite the scar of partition and against the predictions of many political thinkers, epitomises how a political institution should be governed. When most of the democracies have failed even to basic litmus test of democracy ie regular election and smooth transition of power, we have constantly raised the bar. People's government, a merit based bureaucracy, responsible public institution etc are areas that can be emulated in global political order of struggle.

How we established, instituted and made our constitution function set a template to world and especially to our neighbours like Nepal which has constantly failed in this endeavor. "Sarva Dharma Sambhava" (Secularism) is a reply to emerging clash of civilisation especially in middle east where religion instead of uniting, is used to sow seeds of hatred.

The "Me-Mine" rule and the might is right philosophy that is challenging global security whether in middle east or the Asia-Pacific can be resolved by a masterstroke of our political philosophy of "Vasudeva Kutumbkam" ie earth is home to all with equal rights.

Economic role Known as the "bird of gold" we were masqueraded by the greeds of colonialism. Our plodding in economic arena post-independence has attached an appendage of Hindu rate of growth and we almost collapsed in 1991. But we were quick to learn lessons and since 1991 there was a no turning back. Any cynicism was demolished by the way we emerged in 2008 global economic crises.

Our role in contemporary economic order is quite significant. Whether its multilateral institutions like IMF, WB, ADB or formation of new economic systems like New Development Bank of BRICs we have championed not only our interest but also lead the other developing nations especially LDCs. Our philosophy is rooted in economic liberalisation and securing global order from Neo colonialism, an anathema to free enterprise.

The new economic order demands that India should not fall prey to Neo-colonialism neither it should fall out of line in the turn of events like emerging regional trade blocks like RCEP, TPP, TIPP etc. Seamless integration is the emerging trend of globalisation. With the single time opportunity of demographic dividend knocking our doors we have unique opportunity to transform ourselves as global manufacturing hub. It demands development of a robust internal regulatory architecture and cooperation at global level.

India is a pivot that connects the Europe and Middle East with Asia Pacific. This vantage position burdens it with a responsibility to establish an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity. Historically India's presence in South-East Asia, attested by its cultural footprints, lay a foundation for these upcoming responsibilities. In the middle east where the wheel is turning in the favour of democracy, India, like no other nation, due to its own sound democracy, can offer a archetype of political system for peace and democracy. In Asia-Pacific, the new cockpit of geopolitics, India's role as a swing state to neutralise China's assertion through triangular politics involving Australia, USA and Japan will determine the contours of stability. Simultaneously its engagement with its desperate and often politically disparate neighbour are watched by the world and will quantify its claims of global leadership. India is also indebted to reform the global security architecture. Beginning with the UNSC to nuclear regimes and multilateral export control regimes, India's demand for participation and non-discriminatory laws equally applicable on all, is the foundation on which any just global order will be laid. establishment of the democratic security order that provides voice and representation in equal terms is responsibility India can share with the likeminded nations.

The emerging global order also poses certain challenges to our wishful role. Human development is the biggest challenge that India faces. Health where we had historic advantages with Yoga, Naturopathy and Ayurveda,



stagnated under colonial rule needs a rekindling. Equally important is the advancement in Education especially science. Nalanda and invention of zero may have amazed the world but in the contemporary world we have almost nothing to boost of. These two parameters are both a moral necessity and a fundamental determinant of what role we will play in future order.

Our diplomacy in global commons ie in climate change, biodiversity etc is based on emphatic principles of CBD, polluters pay principle etc. Though they took care of our vulnerability and of other nations as well, but our inflexible approach and lack of pragmatism is isolating us in global negotiations. This needs immediate attention as nature has been revered culturally and its degradation has severe impact on us.

While economic figures determine the global leadership and India's role would be determined by various facts and figure, it is not the quantity but the quality that will separate India from others. India's uniqueness is in its unmatched moral philosophy that rises beyond the numbers. A litmus test to where we stand and what role we should play is provided by none other than father of nation, Mahatma Gandhi. He says "The cudgel of our success is not the materialistic achievement. The role we should play should be determined by our ability to emancipate the weakest and to remove the tears of the most vulnerable".

GEOGRAPHY MAY REMAIN THE SAME; HISTORY NEED NOT

Geography defines the living and non-living features exists near the surface of the earth. It provides the physical setting in terms of providing the natural resources like air,water,soil,different locations and topographies for the existence of human civilization. While, history represents the events which has happened in the past. So,what we do in present will become history in the future. Basically,it describes the human behaviour and response as per the situation, circumstance, geographical inputs available,etc. Thus, geography provides the platform and history shows the human response. So,the geography may remain the same but history can be changed as per human ingenuity,level of understanding,etc.

Since the existence of human civilization, from nomadic age to present modern age, geography of the world remains the same. As geographical setting varies over a large geological time scale not over a large human time scale. But,the history of human civilization has gone through tremendous changes in all aspects like in political,social,economic,cultural,etc across the ancient ,medieval and modern period of history. As first we learn hunting, then respecting community living, starting agricultural practices, settlement near rivers, in ancient age. Then, in medieval period, we come across the idea of kinship,fiefdom,slavery,etc . Finally,in modernity we come across the idea of nation, state,democracy,liberty,fraternity during Glorious revolution, American war of independence,French revolution,etc.

Internationally, European history is full of rivalries as since the renaissance, with the advent of sea-trade the rivalries for colonies started and intensified along with mutual rivalries in Europe. The race for more and more acquisition of resource especially land surges with increase in population. This ultimately leads to continuous raising of war between nations & states.This ends with continuous 30years war of west delphia which leads to mutual recognition of sovereignty of each other's nations. So,with the same geography with changing human attitude, policies and programmes,history could be changed to bring more peaceful and prosperous society as seen in Europe nowadays.

Similarly, in Indian context, the continuous rivalries between the sixteen Mahajanpads like Magadh,Ang,etc. This was carried forward in medieval period and ultimately led to invasion by the slave dynasty and formation of Delhi Sultanate and later annexed by Mughal and Britishers. These annexations turned the golden bird i.e India into the menace of poverty, illiteracy, unemployment and distress migrations, etc. Even after independence, with partition between India and Pakistan, which were a single

nation living in mutual harmony since time unknown was divided by human beings.This led to change the history of communal harmony to communal violence on the same geography in post partition period. In current scenario,with the same human and natural resources and geographical resources,the Europe grow with uniting all its member under European Union,although with recent set-backs. While,Middle east countries continue its mutual rivalries due to many regions.This ultimately led to continuous unrest and civil war like situation in which everyone seems to be the self-proclaimed king of the region.They can't utilize the available natural resources like oil and gas, manpower, strategic location, etc for its own benefits and just become a puppet in the hand of superpowers. So,once prosperous Ottoman empire(current middle east) has been dragged back to primitive age where main concern is human survival and security not education,health,or any recreational activities. This shows the contrasting situation which human can build and destroy on the same geography. In contrast,India followed the policy of Non-Alignment and mutual co-existence on the principle of mutual respect and secularism.This helps it in building and making the democratic pluralistic social fabric of the nation. Indian geography which is full of diversities and historically full of mutual hatred and wars is now living with mutual trust and peace. This helps India to be the second fastest growing economy with fourth largest economy ranking in the world. It becomes global Information technology leader, and world's largest democracy.

Although,it seems ironical to have very different societies existing on the same geography with nearly same resources available. So,the real crusaders of changing the history on the same geography are few foresighted persons having courage of conviction and work hard to achieve their goals. For example, Abhram Lincon turns the face of the USA from a country of no history to the most advanced country of the world. This is possible by changing thinking and attitude of people which is fully supported by government policies and institutions which sustained these qualities. He introduces the modern concept of democracy and human respect among the people. Similarly,in South Africa, Nelson Mandela fought for against the practice of Apartheid which discriminate between white and black skinned people. This fructified with abolition of Apartheid.

Similarly,in India, Mahatma Gandhi who brought together different sections of society together. He imbibed the people with the idea of mutual respect and abolish untouchability and discrimination against the depressed class(Harijan). India's first prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru's contribution in building the nation from within is also has immense implication for the current boosting



scenario of India. He introduced modern educational institutes like IITs, IIMs, Indian space programmes, etc. Modern political thought and institutions like parliamentary democracy, Indian administrative services, etc. Same as the contribution of Dr B.R. Ambedkar, Vallabh bhai patel, etc can't be forgotten which enrich the same geography with entirely different history.

Additionally, when we look at the contemporary problems of environment, terrorism, inequalities, poor human development in African and south eastern Asian countries. The reason lies in the historical preference which human followed in pursuit of his desires. Like in India, which followed rapid massive heavy industrialization undermining ecological and human (especially tribals) resettlement concerns led to large scale Maoist activities, environmental and biodiversity concerns.

Similarly, the issue of LTTE in Srilanka and Rohingya issue in Vietnam or Sunnis, Shia, Kurds issue in Middle east or Indo-pakistan issues in India. All these issues are related to people living in same geography and culture but put to differential treatment under different leaderships and government of the region. So, the issues which are dealt with consensus and mutually respecting each others legitimate sovereignty sustains and evolve overtime. While those issues in which govt uses its extra-judicial authorities and armies to tackle the issues fails and makes global outrage and shame for the country at international level. Like Rohingya issues in Vietnam or Tamils issues in Srilanka, etc.

Following the same philosophy India should legitimately resolve the issues relating to its neighbours either the border issues with China or Maoist issue with Nepal or State funding terrorism issue with Pakistan. It could also seek help of international court on less

prudence matters like recent Bangladesh issues which enhance economic and other activities in the regions. Along with confidence building measures and people to people contact could dilute the tension. Accompanied with governmental and diplomatic measures to resolve the issue like Panchsheel agreement, Gujral doctrine, Lahore-Amritsar bus services, etc. Thus, mutual recognition and respect could resolve the tension between adjacent geographic nations. Along with internal history of the nation could be evolved with sound and inclusive policies supported by effective institutions and grass-root attitudinal change to make the system transparent and participatory. This will make the world sustainable, peaceful and cooperative. So, that all of us work together to tackle the historic and contemporary menaces of the society and culture. □ Geography has made us neighbors, History has made us friends, Economics has made us partners, and necessity has made us allies, Those whom God has so joined together, let no man put asunder --John F. Kennedy

Geography has a dimension of history in itself. It has been affected by history and history has affected it over period of time new political boundaries had emerged on earth surface due to historic conflicts like some new countries, e.g. South Sudan. excessive historical exploitation of groundwater resulting into subsidence of ground surface. If there is anything permanent in this world that is change only. slow geographical change has little significance for human being and human can progress without any catastrophic geographical change. But change in history is critical for human development, not the absolute quantity of change but also the direction of change which must be positive and progressive. Human has to realize that, one should not remain victim of past for ever, yet our present action must be considered as positive history by future generation.

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

The dawn of 21st century brought with it one of the most fascinating phenomena in global politics. Termed as the 'New World Order', it marked a shift from the unipolar world that emerged not far back from a bipolar cold war era, to a multi polar world. This new world order was fraught with both opportunities and challenges. For the global east it offered an array of opportunities, for the global west it was a struggle to maintain its hegemony. Among the west it was America that faced a challenge to its super power status from the rising Asian nation especially from China, and to a lesser extent from India and Turkey. What offered America an unparalleled control over the world and whether & why its preeminent position is under threat is an intriguing topic of the 21st century geopolitics.

American ascendancy to the summits of world power came at the cost of decline of Europe and in particular Britain. Pax Britannica gave way to Pax America. This change of guard happened during the world war period but its foundation was laid way back in 1776. The American revolution instituted a new political system called Democracy in America. This was the bedrock on which the colossal structure of American supremacy was built and it finally achieved the vantage position post WW II.

American rise was a result of blending of three separate forces. These were political, economic and social power of America. Politically America was the only country in 18th century where democracy was established firmly. It provided America a stable polity while the world was fighting the war of hegemony and colonial expansion.

America's vast expanse of physical resources unmatched the world, while this melting pot of civilisation absorbed the diverse pool of talent from across the world. American society once freed of ghettoisation was placed uniquely to take advantage of any upheaval of world order. World war provided it the opportunity and America was quick to capture it. Its Dollar diplomacy and selective use of carrot and stick policy gave her the coveted title of super power of the world. Thus, began the era of America from 1950's onward.

American economy contributed 25% of the world GDP, its military strength were unmatched, its diplomacy and ability to carve alliances like NATO, CENTO etc were envy for nations across the world. The way it handled the cold war and emerged victorious at the cost of disintegration of USSR offer lessons of statecraft. Then why its position appears challenged from the players that were insignificant just few years back or is this threat a mere illusion. To start the probe lets begin with an empirical study to ascertain the decline.

It is claimed that America's influence is declining along all three domains of authority i.e. social, economic and political. American people were the flag bearers of major social change. From the Bill of Rights that championed basic human rights to the rational thinking, American dominance was felt everywhere. Its scientist was decorated with global prizes and awards, and the Noble prize found home more often in America. But, the trend is changing. The award of the latest Nobel peace prize to



Asian nationals corroborates these symptoms of change in social leadership. Once a harbinger of democracy, America is losing this stature to India which was once doubted on the longevity of its democratic experiment. Among other political platforms also the Americans are losing their glitter. There are calls for the reform of multilateral institutions like IMF, WB etc. This reforms are going to reduce the clout of America more than any other western nation. Demand for expansion of UNSC will further reduce its preeminent position in global politics. The political clout once exercised by America is weathering. The adamant behaviour of Iran and Syria despite multiple threats of unilateral sanctions by USA, withdrawal of American forces from Afghanistan or the U-turn from a determined decision to launch military strike in Syria are just few symptoms of its eroding might. Economically too its influence is debilitating. The share of American GDP has shrunk to around 18% while that of Emerging Market Economies especially China, India, Brazil, Russia is on the rise. G-7 which controlled global economy is now expanded to G-20. The global economic crises of 2008 and the near insulation of emerging economies especially India attest the decline in dollar diplomacy of America. Asian Development bank or the newly born New Development Bank of BRICS further dilute the global economics that once converged and condensed at America. Going by these empirical evidences can we conclude that America is on the decline?

YES the evidences are enough to hint towards the slippage of America from its position of ascendancy. But what does this slippage mean in real term? Is any other global power ready to replace USA or will it still continue as a global super power despite the erosion of its powers?

Slippage of American power provides opportunities to others. China is the leading challenger to claim these powers. Its sharing of power with America is recognised in various arenas of geopolitics the latest being Asia-Pacific where USA is forced to change its foreign policy stance.

From 'Rebalancing in Asia-Pacific' to increased naval exercises with Japan, S. Korea and Australia; American attempt to reclaim the lost ground from China is mostly going futile and China's influence in the region is expanding. Goldman Sachs and ADB both have predicted the rise of China as the biggest GDP replacing USA by 2050.

India is yet another player that is emerging at a fast pace. Though it is still far behind USA, it is taking independent geopolitical decision irrespective of American pressure. Abdicating the vote in USA introduced resolution against HR violation in Sri Lanka or the diverging stance on Syria and Iran not only tell the independence of Indian geopolitics but also attest the failure of American diplomacy, a case not witnessed in 20th century. American's ability to manoeuvre other states is in fact utilised by India which is trying to play the role of swing state in emerging Asia-Pacific politics, much against the expectation of USA which is willing to align India with her against China.

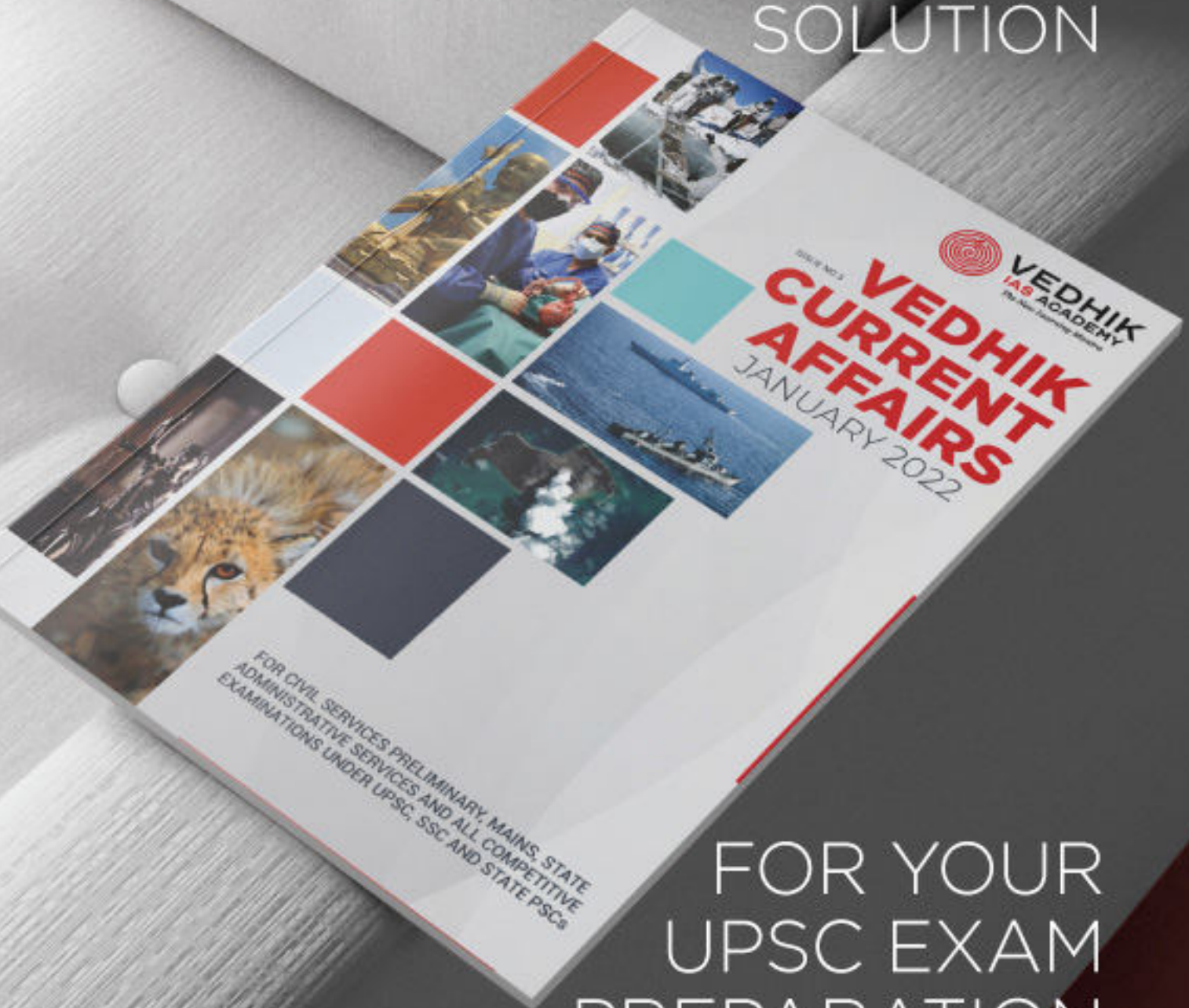
Turkey too is shifting its position from pro US and secular stand and tilting more towards the Islamic East. Stories of Brazil and South Africa are no less different. Russia is almost back to old days and is pursuing its expansionist policy in Ukraine despite US threats. Thus the position is very much clear that the end of USA ascendancy is near. So, will either of China, India, Russia, Brazil or Turkey will emerge as a new super power? A definite answer to this is NO. While US is on decline and other states on rise, there are no evidences strong enough to conclude that USA will be replaced by any of these powers. None of the state is individually able to usurp the loss of American power. This loss is shared among multiple states unlike 1920s when Pax Britannica was replaced by Pax America by absolute transfer of power. The loss of Britain was gained in toto by America in 20th century change of guard. This change of guard is not happening in 21st century. Thus, the rise of a new super power is not on the cards.

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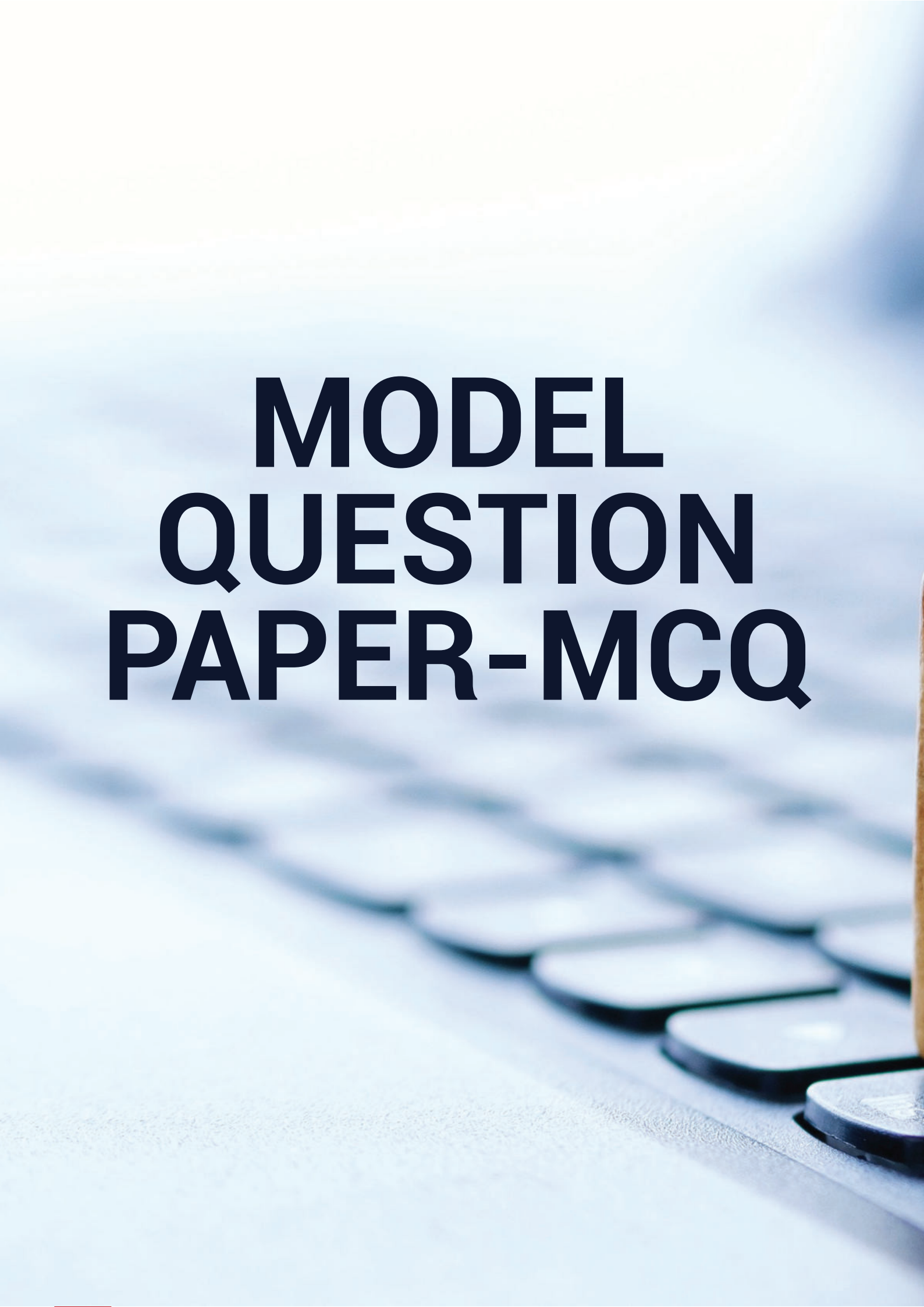
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MODEL QUESTION PAPER-MCQ







Q1. With reference to Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016, aim to regulate plastic waste generation, collection, and recycling, consider the following statements.

1. The rules require local bodies to establish collection centers for plastic waste.
2. Manufacturers and brand owners must take responsibility for collecting and recycling plastic waste.

Which of the above statement/s is/ are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q2. Consider the following statements regarding bio-plastics often seen in news.

1. They are made from petroleum-based sources, similar to conventional plastics.
2. They can replace traditional plastics in packaging, disposable cutlery, and various single-use items.
3. They are biodegradable and break down into natural substances like water and carbon dioxide.

Select the correct statement/s using the code given

- A. Only one
- B. Only two
- C. All the three
- D. None of the above

Q3. With reference to Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023 often seen in news, consider the following statements.

1. The bill makes certain exemptions are provided, such as forest land along railways or public roads, and land within 100 km from international borders for strategic projects or national security.
2. State governments does not need prior approval from the central government to assign forest land to any entity, including government-owned ones, subject to prescribed terms and conditions.

Which of the above statement/s is/ are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q4. The 'SIGHT PROGRAMME' often mentioned in new is related with

- A. Promotion of Electric Vehicles
- B. Green Hydrogen
- C. Promotion of ethanol blended petrol
- D. Program to eliminate the greenhouse gas emission

Q5. 'Sohagi Barwa Wildlife Sanctuary' often seen in news is located at

- A. Madhya Pradesh

B. Maharashtra

C. Bihar

D. Uttar Pradesh

Q6. With reference to Leopard, consider the following statements.

1. The species listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA) of India.

2. The species is classified as 'Endangered' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)

3. The species is distributed across various regions of Africa and parts of Asia, including 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. Consider the following statements regarding Green hydrogen often seen in news.

1. It is produced through electrolysis using renewable energy, such as wind or solar power.

2. It has zero carbon emissions, making it a clean and sustainable energy carrier.

3. The production of green hydrogen is too expensive to be economically viable.

Select the correct statement/s using the code given

- A. Only one
- B. Only Two
- C. All the Three
- D. None of the above

Q8. With reference to 'Project Cheetah' sometimes seen in news, consider the following statements.

1. It is an ambitious initiative by the Government of India to reintroduce cheetahs to the country.

2. It is implemented by Zoological Survey of India.

3. The project aims to restore cheetahs to their natural habitat and conserve the species in India.

Which of the above statement/s is/ are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Q9. Consider the following statements regarding 'Asiatic Cheetah' often seen in news.

1. The species listed under Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA) of India.

2. The Asiatic Cheetah's distribution is limited to the Indian subcontinent.

3. The Asiatic Cheetah has no ecological significance, and its absence would not impact ecosystems.



Select the correct statement/s using the code given

- A. Only one
- B. Only Two
- C. All the Three
- D. None of the above

Q10. With reference to Kanha National Park sometimes seen in news, consider the following statements.

1. The National Park is situated in Rajasthan, India.
2. Kanha's rich biodiversity includes other species like leopards, sloth bears, and barasingha deer.
3. The park's landscape comprises dense forests, grasslands, and bamboo thickets.

Which of the above statement/s is/ are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Q11. With reference to Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016, aim to regulate plastic waste generation, collection, and recycling, consider the following statements.

1. The rules require local bodies to establish collection centers for plastic waste.
2. Manufacturers and brand owners must take responsibility for collecting and recycling plastic waste.

Which of the above statement/s is/ are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q12. Consider the following statements regarding bio-plastics often seen in news.

1. They are made from petroleum-based sources, similar to conventional plastics.
2. They can replace traditional plastics in packaging, disposable cutlery, and various single-use items.
3. They are biodegradable and break down into natural substances like water and carbon dioxide.

Select the correct statement/s using the code given

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- B. Only two
- C. All the three
- D. None of the above

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2. State governments does not need prior approval from

the central government to assign forest land to any entity, including government-owned ones, subject to prescribed terms and conditions.

Which of the above statement/s is/ are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 only
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q14. The 'SIGHT PROGRAMME' often mentioned in news is related with

- A. Promotion of Electric Vehicles
- B. Green Hydrogen
- C. Promotion of ethanol blended petrol
- D. Program to eliminate the greenhouse gas emission

Q15. 'Sohagi Barwa Wildlife Sanctuary' often seen in news is located at

- A. Madhya Pradesh
- B. Maharashtra
- C. Bihar
- D. Uttar Pradesh

Q16. With reference to Leopard, consider the following statements.

1. The species listed under Schedule I of the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA) of India.
2. The species is classified as 'Endangered' by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)
3. The species is distributed across various regions of Africa and parts of Asia, including 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

Q17. Consider the following statements regarding Green hydrogen often seen in news.

1. It is produced through electrolysis using renewable energy, such as wind or solar power.
2. It has zero carbon emissions, making it a clean and sustainable energy carrier.
3. The production of green hydrogen is too expensive to be economically viable.

Select the correct statement/s using the code given

- A. Only one
- B. Only Two
- C. All the Three
- D. None of the above

Q18. With reference to 'Project Cheetah' sometimes seen in news, consider the following statements.

1. It is an ambitious initiative by the Government of India to reintroduce cheetahs to the country.



2. It is implemented by Zoological Survey of India.

3. The project aims to restore cheetahs to their natural habitat and conserve the species in India.

Which of the above statement/s is/ are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Q19. Consider the following statements regarding 'Asiatic Cheetah' often seen in news.

1. The species listed under Schedule II of the Wildlife Protection Act (WPA) of India.

2. The Asiatic Cheetah's distribution is limited to the Indian subcontinent.

3. The Asiatic Cheetah has no ecological significance, and its absence would not impact ecosystems.

Select the correct statement/s using the code given

- A. Only one
- B. Only Two
- C. All the Three
- D. None of the above

Q20. With reference to Kanha National Park sometimes seen in news, consider the following statements.

1. The National Park is situated in Rajasthan, India.

2. Kanha's rich biodiversity includes other species like leopards, sloth bears, and barasingha deer.

3. The park's landscape comprises dense forests, grasslands, and bamboo thickets.

Which of the above statement/s is/ are correct?

- A. 1 only
- B. 2 and 3 only
- C. 1 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Q21. Which of the following fundamental rights in the Indian Constitution indirectly refers to right to privacy?

- a. Right to Equality
- b. Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression
- c. Right to Protection from Discrimination
- d. Right to Life and Personal Liberty

Q22. Which landmark Supreme Court judgment recognized the right to privacy as a fundamental right?

- a. Golaknath v. State of Punjab
- b. Maneka Gandhi v. Union of India
- c. K.S. Puttaswamy (Retd.) v. Union of India
- d. Indira Gandhi v. Raj Narain

Q23. Which committee was formed to examine the issues related to data protection and suggest a draft data protection law in India?

- a. Raghavan Committee

b. Nandan Nilekani Committee

c. Justice B.N. Srikrishna Committee

d. Justice Verma Committee

Q24. Which of the following statements about the Right to Freedom of Speech and Expression in India is correct?

Statement I: The right to freedom of speech and expression is an absolute right.

Statement II: The right to freedom of speech and expression can be restricted on grounds of public order.

- a. Only Statement I is correct.
- b. Only Statement II is correct.
- c. Both Statement I and Statement II are correct.
- d. Neither Statement I nor Statement II is correct.

Q25. Which of the following statements about the Right to Equality in India is correct?

Statement I: The right to equality prohibits discrimination on grounds of religion, race, caste, sex, or place of birth.

Statement II: The right to equality guarantees equal opportunity in matters of public employment.

- a. Only Statement I is correct.
- b. Only Statement II is correct.
- c. Both Statement I and Statement II are correct.
- d. Neither Statement I nor Statement II is correct.

Q26. Which of the following statements about the Right against Exploitation in India is correct?

Statement I: The right against exploitation prohibits human trafficking and forced labor.

Statement II: The right against exploitation guarantees the right to fair wages and safe working conditions.

- a. Only Statement I is correct.
- b. Only Statement II is correct.
- c. Both Statement I and Statement II are correct.
- d. Neither Statement I nor Statement II is correct.

Q27. Which of the following statements about the Right to Freedom of Religion in India is correct?

Statement I: The right to freedom of religion guarantees the freedom to practice, profess, and propagate any religion.

Statement II: The right to freedom of religion includes any individual to change from one religion to another.

- a. Only Statement I is correct.
- b. Only Statement II is correct.
- c. Both Statement I and Statement II are correct.
- d. Neither Statement I nor Statement II is correct.

Q28. Which of the following statements about the Right to Constitutional Remedies in India is correct?

Statement I: The right to constitutional remedies allows



individuals to approach the court for the enforcement of fundamental rights.

Statement II: The right to constitutional remedies is not available against the actions of private individuals or entities.

- a. Only Statement I is correct.
- b. Only Statement II is correct.
- c. Both Statement I and Statement II are correct.
- d. Neither Statement I nor Statement II is correct.

Q29. Choose the correct statements

- 1. Only parliament can make extra territorial legislation.
- 2. Residuary power of legislation is vested with the parliament.
- 3. Even though the union territories of Delhi and Puduchery have got legislative assembly, Parliament can make laws on any of the three lists.

Select the correct answer from the codes given below

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

Q30. According to constitution, the President shall in respect of every financial year cause to be laid before both house of the Parliament a statement of the estimated receipts and expenditure of the Government of India for that year. In this context 'cause to be laid' represents?

- a. Role of the President
- b. Role of the Finance Minister
- c. Role of the Prime Minister
- d. Role of the Parliament

Q31. Passage of which of the following acts made amendments to Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of State Policy and Fundamental Duties.

- a. Right to Information Act
- b. National Green Tribunal Act
- c. Right to Education Act
- d. Lokpal and Lokayukta Act

Q32. Which of the following statements is/are correct with respect to Fundamental Duties?

- 1. Provisions of fundamental duties can be enforced by Writs.
- 2. They are confined to only citizens.
- 3. Renouncing practices derogatory to the dignity of women is a fundamental duty.

Select the correct answer from the codes given below

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

- d. 1, 2 and 3

Q33. Which of the following ways constitution of India can be amended?

- 1. Special majority of Parliament.
- 2. Special majority of parliament along with consent of half of the states.
- 3. Special majority of parliament and consent of half of the states and union territories having legislative assembly.
- 4. Simple majority of the parliament.

Select the correct answer from the codes given below

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

Q34. Which one of the following is part of the Electoral College for the election of the President of India but does not form part of the forum for its impeachment?

- a. Lok Sabha
- b. Rajya Sabha
- c. State Legislative Councils
- d. State Legislative Assemblies

Q35. Which one of the following statements regarding the office of the speaker is correct?

- a. He holds office during the pleasure of the President.
- b. He need not be a member of the house at the time of his election but has to become a member of the house within six months from the date of his election.
- c. He loses his office if the house is dissolved before the end of its normal tenure.
- d. If he intends to resign, the letter of his resignation is to be addressed to the deputy speaker of Lok Sabha.

Q36. Freedom of press in India

- a. Is specially provided in Article 19(1)(a) of the constitution.
- b. Is implied in the wider freedom of expression guaranteed by Article 19(1)(a) of the constitution.
- c. Is guaranteed under the provisions of Article 361A of the constitution.
- d. Emanates from the operation of the Rule of Law in the country.

Q37. Which of the following taxes is/are levied by the Union and collected and appropriated by the states?

- 1. Stamp Duties.
- 2. Passenger and Goods Tax.
- 3. Estate Duty.
- 4. Taxes on Newspaper

Select the correct answer from the codes given below



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

Q38. If in an election to the state legislative assembly, the candidate who is declared elected loses his deposit, it means that

- a. The polling was very poor.
- b. The election was for a multi-member constituency.
- c. The elected candidate's victory over his nearest rival marginal.
- d. A very large number of candidates contested the election.

Q39. According to National Weather Service of the US, Flash floods are caused when rainfall creates flooding in

- A. less than 6 hours
- B. less than 8 hours
- C. less than 12 hours
- D. less than 24 hours

Q40. El Niño is a climate pattern characterized by

- A. Warmer Indian Ocean
- B. Warmer Atlantic Ocean
- C. Warm sea-surface temperatures around the equator toward the Pacific coast of South America
- D. Cooler sea-surface temperatures around the equator toward the Pacific coast of South America

Q41. Consider the following statements –

- 1. Actual maximum Temperature is more than or equal to 45 degrees Celsius.
- 2. The departure from the normal temperature is 4.5 degree Celsius to 6.4 degree Celsius.

In which of the above conditions the heat wave is/are declared in India?

- A. Only 1
- B. Only 2
- C. Both 1 and 2
- D. Neither 1 nor 2

Q42. What could be the possible impact of heatwaves?

- 1. Frequent power cuts
 - 2. accelerated melting of glaciers
 - 3. decreased work capacity and labour productivity
- Choose the correct code –

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 2 and 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Q43. On which of the following date the 99% of the world's population receives some degree of sunlight including the twilight?

- A. July 8
- B. June 21
- C. December 22
- D. March 23

Q44. Which of the following rivers flow from Hindu Kush Himalayas regions?

- A. Brahmaputra
- B. Ganges
- C. Yangtze
- D. All of the above

Q45. Kaas Plateau is located in

- A. Karnataka
- B. Maharashtra
- C. Chhota Nagpur Plateau
- D. Telangana

Q46. Consider the following statements about the Kaas Plateau

- 1. It is also known as the 'Plateau of Flowers'.
- 2. Kaas Plateau is included in the UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site.
- 3. Its name is derived from the Kaasa tree, botanically known as *Elaeocarpus glandulosus* (rudraksha family).

Choose the correct statements -

- A. 1 and 2 only
- B. 1 and 3 only
- C. 3 only
- D. 1, 2 and 3

Q47. In the month of July 2023, the world recorded its hottest ever day. The date is -

- A. July 6
- B. July 4
- C. July 1
- D. July 3

Q48. With reference to the Cyber Emergency Response Team - India (CERT-In), consider the following statements:

- 1. The Cyber Emergency Response Team - India (CERT-In) was established in 2004, functioning under the Department of Information Technology.
- 2. The Cyber Emergency Response Team - India (CERT-In) is mandated under the IT Amendment Act, 2008 to serve as the national agency in charge of cyber security.

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

Q49. With reference to the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI), consider the following statements:

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

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

Q50. The Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) is conducted by

- a. National Sample Survey Office (NSSO).
- b. Registrar General of India (RGI).
- c. Department of Labour Bureau.
- d. None of these.

Q51. With reference to the Fiscal Responsibility and Budgetary Management Act, 2016, consider the following statements:

1. Reduce fiscal deficit to 3 % of the GDP by FY 2017-18
2. Eliminate Effective Revenue Deficit by FY 2015-16

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

Q52. Consider the following:

1. Foreign Currency Assets
2. Gold Reserves
3. Special Drawing Rights
4. Reserve Tranche IMF

Which among the above is / are component of the Forex Reserves?

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

Q53. With reference to the Goods and Services Tax

Council, consider the following statements:

1. The Union Finance Minister serve as the Chairperson of the Goods and Services Tax Council.
2. The State Government can nominate a Minister in-charge of Finance or Taxation or any other Minister to the Goods and Services Tax Council.
3. The Central Board of Excise and Customs (CBEC) serve as a permanent invitee with voting rights to all proceedings of the Council.

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

Q54. With reference to the S&P Global India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index, consider the following statements:

1. The S&P Global India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index measures the performance of the manufacturing sector and is derived from a survey of 500 manufacturing companies.

2. The PMI survey, a survey of about 400 manufacturers do not take into account the contribution of MSMEs, which collectively contribute less than a third to the gross value added generated by the manufacturing sector as a whole.

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

Q55. With reference to the International Financial Services Centre Authority (IFSCA), consider the following statements:

1. The first International Financial Service Centre (IFSC) in India has been set up at the Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City), a multi-service Special Economic Zone (SEZ) located at Gandhinagar.






















2. The International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) is a statutory body constituted under the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) Act, 2019.

3. The mandate of the International Financial Services Centres Authority (IFSCA) is to develop and regulate financial products, services and institutions in the IFSC in India.

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

OMR ANSWER SHEET

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