Monthly Editorial Consolidation

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Content

Reforms in MSME Sector

This editorial is based on "MSMEs have shown resilience in the face of steep challenges" which was published in Livemint on 31/10/2022. It talks about the current state of MSME development in India and related challenges.

Tag: Indian Economy, GS Paper-3, Growth & Development, Mobilisation of Resources, Industrial Policy

The **Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises(MSMEs) sector is an important pillar of the Indian economy** as it contributes greatly to growth of the Indian economy with a vast network contributing about **45% to manufacturing output.**

MSMEs provide about **110 million jobs** which is **22-23% of the total employment** in India. It is next highest to Agriculture. However, this sector still faces several challenges. Barely **15% of MSME units have registered with the UDYAM Platform. Heterogeneity, fragmentation and informalization** highlight the need for reforms in this sector.

Formulation of targeted policies in the areas of **infrastructure development, technology adoption, backward and forward linkage,** can help MSMEs to achieve their full potential and propel the Indian economy in a higher growth trajectory.

What is the Significance of MSME Sector for India?

➢ **Boon for Rural Development:** Compared with large-scale companies, **MSMEs aided in the industrialisation of rural areas at minimal capital cost.** The sector has made significant contributions to the country's **rural socio-economic growth** and **complemented major industries as well**.

➢ **Front Runner in Make in India Mission:** As India aims that th**e products that are 'Make in India' are also 'Made for the World,'** adhering to global standards of quality. **MSME is acquiring the centre stage in the mission**. It is taken as a backbone in making this dream a possibility.

➢ **Simple Management Structure for Enterprise**s: Considering India's middle-class economy, MSME offers a flexibility that it **can start with limited resources within the control of the owner**. From this decision making gets easy and efficient.

    ○ On the contrary, a large corporation requires a specialist for every departmental functioning as it has a complex organisational structure.

➢ **Economic Growth and Leverage Exports**: It is the most significant driver in India contributing to the tune of **8% to GDP**.

○ Nowadays, **Multi National Companies** are buying **semi-finished, and auxiliary products from small enterprises**. It offers immense potential in creating a linkage between **India's MSME base and big companies.**

What are the Current Challenges Related to MSME Sector in India?

➢ **Financial Constraint:** In the **Indian economy**, access to finance has always been an issue for smaller firms and businesses. This is a major hindrance for businesses as well as the MSME sector.

○ However, the most disturbing fact about it is that **only 16% of SMEs get access to timely finance,** resulting in small and medium firms being forced to rely on their own resources.

➢ **Lack of Innovation:** Indian MSMEs lack innovation, and the **majority of the products that they produce are based on outdated technologies.** There is a severe **lack of entrepreneurs** in this sector, which has prevented it from adopting new technologies and tools.

○ As a result, MSMEs have had to struggle with outdated technology as well as low levels of productivity, especially when compared with larger firms.

➢ **Majority of Small Firms**: Micro and small businesses account for more than 80% of MSMEs. Therefore, due to communication gap and awareness, they cannot take advantage of the **government's emergency line of credit**, stressed asset relief, equity participation, and fund of funds operation.

➢ **Lack of Formalisation Amongst MSMEs**: MSMEs lack formalisation and this contributes to the credit gap.

○ Almost **86% of manufacturing MSMEs in the country are unregistered.** Even today, only about 1.1 crore MSMEs are registered with the **Goods and Services Tax.**

What are the Recent Government Initiatives Related to MSMEs?

➢ **Raising and Accelerating MSME Performance (RAMP) Scheme**

➢ **Credit Guarantee Trust Fund for Micro & Small Enterprises (CGTMSE)**

➢ **Interest Subsidy Eligibility Certificate (ISEC)**

➢ **A Scheme for Promoting Innovation, Rural Industry & Entrepreneurship (ASPIRE)**

➢ **Credit Linked Capital Subsidy for Technology Upgradation (CLCSS)**

What Should be the Way Forward?

➢ **Regulatory Mechanism**: The growing importance of the **data economy** necessitates the government creating an **independent body to advise and offer consultancy to MSMEs** and establish **regulatory measures to protect them from economic shocks**.

➢ **Supply Chain Finance**: It can help MSMEs **meet urgent working capital requirements** and **allow them to make early payments** or have quicker access to funds that they are owed and to inculcate **Zero Defect & Zero Effect (ZED) practices** in manufacturing done by Indian MSMEs.

   ○ **Technology-enabled platforms to automate transactions** can be created making it **easier for MSMEs to track payments**.

      ● With such seamless and quick funding, **MSMEs can easily invest in business expansion, procure new raw materials, or update their inventories.**

➢ **Linking Government Projects with Local MSME:** The government can play a crucial role in **creating domestic manufacturing capabilities** by the leverage of proposed public procurements and projects.

   ○ For instance, **public projects such as Sagarmala, Bharatmala,** and industrial corridors **can be linked with the MSME sector.**

➢ **Industry-Academia Channel**: A greater connection between government industry-academia is required **to identify the evolving requirements in manufacturing** and **prepare an employable workforce**, contributing to **Industrial Revolution 4.0.**

➢ **Dedicated MSME Portal**: A portal can be created for MSME **formalisation and registration**. It will not only bring **transparency** but also help in **reducing frauds and misappropriation of data**.

   ○ And it can also be developed as a **full-fledged marketplace for MSMEs** through which **sellers can develop forward and backward linkages.**

   ○ **Aadhaar or PAN can be used as a unique identifier** for all compliance purposes and **annual registration process as a vendor must be simplified** or can be done with this identifier.

➢ **E-Courts for Dispute Resolution:** Often the **National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT)** proceedings lead to drainage of precious financial resources for MSME sector.

   ○ To push for faster resolution of cases, **there is a need to strengthen the NCLT framework** with introduction of alternate methods of debt resolution, such as via **e-courts.**

➢ **Incentivising Digital Adoption Within the Sector**: By **incentivizing digital adoption** within this sector,

particularly disruptive technologies such as **artificial intelligence** and **quantum technology**, the industry can experience a technological boom.

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Right to Breathe at Risk

This article is based on "The weakest link in the air pollution fight" which was published in The Hindu on 02/11/2022. It talks about the issue related to air pollution in India and related regulatory challenges.

Tag: Biodiversity & Environment, GS Paper-3, Environmental Pollution & Degradation

In recent years, **Air Pollution** has acquired critical dimensions and the **air quality** in most Indian cities fail to meet **WHO guidelines** for safe levels.

According to the report of **The Lancet Planetary Health**, Air pollution was responsible for 16.7 lakh deaths in India in 2019, or 17.8% of all deaths in the country that year and air pollution is most severe in the **Indo-Gangetic Plain**. **Burning of biomass** in households was the single largest cause of air pollution deaths in India, followed by **coal combustion**.

The levels of **PM2.5 and PM10** as well as concentration of dangerous carcinogenic substances such as **Sulphur Dioxide (SO_2)** and **Nitrogen Dioxide (NO_2)** have reached alarming proportions in most Indian cities, putting people at additional risk of respiratory diseases and other health problems.

At the rate with which air pollution is increasing in the country, **immediate action has become an absolute necessity**. It is therefore necessary to **revitalise the government's efforts to curb this menace.**

What are the Major Sources of Air Pollution?

➢ **Urbanisation**: Rising **urbanisation** and associated anthropogenic activities such as **construction** are the prime reasons that lead to air pollutant emissions and poor air quality.

   ○ It is expected that by 2030, around **50% of the global population will be residing in urban areas**, further contributing to air pollution.

   ○ A result of urbanisation is the presence of large numbers of cars and other vehicles on the roads that **contribute to traffic congestion on the roads,** affecting the air quality of that particular area to a great extent.

➢ **Burning of Fossil Fuels:** Air pollution takes place due to the **incomplete burning of fossil fuels**. These include **coal, oil, and gasoline** that are used to produce energy for electricity and transportation.

○ When fossil fuels are burned, they emit more than just CO_2:

- Coal-fired power stations alone account for **80% of harmful mercury emissions** in India.
- The great majority of **dust (particle pollution)** is released in our air due to fossil fuel burning.

➢ **Industrial Emission: Particulate matter 2.5 and 10, NO_2, SO_2, and CO** are key pollutants that are emitted from industries that use **coal and wood as their primary energy source** for the production of their goods.

➢ **Agriculture & Allied Sources**: The farming industry is one of the sources of pollution due to **ammonia** produced from livestock manure and fertilisers, which blows into the cities.

○ Further, **stubble burning** is also one of the major sources of air pollution in **Northern India**, especially in winters.

➢ **Household Pollution:** Use of toxic products also called **Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs), inadequate ventilation, uneven temperature, and humidity level** can cause indoor air pollution.

○ The use of **wood stoves or space heaters** is capable of increasing the humidity level which can directly affect the health of a person in no time.

- Carcinogens and toxins from indoor air pollution cause **17% of deaths** from **lung cancer.**

➢ **Climate Change Induced Wildfire:** The average temperature is increasing day by day due to the greenhouse effect. As a result, the **rise in temperature affects the rate of wildfires.**

○ **Climate change** is not just increasing wildfire but also spiking **air pollution**. It causes **increased PM2.5** in the air which collides with other harmful substances like **chemical gas** and pollen creating **smog.**

What are the Issues Associated with Air Pollution in India?

➢ **Rural Negligence:** Air pollution in India is generally **perceived as a problem of the cities and by the cities.** Quite predictably, solutions have been designed for the cities. **Initiatives to alleviate poor air quality remain conspicuously absent in rural areas.**

○ **96% Air quality monitoring stations are within the city** boundaries and do not cover surrounding rural hamlets.

○ And within the arena of cities, tier-2 and tier-3 cities receive less attention, For instance, India has **804 manual monitoring stations under the National Ambient Monitoring Programme (NAMP)** and **274 real-time monitoring stations (CAAQMS).**

- Most of these are disproportionately located in tier-1 cities and a few are in tier-2 cities.
- Also, many **State Pollution Control Boards** and **Pollution Control Committees are falling short in meeting their statutory mandate.**

➢ **Toll on Indian Economy:** A World Bank report titled '**Diagnostic Assessment of Select Environmental Challenges in India"** highlighted that the **annual cost of air pollution,** specifically pollution from particulate matter (burning of fossil fuels) **amounts to 3% of the GDP of the country,** outdoor air pollution accounting for 1.7% and indoor air pollution for 1.3%.

○ Therefore, it is clear that air pollution takes its toll on the Indian economy to a great extent.

➢ **Health Hazard:** The **Air Quality Life Index** shows that **particulate matter pollution reduces life expectancy more than communicable diseases.**

○ Inhaling air induced with pollutants due to the burning of natural gas and fossil fuel **reduces the heart's ability to pump enough oxygen**. Hence causing one to suffer from **various respiratory and heart illnesses.**

- Furthermore, the **nitrogen oxides are responsible for acid rain** that increases the **chances of skin cancer.**
- Not only humans but **animals too are affected by air pollution, it** adversely affects their **lungs, triggers asthma** and causes **chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.**

➢ **Disproportionate Impact on Women:** Research has established that women are disproportionately affected by household air pollution caused by **burning biomass.**

○ Air pollution is also linked to **higher rates of miscarriages, pregnancy complications and stillbirths, affecting women's reproductive health.**

➢ **Ecological Imbalance**: Air pollution can **damage crops and trees in a variety of ways**. Ground-level ozone can lead to **reductions in agricultural productivity and commercial forest yields**, reduced growth and survivability of tree seedlings, and **increased plant susceptibility to disease,** pests and other environmental stresses (such as harsh weather).

What are Initiatives taken by India for Controlling Air Pollution?

➢ **System of Air Quality and Weather Forecasting and Research (SAFAR) Portal**

➢ **Graded Response Action Plan (for Delhi)**

➢ **Turbo Happy Seeder** and **Microbe Pusa (for reducing stubble burning)**

➢ **National Air Quality Monitoring Programme (NAMP)**

What Should be the Way Forward?

➢ **Link Zero Emissions with Human Rights:** Air pollution needs to be recognized more as a **human right issue rather than merely as an environmental challenge**, and should be linked with the **mission of net zero emission.** (by 2070)

   ○ The **UN General Assembly (UNGA)** has also passed a resolution recognizing the **right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as a human right.**

➢ **Green-Transition Finance:** There is a need to c**reate a financial architecture that can mobilise private finance for clean-air solutions in India.** Green sectors such as **clean energy and e-mobility** offer tangible solutions to improve air quality.

   ○ An **investment fund linked with Finance** with a **dedicated green focus could play an instrumental role in catalysing growth** and simultaneously **addressing the twin problems of air pollution and climate change.**

   ○ The procurement of **electric vehicles (EVs)** should be mandatory for vehicles for **at least central government use as of now.**

➢ **Carrot and Stick Approach in Industrial and Agricultural Sector: Niti Aayog** has suggested a **carrot-and-stick policy** towards air pollution adopted in many European countries.

   ○ Carrot and stick motivation is a motivational approach that involves offering a **"carrot" (a reward—for good behaviour)** and a **"stick" (a negative consequence for poor behaviour).**

➢ **Ready-Made Concrete for Construction:** Construction dust is a major contributor to pollutants in air in expanding cities. To deal with this situation, Niti Aayog has suggested the **use of ready-made concrete** that can minimise environmental impacts of building activities.

➢ **Decommissioning of Inefficient Power Plants: Older Power plants** primarily run on coal and **contribute heavily to air pollution**.

   ○ These plants should be decommissioned and replaced by **efficient super-thermal plants** or with **power generators** that are based on **renewable energy.**

➢ **Push to Roof-top Solar Panel Generators**: Increasing **solar power generation** is a critical measure that needs to be adopted in order to reduce air pollution.

   ○ Solar energy should be encouraged by the government so that rooftop solar panel power generators can be put into place.

   ○ It should be complemented with **simplification of rules, regulations and leasing policy for operations** and called for **power distribution reforms**.

➢ **Integrated Surveillance Platform:** India needs an integrated surveillance platform for health and exposure surveillance.

   ○ Population exposure surveillance via **biological and environmental monitoring** can inform **risk attributions of bad air quality**.

➢ **Reducing Emission, Securing Purse**: Recent **World Bank** report observed that a **30% reduction in particulate emissions by 2030** would save India 105 billion dollars in health-related costs.

   ○ India's **National Clean Air Strategy** aims to reduce emissions of particulate matter by as much as **30% by 2024.**

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Citizen-Centric Digital Revolution

This article is based on "G20 offers India a chance to be the architect of a new digital economy" which was published in Livemint on 03/11/2022. It talks about the need for citizen centricity in the Indian digital economy.

Tag: Governance, GS Paper-2, GS Paper-1, Population and Associated Issues, GS Paper - 3, Technology Missions, Government Policies & Interventions

   Digital infrastructure has emerged as an equally or arguably a more significant infrastructure **necessity of citizens**, as compared to the traditional infrastructure necessities such as power, water, and roads. The **Covid-19 pandemic** has not only shuffled the global order, but it has also provided an impetus to the ever-expanding digital infrastructure.

   The digital infrastructure has become indispensable to the functioning of a society and the quality of life of its citizens. With nearly **half a billion internet users in India** and a host of indigenous digital services that are expected **to transform the digital economy of India.**

   For a digital economy to succeed, it must provide **all citizens equal opportunity and access to critical services.** India needs to reflect on its strength i.e., an opportunity to lead the **creation of a framework for a citizen-centric digital economy.**

What is the Current State of Citizen Centricity in India's Digital Revolution?

➢ The **Government's Digital India programme** aims to provide high-speed internet connectivity across the length and breadth of the country. Furthermore, it aims to establish a variety of **digital services to facilitate citizens and improve governance.**

➢ Some of the transformative digital platforms under Digital India include

- **MyGov:** It has laid the robust foundation for **citizen engagement and participatory governance in the country** by providing a common digital platform, where **citizens can share their views on government programmes and schemes.**
- **Unified Payments Interface:** It is an **instant real-time payment system** developed by **National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI)** to facilitate inter-bank transactions through mobile phones.
  - In 2021, UPI processed around 39 billion transactions totalling USD 940 billion, **equivalent to 31% of India's GDP.**
- **Digital Locker (DigiLocker):** It is enabling **paperless governance by providing digital space** for users for their document verification and storage.
- **MeghRaj**: In order to utilise and harness the benefits of **Cloud Computing**, the Government has embarked upon an ambitious initiative – **GI Cloud, which has been named MeghRaj.**
  - The focus of this initiative is to **accelerate delivery of e-services in the country,** while optimising ICT spending of the Government.
- **SWAYAM Portal:** The education system is poised to be transformed by use of **SWAYAM**, providing more than **2,000 open courses**, and **SWAYAMPRABHA,** a group of **32 DTH TV channels** devoted to telecasting of high-quality educational programmes.

What are the Major Hurdles in Citizen-Centric Digitalisation in India?

- **Digitalisation Induced Centralisation**: As digital technology integrates governance and the central government holds most data, **centralisation can cause discord between the central and the state.**
  - It becomes more relevant when specific standards are prescribed by the Central government for data sharing as a **precondition to financial assistance.**
- **Digital Divide**: High level of **digital illiteracy is the biggest challenge and hindrance in the success of digital India programme** in adaptation of technologies. Also, India had a rank of **73 out of 120 countries for internet literacy.** (2021)
  - Also, **digital services are not available in local languages,** which is a major barrier to digital literacy.
- **Deceptive Service Strategies**: "Free" services are a myth in the digital world. Personalization is based on data. Despite its benefits for users, **Firms earn money by using the personal data** collected to ensure t**argeted advertising, cross-selling other products/services.**
  - Unless these services are regulated, fair digitalization would not be possible.

- **Disproportionate Digitalisation:** Between urban and rural India, there is a wide digital infrastructure divide, the **problem of funding is still not able to meet the cost of infrastructure creation in rural areas.**
  - Due to the **booming private telecom industry**, the competent private sector organisations **avoid building towers in rural areas as they are not commercially viable.**
    - Currently **over 25,000 villages remain deprived of mobile connectivity** because providing mobile connectivity in such locations is not commercially viable.
- **Dominance of Big Tech**: Big tech companies acquire competitors to buy consumer loyalty instead of earning it. They leverage their market power in one line of business to gain monopolies in others, **locking consumers into their ecosystem of products and services.**

What Should be the Way Forward?

- **Exploring Emerging Technologies**: There is a need to **integrate governance with block chain technologies** that will consolidate the digital revolution in India and **increase transparency and decentralisation of information.**
  - Also, the **expansion of Quantum Technology and internet of things in a regulated manner** will open new opportunities for India to have a **real-time based economy.**
- **Integrated Digital Environment: Our regulatory systems** need to be able to understand the **evolving risks of data privacy** and guide firms in placing appropriate safeguards.
  - Regulations should create a **competitive environment for the digital market** and a good cushion should be provided so that **incumbents should not be apprehensive of failing** (as more startups fail in this industry than succeed).
- **Bottom-Up Digitalisation: Common Services Centres (CSCs)** can be revitalised at panchayat level as digital access points for delivering **e-services to citizens**, that will **improve transparency, accountability, and efficiency** in the delivery of services by acting as an intermediary between rural citizens and the government.
- **Cooperative and Competitive Digital Federalism**: **States in India vary in their levels of e-readiness**, this aspect must be considered when implementing eGovernance reforms across the country.
  - At the same time, there are several successful projects running in the country currently, but very few are on a national scale. **Successful models**

need to be replicated and upscaled throughout the country.

➢ **Innovation-Security Coexistence:** Co-creation and **co-ownership of a digital world** in which innovation and security coexist is imperative. In order to achieve this, **the tech industry and regulators/government bodies would need to meaningfully cooperate**, as well as harmonise their regulatory approaches to see the "big picture" together.

　○ And through the country's **G20 presidency, India could become the architect of this redesigned digital economy,** so that **when the world thinks digital, it thinks India.**

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Over-the-Top Challenge

This article is based on "The over-the-top debate ends here" which was published in Financial Express on 01/11/2022. It talks about the regulation of OTT platforms in India and related issues.

Tag: Indian Economy, GS Paper-3, Industrial Growth, IT & Computers, GS Paper-2, Government Policies & Interventions

Watching Movies and TV shows has always been in the form of theater and television. But now-a-days the **improved technology has made movie watching more convenient through online streaming or Over-The-Top (OTT) services.**

Over-the-top (OTT) video streaming accounted for 46% of the overall growth in Indian media and entertainment industry from **2017 to 2022**.

However, there has been a raging debate between **telcos** and **OTT providers.** The telcos allege that **OTTs are taking a 'free ride' on their infrastructure** and should pay an access charge. Therefore, there is a need to take adequate steps in this direction for smooth functioning of the **emerging media and entertainment industry.**

What are OTT platforms?

➢ OTT platforms are **audio and video hosting and streaming services** which started out as content hosting platforms, but **soon branched out into the production and release of short movies, feature films, documentaries and web-series** themselves.

　○ Examples: **Netflix, Hotstar, Amazon Prime Hulu, Pluto TV**, and many more.

➢ These platforms offer a range of content and **use artificial intelligence to suggest users the content** they are likely to view based on their past viewership on the platform.

➢ India is currently the **world's fastest growing OTT market** and is all set to emerge as the **world's sixth largest by 2024.**

What are the Factors Responsible for Growth of OTT in India?

➢ **Urbanization and Westernization**: **Migration to big cities** and cultural changes in media consumption have made customized interfaces of OTT more attractive to users.

➢ **Access to Digital Services**: **High-speed mobile internet** at affordable prices, doubling of internet users, **increased adoption of digital payments**, have given OTTs a competitive edge.

➢ **Democratization of Media:** The OTT industry benefits a number of small content producers and artists in India, who have mastered their craft.

　○ It also helps in accessing regional films around the country as well as globally.

➢ **Convenience:** Limited Advertisements, Pause & Play options, **flexibility to stream movies anywhere any time (**e.g. **while traveling**) have combined to **fuel OTT industry's eye-catching growth in India.**

How OTT Platforms are Regulated in India?

➢ The Indian government announced new rules to regulate the **Over-the-top (OTT)** service providers and digital content providers in India.

　○ The new rules are called **Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.**

　　● As per the new rules OTT platforms will have to self-classify the content into five age-based categories: **U (Universal), U/A 7 years, U/A 13 years, U/A 16 years, and A (Adult).**

　　● The rules also lay down a **soft-touch self-regulatory architecture** with a **Code of Ethics** and three-tier grievance redressal mechanism for OTT platforms.

　　　■ Every publisher should appoint a **Grievance Officer based in India** for receiving and redressing grievances in 15 days.

➢ But there is currently **no rule or authority in regulating pre-screen content on OTT platforms**. However, the government has the powers to issue directives to block certain information to be in public access, under **Section 69A of the IT Act, 2000.**

What are the Issues Associated with OTT Platforms in India?

➢ **Lack of Direct Regulation**: There is **no separate legislation or body for regulation of OTT platforms.** They are **only governed by the Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeITy)**.

➢ **Threat of Cybercrime:** In the process of subscribing to an OTT platform, people share their confidential information like bank details, **credit card access,** which has the **potential to be misused and lead to cybercrime.**

➢ **Effect on Telecom Revenue Stream**: For voice calls and SMS messages, OTT platforms like Whatsapp and Telegram use the network infrastructure provided by telecom service providers like **Airtel and Jio.**

  ❍ **Telecom Service Providers (TSPs)** allege that these features **negatively affect their revenue streams (voice calls, SMS).**

➢ **Risk to Moral Fabric of Society**: Critics have always pointed out that **the content on these platforms contains obscenity and vulgarity, which is negatively affecting the youth.**

  ❍ Due to the lack of censorship, content on OTT platforms can **disrupt social harmony** and the **moral fabric of society.**

What Should be the Way Forward?

➢ **Deploying Unbiased Regulatory Body**: Considering the present situation, **there is a need for an unbiased regulatory body** to regulate the contents on OTT platforms.

  ❍ The government should deploy **strict guidelines for production of content** on OTT and **"light-touch regulations" for OTT communication services like WhatsApp, Signal and Telegram**, keeping consumer interest and cyber fraud issues in mind.

➢ **Maintaining Quality, Promoting Equality:** The **Ministry of Information and Broadcasting** should ensure the quality of digital content being produced in OTT platforms, **put the people's sentiments first,** and **promote new talent and social content.**

➢ **Viewers' Responsibility:** It is essential to **ensure that kids at home do not access the OTT content** until a strict accessibility and regulatory policy is in place with the purpose of limiting access to underage content.

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Global Energy Equity

Tag: International Relations, GS Paper - 2, Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests, GS Paper - 3, Solar Energy, Renewable Energy, Energy Security.

In the **run-up to the Climate Change Conference (COP26)**, last year in **Glasgow**, several developed countries had declared their intention to reach **net-zero emissions by 2050**. These declarations did not square with the requirements of "**keeping 1.5°C alive**".

Four-fifths of the global carbon budget has already been exhausted. **Developed countries** are **responsible for more than half** of global **CO_2 emission.** But **global energy poverty is concentrated in developing countries.**

Also, the **average per capita energy use** of the richest 20 countries is **85 times higher** than that of the 20 poorest countries.

In this background, **COP27** affords a critical moment to acknowledge and address the concerns surrounding **energy access and curb energy inequality.**

What is Energy Poverty?

➢ According to the **World Economic Forum**, Energy Poverty is the lack of access to sustainable modern energy services.

  ❍ It can be found in all conditions where **there is a lack of adequate, affordable, reliable, quality, safe and environmentally sound energy** services to support development.

➢ The **International Energy Agency (IEA)** estimates that around **2 billion people** worldwide experience **energy poverty.**

How does Energy Inequality Relate to the Global Order?

➢ Energy inequality burdens the global south disproportionately.

➢ Poor and vulnerable communities in the **energy-importing countries of the global South suffer the most.**

  ❍ Almost **90 million people in Asia and Africa**, who gained access to electricity recently, cannot afford to pay their energy bills.

  ❍ The reality of global inequality was acutely evident during the **COVID-19** pandemic. Several countries in **Africa, Asia and Latin America** are facing severe **agricultural and industrial slowdowns** in the post-pandemic period.

➢ At a time when the language of **energy poverty and security is re-entering the northern vocabulary,** it is time **to call out the hypocrisy of the advice on fossil use and import of fuel given by the North** to some of the world's poorest regions.

What is Energy Hypocrisy of Global North?

➢ **Commitment to Decarbonization**: 30 years after acknowledging the problem of **anthropogenic global warming** and committing in the **United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change(UNFCCC)**, to take the lead in **climate change mitigation,** the level of **decarbonisation in the global North has not matched the expectations.**

  ❍ In the **United States alone, 81% of primary energy is from fossil fuels**.

○ Additionally, in **2022**, even **coal consumption in the U.S. and the EU** is estimated to increase by **3% and 7%,** respectively.

➤ **Europe's Accusation**: As part of the current global order, Europe accused India of "funding war" in the name of **acquiring oil from Russia** during the **Russia-Ukraine war**.

○ **Europe's Energy Consumption**: In **Europe,** fossil fuels constitute **76% of the energy consumption** (coal, oil, and natural gas contribute **11%, 31%, and 34% respectively**).

● The **Nord Stream 1 pipeline supplies European Union** states with about 35% of all the gas they import from Russia.

○ **Bottom Line**: In response to the accusation, the **Government of India** responded in the following manner:

● If European states manage energy deals in a way that has an impact on their economy, **that freedom or choice should exist for other countries as well.**

● India is working to **get the best deal for its citizens** amid intense volatility in global energy markets **and "no political messaging should be attached to this.**

What are the Challenges Related to Energy Security of India?

➤ **High Dependence on Imports**: With its **growing dependency on imported oil**, India's energy security is under severe strain, and the current **disrupted global supply chain** is compounding the problem.

➤ **Delayed Domestic Production:** Coal, oil, and natural gas are the most important sources of energy in India. A major reason for inadequate domestic supply is delays related to **regulatory and environmental clearances**(**Mining of coal** is most affected by this).

➤ **Affordability Concern:** India ranks **low in affordability of petrol,** notwithstanding the claims of high subsidies to oil.

○ High prices of petroleum products directly **contribute to higher retail inflation.**

● Diesel prices account for **60-70% of the freight cost in India.** Higher cost of freight contributes to **price rise for products in every sector.**

What Should be the Way Forward?

➤ **Shifting the Focus Towards Renewable Energy Sources**: Energy generated from **renewable sources** is **cleaner, greener and more sustainable.**

○ In addition to contributing to low-carbon development strategies, renewable energy projects can create **employment opportunities** for India's workforce.

➤ **Energy Awareness**: It is important to organise energy campaigns that promote green energy and to raise **awareness of efficient energy consumption** at the lowest possible level.

➤ **Translating Goals into Implementable Action**: To achieve the **sustainable development goals** like **zero hunger, zero malnutrition, zero poverty, and universal well-being,** energy security will be crucial.

○ To properly implement energy sustainability, **technology options for effective utilisation of energy resources** should be considered.

○ Also, there is a need to set up a **monitoring mechanism at the local level** to **oversee implementation of policies in true spirit.**

➤ **Towards Global Energy Equity:** The question of inequality in energy access should be raised squarely at the centre of all discussion in COP27. As the strapline for **COP27** (**"Together for Implementation"**) suggests working together with burden sharing and **differentiated but significant responsibilities according to respective capabilities of different countries.**

○ **Global intergovernmental organisation** should be established dedicated to just energy transition, energy access and energy justice to move towards **energy equity.**

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Gender Equity and Uniform Civil Code

This article is based on "The Uniform Civil Code " which was published in The Hindu on 07/11/2022. It talks about the constitutionality of Uniform Civil Code in India and related issues.

Tag: Indian Polity, GS Paper-2, Fundamental Rights, Directive Principles of State Policy, Issues Related to Women

The **Preamble of the Indian Constitution** states that **India is a Secular Democratic Republic** and thereby it means that the **State does not endorse any specific religion**. A secular State is one which shall not discriminate against anyone on the ground of religion.

The Indian Constitution also contains articles mandating **equality** **and non-discrimination** on the **grounds of sex (Articles 14-18)**. However, several laws exist that apparently violate these principles and continue to be there especially in **personal laws** of certain **communities** which contain provisions that are deemed to be **highly discriminatory against women.**

Women, who make up nearly a **half of India**, continue to demand for a **gender just code** to enjoy equality and justice irrespective of the community to which they belong. However, the ideal of **Uniform Civil Code(UCC)** is yet to be achieved in India.

Since the **Uniform Civil Code was a politically sensitive issue**, the founding fathers of the Constitution arrived at a compromise by placing it under **Article 44** as a **directive principle of state policy.**

As India strives for **gender equality,** a close examination of the UCC for the country is necessary.

What is Uniform Civil Code?

➢ **Article 44** of the **Directive Principles of the State Policy (DPSP)** states that it is the duty of the State to secure **Uniform Civil Code (UCC)** for the citizens throughout the country.

➢ It mainly aims to replace **Personal Laws** based on the scriptures and customs of each major religious community in India with a common set of rules governing every citizen.

➢ "**Uniform**" in UCC signifies:
  ○ Uniformity of laws **between communities.**
  ○ Uniformity of laws **within communities** ensuring equalities between the rights of men and women.

What are the Efforts Towards UCC in India?

➢ **Special Marriage Act, 1954:** The **Special Marriage Act of 1954** provides for **civil marriage for any citizen irrespective of religion**, thus, permitting any Indian to have their marriage outside the boundaries of any religious personal law.

➢ **Shah Bano Case 1985:** In this case, **Shah Bano** was refused her claim for maintenance. The **Supreme Court** ruled in her favour under **Section 125 of Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC),** which applied to all citizens the order for maintenance of wives, children and parents.
  ○ The Supreme Court further **recommended that the long pending Uniform Civil Code should be finally enacted.**

➢ The **Supreme Court** also called on the government to implement the UCC in the **1995 Sarla Mudgal judgement** as well as in the **Paulo Coutinho vs Maria Luiza Valentina Pereira case (2019).**

What are the Arguments in Favour of UCC?

➢ **Accommodating the Aspirations of the Youth:** As the world transitions into the digital age, the **social attitude and aspiration of the young** population is shaping by u**niversal and global principles of equality, humanity and modernity.**

  ○ Thus, the e**nactment of Uniform Civil Code will help in utilising their full potential** towards nation building.

➢ **Support National Integration:** The Constitution guarantees all citizens equal treatment in courts of law whether it is criminal laws or other civil laws (except Personal Laws).
  ○ Thus, the implementation of Uniform Civil Code will grant equal set of personal laws to all, resulting in the **end of politicization of issues of the discrimination or concessions** or on the **other hand exceptional benefits appreciated by a specific community on the basis of their specific religious personal laws.**

➢ **The Rise Above the Patriarchal Mindset:** The existing personal laws of most religions are based upon the **upper-class patriarchal notions of the society.** Thus, the codification and implementation of the Uniform Civil Code will **destroy the sanctity of the patriarchal orthodox**.
  ○ Thus, the Uniform Civil Code will **promote gender equality** and will bring both **men and women at par.**

➢ **Convenient for Judicial Process: T**here exist many personal laws, including **Hindu Code, Sharia Law, etc.** The presence of so many laws leads to **confusion, complexity, and inconsistencies** in the adjudication of personal matters, sometimes resulting in **delayed or incomplete justice.**
  ○ UCC will help the judiciary deliver justice efficiently and within a **reasonable timeframe.**

What are the Arguments Against UCC?

➢ **21st Law Commission Report** : The **Law Commission of India** has opined that a Uniform Civil Code (UCC) is neither necessary nor desirable to reconcile conflicts in personal/family laws.
  ○ It stated that **many countries are now moving towards recognition of difference**, and the mere existence of difference **does not imply discrimination, but is indicative of a robust democracy**.
  ○ Therefore, the **Commission has suggested amendments to existing family laws** to tackle discrimination and inequality in personal laws, rather than do away with differences between them altogether.

➢ **Against Cultural Diversity India**: Practical difficulties due to **diversity in India,** it is difficult to come up with a uniform set of rules for personal issues like marriage due to the tremendous diverse culture in India across the **religions, sects, castes, states, etc.**

➢ **Encroachment on Religious Freedom**: **Articles 25 to 28 of Indian Constitution** provide the **Right to**

Freedom of religion. The Uniform Civil Code is viewed as a **threat to religious freedom(Article 25)** by many communities, especially the minority communities.

○ According to them, the **Uniform Civil Code will neglect their traditions and impose rules** which will be mainly influenced by the **majority religious communities.**

➢ **Against the Indigenous Rights of Tribes**: The **Naga Community** has claimed that the implementation of UCC would bring about clear trouble for their **culture and dignity.**

○ It can potentially cause **social disorder,** as the **personal and social life of the tribes are quite distinct from the rest of the people in the country.**

Conclusion

The **goal of a UCC should ideally be reached in a piecemeal manner through a brick-by-brick approach** rather than an omnibus approach. A **just code is far more important than a uniform code.**

There is a need to consider **social adaptability of UCC** while forming a **blueprint for a uniform civil code.** Whether a single law is framed for all religions or reforms are made to our personal laws, **they should be based on gender justice and ensure that the principle of equality enshrined in our Constitution remains intact.**

The bottom line is that the government and society need to build trust in order to proceed towards a **Uniform Civil Society that respects human rights and promotes gender equality,** that holds more importance than a Uniform Civil Code.

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Solar Energy and India's Net-Zero Target

This article is based on "Solar energy can help India achieve net zero " which was published in Hindustan Times on 07/11/2022. It discusses how solar energy can help India achieve its Net-Zero target.

Tag: Indian Economy, GS Paper-3, Solar Energy, Renewable Energy, Infrastructure, GS Paper-2, Government Policies & Interventions

The world is on the cusp of a **Solar Revolution**. Not only is solar the world's **most abundant and clean energy source**, with its widespread acceptance, it has become the common energy imperative to drive **international climate action**.

Many countries are in line to solar acceptance, with India leading the way, **giving it the scale and affordability that global climate action asks for.** Solar energy is playing a key role not **only in the developing world to tackle**

energy access and energy security, but also in developed countries **to facilitate energy transition**.

Despite technological superiority over other energy technologies, solar energy is facing an important challenge as the **global photovoltaic (PV) manufacturing supply chain** is **concentrated in a handful of countries**, which resulted in **recent price surges** because of the choking of **existing limited supply chains.**

How can Solar Energy Facilitate Development in India?

➢ **Job Generation:** The Solar Sector has immense potential to create new jobs, **1 GW of Solar manufacturing facility generates approximately 4000 direct and indirect jobs.**

○ In addition solar deployment, operation and maintenance can create additional recurring jobs in the sector.

➢ **Environmental Development:** India's energy demands are largely fulfilled by **non-renewable sources of energy.**

○ The **scarcity of these fossil resources** stresses the need for renewable energy sources. Abundance of solar energy can fulfil India's **clean energy** demands.

➢ **Energy Security:** India being a **developing economy** needs proper electricity for industrial growth and agriculture.

○ For achieving **self-sufficiency and minimal cost in power generation,** assured regular supply, solar energy can play a vital role.

➢ **Social development:** The problem of power cuts and unavailability of electricity, especially in rural areas, leads to **improper human development.**

○ The use of **solar energy can enable social development** in even the most remote areas of India.

What are the Challenges Related to Solar Energy in India?

➢ **High Dependency on Imports**: India still is largely dependent on foreign countries like China for **solar modules**.

○ **Backward integration in the solar value chain is absent** as India has no capacity for manufacturing solar wafers and polysilicon.

● In 2021-22, India imported nearly **USD 76.62 billion worth of solar cells and modules from China alone**, accounting for **78.6% of India's total imports that year.**

➢ **Land Scarcity:** Solar projects that are **ground-mounted require** a vast area for installation. **Per capita land availability in India is very low,** and land is a scarce resource.

❍ Installing solar cells near substations may have to compete with other land-based necessities for a small area of land.

➢ **Losses in Cost and T&D (Transmission and Distribution)**: Solar energy is also having problems with **cost competitiveness** and competing against other energy generation technologies.

❍ The cost of **T&D losses is approximately 40%,** making generation through solar energy sources highly **unfeasible.**

➢ **No Solar Waste Management Policy:** Despite ambitious solar installation targets, India does not have a policy for managing its **solar waste**. Solar waste consists of discarded solar panels. It is predicted to grow by **4 to 5 times** within the next ten years.

➢ **Acceptability Concern**: Despite the fact that solar energy production techniques have been improvised in India, **it has not yet been commercialised.**

❍ Topographically and climatically, **sun rays are not uniformly available at any particular place throughout the year**, and people (particularly **farmers**), have not yet been educated about its advantages and benefits.

➢ **Low Cost to Benefit Ratio**: Despite significant growth in the installed solar capacity, th**e contribution of solar energy to the country's power generation has not grown at the same pace.**

❍ In 2019-20, for instance, solar power contributed **only 3.6% (50 billion units)** of India's total power generation of 1390 BU.

> **What are the Related Government Schemes to Enhance Solar Energy Production in India?**
> ➢ **International Solar Alliance**
> ➢ **National Solar Mission**
> ➢ **Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan (PM-KUSUM)**
> ➢ **One Sun, One World, One Grid (OSOWOG)**

What Should be the Way Forward?

➢ **Solar Self Reliance**: India needs to **cultivate a strong domestic solar energy market supporting the vision of** **Atmanirbhar Bharat**.

❍ The best way to support the development of solar PV manufacturing projects is direct support to **upstream actors,** for instance through **Design and Production Linked Incentives**.

➢ **Bio Solar Cells:** India can also explore the use of **bio solar cells** by generating electricity from **microbial photosynthetic and respiration processes**.

➢ **Towards Global Solar Manufacturing Hub**: Given its **geographical location and abundance of resources**, India is nicely positioned to become a global hub of solar manufacturing.

❍ **India's solar story** will continue to provide important lessons for other developing countries that are looking to **transition to clean energy**.

● With 110 members and signatory countries, the India led **International Solar Alliance is making efforts to bring about this change**.

❍ **Technology sharing and finance** could also become important aspects of ISA in the future, allowing for meaningful cooperation between countries in the solar energy sector.

➢ **Catalysing Net Zero Target**: **Solar Mini Grids** and **community rooftop solar installations** can enable the solar shift in India. **Localised Solar energy** is the one which could become the cornerstone of the **net-zero India that we are aiming to see in 2070.**

➢ **Reducing T&D Loss**: India can encourage **R&D activities to find more innovative solutions to cut down T&D loss** by establishing research centres and funding gives some relief to solar energy players.

❍ In addition, India can collaborate with world-renowned universities for the upgradation of substations and T&D lines to **reduce T&D losses**.

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Destigmatising Disability

This article is based on "On disabled persons, Supreme Court gives a welcome order with problematic observations" which was published in Indian Express on 08/11/2022. It talks about the issues related to persons with disabilities in India and the Supreme Court's position on the issue.

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

The **Constitution of India** ensures **equality, freedom, justice and dignity** of all individuals including **persons with disabilities** and mandates an inclusive society for all. However, measuring disability is a complex phenomenon as the **definitions of** **disability** **vary at international and national level** due to the various approaches.

India is a signatory to **The Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**. However, in 2020, a **United Nations** report indicated that **44%** of the indicators are not followed by the countries in the **Asia-Pacific** region.

Narrowing it to India, the **access to justice and the right to be inclusive** is a challenge because India has **stringent requirements for being classified as "disabled"**, which needs to be addressed.

How does the United Nations view Disability?

➢ The Preamble to the **Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)** -2006, adopted by the **United Nations**, describes disability by stating that:

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

➢ The expression of the UN reflects a **shift from a medical model to a social model** of disability.

What are the Constitutional Provisions Regarding Disability in India?

➢ **Fundamental Right to Equality Dignity**: **Equality and Dignity** of the individual is a fundamental notion behind all the fundamental rights guaranteed under **part III** of the **Constitution of India, tha**t protects the rights of the disabled.

➢ **Directive Principle of State Policy: Article 41** of Constitution of India declares that the State shall make effective provision for securing the **right to work,** to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and **disability**.

○ **Article 46** lays down an obligation on the State to promote with **special care the educational and economic interests of the weaker sections** of the people, and **protect them from social injustice** and all forms of exploitation.

➢ **Legislative Power**: Indian Constitution while distributing legislative powers between the Centre and States kept the **disability issue in the State list.**

What are the Challenges Faced by a Person with Disability in India?

➢ **Denying Recognition, Depriving Development:** The **complexity of the recognition of a disability** not only makes us in India lag in the international scales of **human development**, but **also makes a person hesitant to approach the judiciary and the bureaucracy to determine their access to health care and welfare**.

○ Added to this, a layer of certification deprives **People with disabilities (PwD),** especially mental disabilities, **to reach the corridors of welfare** as they are **dropped at the entrance.**

➢ **Lack of Infrastructural Access**: Lack of infrastructure like **sanitation, stair-case, ramps, canteens and recreation rooms, separate wash rooms, garden areas,** faced by the disabled.

○ Also, for **young talented disabled persons** who live in rural areas and employment opportunities are situated in the urban areas. They sometimes have to **leave the job as conveyance facilities are not up to the mark.**

● **According to the National Statistical Office (NSO) report,** disability is more prevalent in rural areas than in urban areas.

➢ **Treated with Sympathy Rather than Empathy**: Insensitivity among **peers, and teachers, access to inclusive education**, **institutionalisation of rights** are some of the major concerns often raised by the PwD candidates which are somehow **acknowledged but not acted upon.** As a result, people with disabilities encounter **discrimination from various walks of life.**

➢ **Lack of Timely Survey and Policy Delay:** The **Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016** mandates to conduct survey of **school going children every five years for identifying children with disabilities**, ascertaining their special needs and the extent to which these are being met.

○ Since the primary survey has not been conducted yet, the **policy formation for the implementation of the act** remains in the pipeline.

➢ **Lack of Inclusive Education:** During the lockdown imposed due to **Covid-19,** many children with disabilities **faced the wrath of a pandemic.** With public participation rounding to zero, they **struggled to find scribes, sign language interpreters to continue their studies**.

○ Even though the school curriculum was hastily shifted to online mode, **inclusive learning took a back seat**. Hence, adding more pain to the existing problems.

➢ **Lack of Job Security:** Unemployment being one of major factors as at such times **disabled persons are the ones who are scapegoats** in getting fired at tenure of recessions.

○ They are **first to be discharged from their services** when cost cutting methods are adopted by the companies.

What Should be the Way Forward?

➢ **Transparency in Budgeting and Planning:** Disability Response Planning should be the part of budgeting by all ministries.

○ Accordingly, the policy paradigm of governance should be **proactive in addressing the needs of people** in disadvantaged situations and **providing them equal opportunities in every sphere of development.**

➢ **Recognising Indian Sign Language :** Making ISL (**Indian Sign Language**) interpreters should be mandatory in all official communication where disabled are involved.

❍ Also , **incentivising companies who are accessible to disabled in physical design** as well as **Information and Communications Technology (ICT)**.

➢ **Universal Design for Learning**: It is necessary to take into account all the features of the **neuropsychological, cognitive and emotional profile of the child** when planning and delivering a lesson in schools.

❍ **UNESCO** has suggested in its report on **Understanding the impact of Covid-19 on learners** with disabilities that:

● The use of a **"Universal Design for Learning"** approach could be a way to address these situations, to develop learning materials and **increase the inclusiveness of distance learning.**

➢ **Tackling Social Disability:** Disability is considered to be a **social stigma** in society which needs to be improvised. **Disability is nothing but impairment in the mind of people** rather than being impaired by limbs.

❍ The problem lies when the **society sees differently abled people as a liability or a charity case**.

❍ The entire concept of the 'special kids' term used for us is flawed. **No person with a disability wants to be treated exceptionally**. All we need is **sensitisation towards their basic needs.**

❍ Therefore, their **right should be recognised as a mandatory step** and not at the **goodwill of others.**

➢ **Adopting Transdisciplinary Approach:** We need to create awareness and capacity building at various levels.

❍ **Awareness at family level, Sensitization at the community level and capacity of government frontline workers and professionals.**

● India was able to fight **polio and leprosy** because we were able to bring a transdisciplinary approach. **Such a transdisciplinary model is required to tackle stigma related to disability.**

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Fostering Rural Growth

This article is based on "Fostering rural India's growth" which was published in Hindustan Times on 09/11/2022. It talks about issues related to Rural India and major developmental roadblocks.

Tag: Governance, GS Paper-2, Government Policies & Interventions, GS Paper-3, Inclusive Growth, Growth & Development

India is predominantly a **rural country** with t**wo third population** and **70% workforce residing in rural areas**. **Rural economy** constitutes **46% of national income.** Thus growth and development of rural economy and population are a key to overall growth and inclusive development of the country.

Contrary to the common perception about **predominance of agriculture in the rural economy,** about **two third of rural income is now generated in non agricultural activities.**

However, the impressive growth of the non-agricultural sector in rural India has not brought significant **employment gains** or reduction in disparity in worker productivity. This underlines the **need for a new approach** to direct the transition of the rural economy.

What are the Constitutional Provisions Related to Rural Development in India?

➢ **Directive Principle of State Policy**: **Article 40** of the Constitution which enshrines one of the **Directive Principles of State Policy** lays down that the **State shall take steps to organise village panchayats** and endow them with such powers and authority as may be necessary to enable them to function as units of self-government.

➢ **73ʳᵈ Constitutional Amendment Act**: Panchayati Raj Institutions was constitutionalized through the **73ʳᵈ Constitutional Amendment Act, 1992** to build **democracy at the grass roots level** and was entrusted with the **task of rural development in the country.**

➢ **Eleventh Schedule of the Constitution:** It places as many as **29 functions** within the purview of the Panchayati Raj bodies including **agricultural extension, land improvement, implementation of land reforms etc.**

❍ Panchayats are empowered to **prepare plans for economic development and social justice** in respect of subjects as devolved by law to the various levels of Panchayats **including the subjects as illustrated in Eleventh Schedule.**

What are the Major Issues Related to Rural Spheres in India?

➢ **Lack of Educational Enlightenment:** The school education in rural India is mostly dependent on **Government and Government aided schools**. For rural India, the journey of education is not easy.

❍ Students from rural schools either have **no access or lack of access to advanced learning tools** such as **digital learning, computer education, and non-academic books**.

❍ Also, families from rural areas are always in **financial burden** due to various reasons. For them **education for their children becomes the second priority**, that's why they are **forced to participate in income generation** activity for their survival.

➤ **Lack of Effective Administration**: The biggest problem in the way of successful rural development in India is a **lack of transparency in the administration system.**

   ○ In these areas, corruption thrives due to a lack of political awareness. The **accountability mismatch** between **special purpose agencies** and **panchayats** also contributes to this problem.

➤ **Rural-Urban Water Conflict:** Cities are rapidly expanding as a result of rapid urbanisation, and a large influx of migrants from rural areas has increased the **per capita use of water in cities**, which is causing **water to be transferred from rural reservoirs** to urban areas to meet the deficit and posing a risk to rural areas in meeting their water needs.

➤ **Rural Inflation:** The inflationary pressure in the economy is **impacting rural India more than its urban counterpart.**

   ○ Data from the **National Statistical Office (NSO)** reveals that **consumer price inflation (CPI) has grown at a higher rate in the rural areas** compared with the urban areas.

   ○ For instance, the **inflation rate for cereals** in rural areas increased to **10.08%** during August 2022, compared to **8.65%** for urban areas.

➤ **Unplanned Migration**: **Unplanned rural to urban migration**, particularly in search of better economic opportunities, is putting severe pressure on urban amenities and forcing a large number of low wage migrants from rural areas to live in unhygienic and deprived conditions.

   ○ It is also leading to **feminisation of agriculture** in India.

➤ **Lack of Fiscal Autonomy:** Panchayats have very little fiscal autonomy. **Grama Panchayats have only limited powers with regard to setting tax rates** and revenue base since broad parameters for such exercises are fixed by the state government.

   ○ Resultantly, the **extent of vertical gap and volume of conditional grants are much higher**.

      ● It reduces the **fiscal autonomy** of the Grama **Panchayats** and allows only f**eeble scope for freedom of borrowing and development.**

What are the Recent Government Initiatives Related to Rural Empowerment?

➤ **Deen Dayal Upadhayay Grameen Kaushalya Yojana**

➤ **Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana**

➤ **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana**

➤ **Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act**

➤ **National Rural Livelihood Mission**

➤ **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana**

What Should be the Way Forward?

➤ **Empowered Women- Empowered Nation**: Rural women are **torchbearers for social, economic and environment transformation for the 'New India'**.

   ○ Empowering and mainstreaming rural women workforce in agriculture can bring a paradigm shift towards rural economic growth.

      ● It will enhance **food and nutrition security** and also a win-win strategy for achieving **Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.**

➤ **Farm-Factory Approach:** Incentives must be provided to **food processing industries to set up in rural areas**, and processing must be linked to transportation through efficient value chains.

   ○ In addition, **contract farming and direct farm-factory connections** offer considerable potential for **rural income security.**

➤ **Digitised Rural Space**: Digitalisation in rural space and **Local e-governance** will be critical to making **650,000 villages and 800 million citizens self-sufficient.**

   ○ Through active collaboration between the public and private sectors, a rural knowledge platform can be built that will bring **cutting-edge technology deeper into villages and create jobs.**

      ● **Artificial Intelligence** can be used to facilitate smart and precise agriculture.

➤ **Towards Fiscal Prudence:** Panchayats should have more **fiscal autonomy to manage their finances and developmental affairs**. Also, to finance the rural development models, **'Atmanirbhar Village bonds'** could be issued to **raise resources.**

➤ **Embracing Kalam's Vision:** Former President **APJ Abdul Kalam** had proposed the concept of **Provision of Urban Amenities to Rural Areas (PURA)** whose objective goes beyond the mere creation of economic infrastructure and employment opportunities in rural areas.

   ○ To further this paradigm, **access to good housing, including housing amenities, should become a priority.**

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Formalizing the Informal Sector

This article is based on "A cover for the informal sector" which was published in Financial Express on 11/11/2022. It talks about the Informal Sector in India and related issues.

Tag: Indian Economy, GS Paper-3, Employment, Government Policies & Interventions, Inclusive Growth, Management of Social Sector/Services, Growth & Development.

Predominance of **Informal Sector** has become one of the central features of the labor market scenario in India. While the **informal sector** contributes around **half of the GDP** of the country, its dominance in the employment front is such that more than **90% of the total workforce** has been engaged in the informal economy.

Government has made several efforts to formalize the economy. Introduction of the **Goods and Services Tax (GST)**, **Digital Payment Systems** and enrollment of informal sector workers on numerous government portals like **e-Shram** are all meant to encourage the formalization of the economy.

The above-mentioned efforts are based on the "**fiscal perspective**" of formalization. Despite this, the formal sector is more productive than the informal sector, and **formal workers have access to social security benefits.** It is therefore necessary to consider multidimensional aspects of formalizing Indian Informal workforce.

What is the Difference Between Formal and Informal Sector?

➢ **Formal Sector:** The formal sector has a formal contract between **employer and employee** and a pre-defined work conditions. This sector consist of **organized group of people** working in the same environment and is legally and socially aware their rights.

➢ **Informal Sector:** Informal sector consists of all **unincorporated private enterprises owned by individuals or households** engaged in the sale and production of **goods and services** operated on a **proprietary or partnership basis**.

What are the Recent Government Initiatives Related to the Informal Sector?

➢ **E-Shram Portal**
➢ **Labour Codes**
➢ **Pradhan Mantri Shram Yogi Maan-dhan**
➢ **PM SVAnidhi: Micro Credit Scheme for Street Vendors**
➢ **Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi**
➢ **World Bank Support to India's Informal Working Class**

What is the Scenario of Informal Workers According to E-Shram Portal?

➢ **Social and Economic Analysis:** Over 94% of 27.69 crore informal sector workers registered on the e-Shram portal **have a monthly income of Rs 10,000 or below.**

○ Over **74%** of the enrolled workforce belongs to **Scheduled Castes (SC), Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Other Backward Classes (OBC).**

➢ **Age-wise Analysis**: 61.72% of the registered workers on the portal are of the age from **18 years to 40 years**, while **22.12% are of the age from 40 years to 50 years.**

➢ **Gender Wise Analysis: 52.81% of registered workers are female** and 47.19 % are male.

➢ **Occupation Wise: Agriculture is at the top with 52.11% of enrolments** done by those related to the farm sector followed by **domestic and household workers** at 9.93% and **construction** workers at 9.13%.

What are the Challenges Related to Informal Sector in India?

➢ **Gender Disparity:** Women constitute the majority **of informal participants,** but they **receive the least benefits and** are characterized by **lower paying, income volatility, and the lack of a robust social safety net.**

○ It has also significantly hindered women's participation in the workforce. The **Periodic Labour Force Survey** data shows that the **female labor force participation rate dropped to 21.2% in March 2021** compared to 21.9% one year prior.

➢ **Economic Exploitation:** The informal employment by definition has no written contract, paid leave and hence pay **no minimum wages, nor pay attention to conditions of work.**

○ The **Code on Wages 2019 is still** limited in scope and efficacy for the informal sector. Casual workers are typically the least covered because:

● **If a state government refuses to include a specific job** within a particular sector, it is not covered under the **minimum wages criteria.**

➢ **Lack of Taxation**: As the businesses of the informal economy are not directly regulated, they usually **avoid one or more taxes by hiding incomes** and expenses from the regulatory framework.

○ This poses a challenge for the government as a **major chunk of the economy remains out of the tax net.**

➢ **No Separate Statistics:** There are no official statistics available representing the true state of the economy, which **makes it difficult for the government to make policies** regarding the informal sector in particular and the whole economy in general.

➢ **No Fixed Working Hours:** Long working hours **beyond labor standards** are common in India in the unorganized sector. In Particular, there is no fixed working time in the **agriculture sector** because there are **no laws which can act as a guideline** for farm workers' working conditions.

➢ **Labyrinth of Poverty**: Unorganized sector workers had a much greater rate of **poverty** in the organized sector than their counterparts.

○ **Low nutrition intake,** because of low wages, health difficulties, presents risks to their lives.

➢ **Worst Hit at the Time of Disaster**: Many **natural disasters** such as **floods, drought, famine, earthquakes** and so on have devastating effects on the informal sectors.

○ This problem is exacerbated by the **lack of social security.**

What Should be the Way Forward?

➢ **Simplifying Registration Processes**: There is a need to ease rules for informal business conduct that will **bring informal enterprises** and their workers into the fold of **formality.**

○ A **Self-help group** initiative that **organizes informal workers** can contribute to the creation of self-reliance and address issues related to their working conditions.

➢ **Comprehensive Data of Informal Sector**: It is necessary to build a **comprehensive statistical base** on various dimensions of the informal economy as an integral part of the National Statistical System, **enabling policy makers to make informed decisions.**

➢ **Vending Rights:** Vending rights on space to the vendors will increase their accountability on their space and its surrounding environment.

○ **License to the vendors (space and time specific)** against payment of charges is also expected to **enhance the revenue of Local Authorities**.

● A part of this revenue **could be used for provision of drinking water facilities, toilets and waste collection** at public places

➢ **Grievance Redressal Mechanism**: Grievances from informal workers should be heard and redressed periodically through an **accessible and officially monitored mechanism.**

➢ **Gender Pay Parity: Directive Principles of State Polic**y directs **of equal pay for equal work (Article 39(d));** women agricultural laborers usually receive lower wages than their male counterparts.

○ The Government should strengthen and enforce this DPSP through **relevant legislative backing.**

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Governor and State Legislature

This article is based on "Should Chief Ministers have a say in the appointment of Governors?" which was published in Financial Express on 11/11/2022. It talks about the Informal Sector in India and related issues.

Tag: Governance, GS Paper-2, Constitutional Bodies, Role of Governor

The post of **Governor of a State** is of immense importance in our political system. The Governor acts as a **bridge between the Centre and the States.** It is considered as one of the **pivotal parts of cooperative governance that our democracy is proud of.**

But for a long time, the **role, powers, and discretion of the Governor's office** in multiple states have been hotly debated in the **political, constitutional, and legal realms.**

Governor-State friction has recently flared up. The **power spat** between the Delhi government and the Lieutenant Governor over the **appointment of bureaucrats** and deadlock between the **Tamil Nadu government and Governor's assent to the National Eligibility cum Entrance Test (NEET) exemption Bill** are instances of a tussle.

To advance towards **cooperative federalism,** this topic needs closer scrutiny, considering different aspects from **detached perspectives.**

How did the Post of Governor Come About?

➢ Before Independence:

○ Since **1858,** when India was administered by the **British Crown**. Provincial Governors were **agents of the crown,** functioning under the supervision of the **Governor-General.**

○ With the **Government of India Act, 1935**, the governor was now to act in accordance with the advice of Ministers of a province's legislature, but **retained special responsibilities** and discretionary power.

➢ **Post-Independence:**

○ The post of the governor was extensively debated in the **Constituent Assembly**, which decided to **retain it while re-orienting its role** from the British era.

○ Currently, under the parliamentary and cabinet systems of governance adopted by India, the **Governor was envisaged to be the Constitutional Head of a State**.

What are Constitutional Provisions Related to the Governor?

➢ **Article 153** says that there shall be a Governor for each State. One person can be appointed as Governor for two or more States.

○ The **Governor is appointed by the President** by warrant under his hand and seal and holds office under the pleasure of the **President (Article 155 and 156).**

➢ **Article 161** states that the governor has the power to grant **pardons, reprieves**, etc.

○ The **Supreme Court** stated that the sovereign power of a Governor to pardon a prisoner is actually **exercised in consensus with the State government** and not the Governor on his own.

- The **advice of the government binds the Head of the State**.

➤ **Article 163** states that there is a **council of ministers** headed by the Chief Minister to aid and advise the Governor in the exercise of his functions, **except some conditions for discretion**.

○ Discretionary powers include:

- **Appointment of a chief minister when no party has a clear majority in the state legislative assembly**
- In times of no-confidence motions
- **In case of failure of constitutional machinery in the State(Article 356)**

➤ **Article 200** gives power to the Governor to **give assent, withholds assent, or reserves the bill for the consideration of the Presiden**t passed by the Legislative Assembly.

➤ **Article 361** states that the Governor of a State, **shall not be answerable to any court for the exercise and performance of the powers** and duties.

What Are the Issues Related to the Post of Governor in India?

➤ **Affiliation Based Appointment**: Politicians and former bureaucrats **affiliated with the ruling party** have been appointed in several instances as Governors.

○ This has led to questions about the **post's impartiality and non-partisanship.** Also, the convention of consulting the Chief Minister before appointing the Governor is often ignored.

➤ **From Centre's Representative to Centre's Agent:** Critics refer to governors as the '**agents of the Centre'** today.

○ In 2001, the **National Commission to Review the Working of the Constitution,** held that the Govern**or owes his appointment and his continuation to the Union.** Apprehensions exist that he will follow instructions given by the Union Council of Ministers.

- This goes **against the constitutionally mandated neutral seat** and has resulted in bias.

➤ **Misuse of Discretionary Powers:** The discretionary powers of governor have been misused in many instances.

○ For instance, it has been argued by critics that the Governor's recommendation for President's Rule in a state has not always been based on **'objective material', but on political whim or fancy.**

➤ **Removal of Governors:** Having **no written grounds** or procedures for removing governors, several times governors were removed arbitrarily.

➤ **No Clear Distinction Between Constitutional and Statutory Role**: The constitutional mandate to act on advice of the council of ministers is not clearly distinguished from the **statutory authority as chancellor**, resulting in many conflicts between the governor and the state government.

○ For instance, there was a recent appointment of a **Vice Chancellor in a university by the Kerala Governor**, bypassing government nominations.

➤ **Constitutional Loopholes**: In the **Constitution**, there are **no guidelines for exercise of the governor's powers in-case of appointment of Chief Minister** or dissolving the Assembly.

○ Also, there is no limit set for how long a Governor can withhold assent to a Bill.

○ As a result, **friction between the governor and concerned state governments is likely to arise.**

What are Reforms Proposed by Various Commissions?

➤ **Punchhi Commission:** The impeachment procedure for the **President** can be adapted to impeach governors as well.

○ The **Convention of Governors serving as Chancellors** of Universities and holding other statutory positions should be abolished because it **opens their office to controversies and public criticism.**

➤ **2ⁿᵈ Administrative Reforms Commission:** The **Inter-State Council** should formulate guidelines on how governors should exercise discretionary power.

➤ **Rajamannar Committee:** The **Rajamannar Committee** emphasised that the governor of the state should not consider himself as an agent of the centre but play his role as the constitutional head of the State.

➤ **Sarkaria Commission:** In its report, the Commission recommended that **Article 356 should only be used in very rare instances** when it is impossible to prevent a breakdown of constitutional machinery within a State.

➤ **Venkatachaliah Commission:** It recommended allowing Governors to complete their five-year terms ordinarily.

○ The **central government should consult with the Chief Minister** before removing them before the end of their term.

What Should be the Way Forward?

➤ **Reimagining Appointment Procedure:** It would be appropriate to devise a committee comprising the **Prime Minister, the Home Minister, the Speaker of**

the Lok Sabha and the Chief Minister of the State concerned to select the Governor.

➢ **Neutral Constitutional Stand**: The Governor is supposed to be an **independent, non-partisan person**. He/she is supposed to **keep the interests of the State in mind** and also ensure that the link between the State and the Centre is maintained in a smooth way.

➢ **Framing a Code of Conduct:** There is a need to devise a 'Code of Conduct' that should define certain '**norms and principles'** that should **guide the governor's discretion** and constitutional mandate.

  ○ Discretion must be a **choice dictated by reason,** actuated by good faith and tempered by caution.

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Preserving the Precious- Groundwater

This article is based on "Preserving the precious: On ground water use" which was published in The Hindu on 14/11/2022. It talks about the depleting ground water resource in India and related challenges.

Tag: Biodiversity & Environment, GS Paper-3, Conservation, Environmental Pollution & Degradation, Irrigation

India is home to **17% of the world's population**, but only holds **4% of the world's freshwater resources.** Not only is **water scarce in India**, but the **extraction of groundwater has been on the rise for decades.**

Since the 1960s, the government's support for the "**Green revolution"** to ensure food security has **increased the demand for groundwater for agriculture.**

Groundwater pollution and the effects of **climate change**, including erratic rainfall in the drier areas, put **additional stress on groundwater resources**. Overexploitation rates pose threats to **livelihoods, food security,** climate-driven migration and human development.

It is therefore necessary to devise a mechanism for **replenishing aquifers** and ensuring **sustainable use of groundwater.**

What is the Current State of Groundwater Extraction in India?

➢ India is the **world's largest user of groundwater,** where groundwater contributes to more than **60% of the country's irrigation resources.**

  ○ This over-extraction of groundwater is non-renewable since **recharge rates are less than extraction rates** and replenishing this resource can take thousands of years.

➢ The **2022 assessment of the Ministry of Water Resources** suggests that **groundwater extraction is the lowest since 2004**.

  ○ A decrease in groundwater extraction may indicate better water management, however, the report called the **National Compilation on Dynamic Ground Water Resources of India** also says that the **improvement is only "marginal".**

What are the Current Government Initiatives Related to Groundwater Management?
➢ **National Water Policy, 2012**
➢ **Pradhan Mantri Krishi Sinchayee Yojana**
➢ **Jal Shakti Abhiyan- Catch the Rain Campaign**
➢ **Atal Bhujal Yojana**

What are the Issues Related to Groundwater Depletion?

➢ **Unregulated Pumping**: Several states affected by depletion of groundwater provide **free or heavily subsidised power (**including **solar pumps)** for pumping groundwater for irrigated **agriculture**. This enables overexploitation and depletion of scarce groundwater resources.

➢ **Preference to Water-intensive Crops**: The **minimum support price for wheat and rice** creates **highly skewed incentive structures** in favour of wheat and paddy, which are water intensive crops and depend heavily on ground water for their growth. This makes **groundwater a heavenly resource for their farming.**

➢ **Lack of Ground-Water Regulation**: The government of India regulates groundwater exploitation in water-stressed states through **"notification" of highly overexploited blocks**.

  ○ However**, only about 14% of the overexploited blocks in the country are currently notified.**

➢ **Rising Population and Urbanisation**: Rising **population and urbanisation** has increased demand for water for **domestic and industrial needs.** limited surface water resources lead to the **over-exploitation of groundwater resources.**

➢ **Climate Change – Sinking Water Table**: **Draughts, flash floods, and disrupted monsoon events** are recent examples of climate change events that are placing pressure on India's groundwater resources.

  ○ And since, **wells, ponds and tanks are drying up** as groundwater resources come under increasing pressure due to **over-reliance and unsustainable consumption.** This has escalated the **water crisis.**

What Should be the Way Forward?

➢ **River Catchment Management:** Creation of **green corridors, mapping of channels for potential recharge zones** to store floodwater and **artificial groundwater**

recharge structures in the urban areas (where groundwater is five-six metres below the surface), will subsequently contribute to reducing groundwater depletion.

   ❍ The use of **dysfunctional bore wells for recharging groundwater** with clean rainwater will also be a good option.

➤ **Surface Waterbody Management**: Restoration of **ponds, lakes** and other traditional water resource structures should be an **integral part of the development projects of urban and rural areas,** and it will substantially develop groundwater potential.

➤ **Wastewater Management: Dual sewage system for grey water and black water** and promoting **reuse of the recycled water** in agriculture and horticulture should be promoted.

   ❍ Industries should also be encouraged to increase **water use efficiency, effluent treatment and zero liquid discharge.**

➤ **Water Efficient Agriculture:** Agriculture alone consumes more than **80% of groundwater in the Ganga basin**.

   ❍ Water-efficient irrigation systems like **drip and sprinkler irrigation** should be made mandatory. Also, balanced farming of water-extensive crops and **use of treated wastewater for irrigation should be adopted.**

➤ **Groundwater Security Plan:** Sustainable groundwater management including initiating suitable action for **compulsory rainwater harvesting** should be taken by different state governments.

   ❍ Further, the Central Government should promote the concept of **conjunctive use of surface and groundwate**r based on the **village/gram panchayat level groundwater security plan** prepared in a scientific manner through participation of communities/stakeholders.

➤ **Social Regulation of Groundwater:** A **Participatory groundwater management approach** should be followed to **empower communities in a defined aquifer area** by providing **governance rights, community awareness, capacity development, and knowledge** and motivation for **social regulation of ground water** and the implementation of coordinated actions.

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Mainstreaming Tribals in India

This editorial is based on "What are the hurdles to building schools for tribals?" which was published in The Hindu on 15/11/2022. It talks about the challenges related to mainstreaming Tribals in India.

Tag: Social Justice, GS Paper-2, Issues Related to SCs & STs, Government Policies & Interventions

Tribes represent an important element in Indian society which is integrated with the **culture mosaic of our civilization.** Tribals make up **8.6%** of India's population.

Ethnic tribal sub nationalism poses a serious challenge to the progress of the tribal communities. Leaving the tribal in their own state will **deepen the developmental divide** between the mainstream and the tribals.

On the other hand, tribal lands are rapidly acquired for **new mining and infrastructure projects.** Often, these policies are perceived as **subjugating tribal people and causing the degradation of the resources** upon which they depended.

It is therefore necessary to approach this issue from a **multi prolonged perspective** and find solutions to prevail in a **socially just Indian society.**

What are the Constitutional Provisions Related to Tribes?

➤ The Constitution of India does not endeavour to **define the term 'tribe'**, however, the term **Scheduled Tribe'** was inserted in the Constitution through **Article 342.**

➤ The **Fifth Schedule** of the Constitution provides for the setting up a Tribes' Advisory Council in each of the States having Scheduled Areas.

➤ Educational & Cultural Provision:

   ❍ **Article 15(4):** Special provisions for advancement of other backward classes (it includes STs)

   ❍ **Article 29:** Protection of **Interests of Minorities** (it includes STs)

   ❍ **Article 46:** The State shall promote, with **special care, the educational and economic interests** of the weaker sections of the people, and in particular, of the Scheduled **Castes, and the** Scheduled Tribes, and shall protect them from social injustice and all forms of exploitation.

   ❍ **Article 350**: Right to conserve distinct Language, Script or Culture.

➤ **Political Provision:**

   ❍ **Article 330:** Reservation of seats for STs in Lok Sabha,

   ❍ **Article 332:** Reservation of seats for STs in State Legislatures

   ❍ **Article 243**: Reservation of seats in Panchayats.

➤ **Administrative Provision:**

   ❍ **Article 275:** It provides for the grant of special funds by the **Union Government to the State Government** for promoting the welfare of Scheduled Tribes and providing them with a better administration.

What are the Recent Government Initiatives Related to Tribes?

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

What are the Challenges Faced by Tribes in India?

➢ **Educational Inequality:** There are many factors contributing to the **difficulty of getting to schools in tribal areas,** such as geographic conditions, sparse populations, and remoteness of tribal villages.

  ○ Even if school facilities are available, **early participation of children into work, abject poverty, lack of supportive education culture at home** has resulted in high rate of early dropout.

  ○ Also, **migrant populations are mostly from tribal communities**. Children tend to accompany their parents, **drop out of school** and are forced into hard labour at work sites.

➢ **Declining Status of Women** : Degradation of nature, particularly through the destruction of forests and shrinking resources, **threatens the health and nutrition of tribal women**, who are considered the last ones to be fed.

  ○ Also, with the opening of tribal belts to mining and industries, **tribal women are subject to the ruthless operations** to earn, **resulting in their commodification.**

➢ **Mass Displacement**: **Power projects, industries and large dams** are now setting up in the tribal inhabited areas. Acquisition of tribal land by the government for these projects led to **large scale displacement of the tribal population and** inadequate rehabilitation exacerbated the problem.

  ○ Tribes of **Chotanagpur region, Odisha, West Bengal, and Madhya Pradesh** are the hardest hit.

  ○ **Development of national parks and wildlife sanctuaries** and eco-parks are negatively impacting their habitat and displace their living leaving them with mental health issues.

    • In 2014, around **450 families from indigenous Baiga and Gond** communities were evicted from **Kanha Tiger Reserve.**

➢ **Indigenous Identity Erosion:** Traditional tribal institutions and laws are increasingly clashing with modern institutions, causing tribals to be concerned about maintaining their identity.

  ○ Another cause for concern is the **disappearance of tribal dialects and languages.**

➢ **Social and Mental Issues:** Tribal people experience social exclusion as a result of **discrimination at the social and institutional levels,** which leads to isolation, and consequently, **self-exclusion.**

  ○ For tribal people, **development activity feels like an intrusion into their home.** As a result, they have to migrate to other regions, and it causes psychological problems for them as they are not able to adjust well to other **lifestyles and values.**

➢ **Problems of Health and Nutrition:** Due to **economic backwardness** and **insecure livelihood**, tribal populations are prone to diseases like **malaria, cholera, diarrhoea, and jaundice.**

  ○ It is also plagued by problems associated with malnutrition, such as **iron deficiency and anaemia, high infant mortality** rates, etc.

What Should be the Way Forward?

➢ **Viewing Tribals as Forest Entrepreneurs:** There is a need to **revitalise Forest Development Corporations (FDCs)** to structure commercialization of forests and engage tribal communities as **"Forest Entrepreneurs"** in exploration, extraction, and enhancement of minor **forest-based products.**

➢ **Educational and Digital Equality:** Eklavya Model School Initiative should be tasked with **digitalization of education**, extending **digital infrastructure to tribal regions** so no area in India remains digitally isolated.

➢ **Tribal Women Empowerment**: Effective measures should be taken to improve the lot of tribal women through:

  ○ Taking the lead in **Joint Forest Management and Panchayati Raj Institutions**

  ○ **Legal and administrative measures to check the practice of victimising women along with a campaign for social awareness and rehabilitation of victimised women,** preferably through **women's organisations.**

➢ **Mainstreaming Tribes**: Non-tribal population should be educated about the **capability and dignity of tribal people** to ensure the **unity and integrity of the country and the spirit of brotherhood.**

➢ **Vocal For Local, Local to Global:** The government can collaborate with tribal groups for **identifying and collecting medicinal plants from the wild** and also cultivate suitable species for their self-consumption as well as for **sale in their local states.**

  ○ **Indian pharmaceutical exports** can also benefit from it.

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Curbing the Menace of Terrorism

This editorial is based on "How we can further our efforts in curbing terror financing" which was published in Indian Express on 16/11/2022. It talks about the Terror financing and challenges related to it.

Tag: Internal Security, GS Paper - 3, Challenges to Internal Security Through Communication Networks, Government Policies & Interventions, India and its Neighbourhood

Terrorism looms large over the world today. **Amorphous terror groups, newer cyber linked terrorism, increasing lone wolf attacks** are all adding to the ominous threats of violence. India has borne the **brunt of terrorism** and has witnessed serious **loss of life and property** in senseless violent explosions in large cities in the past few decades.

As the world shrinks with technological and communication changes, **terrorists, weapons and funds** are also able to move across national boundaries easily. **International co-operation between law enforcement authorities** in this area is a sine qua non for combating such cross border challenges.

What is India Doing to Combat the Threat of Terrorism?

➤ In the wake of the **26/11 terrorist attack**. In January 2009, the **National Investigation Agency** was established to deal with terrorist crimes.

➤ In India, the **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Act** is the primary anti-terrorism law.

➤ To gather information related to security, the **National Intelligence Grid (NATGRID)** has been established.

➤ An operational hub has been created for the **National Security Guard** to ensure a rapid response to terrorist attacks.

What are the International Initiatives to Counter Terrorism?
➤ **United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (UNOCT)**
➤ **Terrorism Prevention Branch (TPB) of United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)**
➤ **Financial Action Task Force (FATF)**
➤ **India's Annual Resolution on Counter-Terror**

What are the Challenges Related to Terrorism in India?

➤ **No Global Definition of Terrorism:** There are no universally accepted definitions for what constitutes terrorism, so it is **hard to classify a particular activity as a terrorist activity,** which provides terrorists with an edge and allows some countries to remain silent and veto any action at global institutions.

➤ **Expanding Web of Terrorism:** The **Internet** provides a relatively **unregulated and unrestricted place** where terrorists can craft and disseminate propaganda through seemingly limitless numbers of **websites and social media platforms**, tailoring their pitch so as to **target thousands of potential new recruits** to join their organization and **further their cause.**

➤ **Terror Financing:** According to the **International Monetary Fund (IMF)** and **World Bank,** criminals launder an estimated two to nearly four trillion dollars each year. Fund movements by terrorists have also been concealed through **charities and alternative remittance systems.**

  ○ It **taints the international financial system** and **erodes public trust** in the integrity of the system.

  ○ Furthermore, the **lack of regulation of crypto currency** could make it a breeding ground for terrorists.

➤ **Bio-Terrorism:** **Biotechnology** is boon for mankind but it is also a **substantial threat** because **small amounts of biotic agents can be effortlessly hidden, transported and discharged into vulnerable populations.**

  ○ Tropical agricultural pathogens or pests can also be used as **anticrop agents** to **hamper food security** worldwide.

➤ **Cyber Attack:** The world is moving towards a **digital village** where **data is the new oil,** terrorists use unlawful attacks in a country's cyberspace, networks and **use the information to intimidate or coerce a government** or its people in furtherance of **political or social objectives.**

What Should be the Way Forward?

➤ **Developing Cyber-Defence Mechanism:** A holistic approach for dealing with cyber terrorism is necessary, whether it's **conducting cyber search operations** or **extending the scope of countermeasures against cyber attacks**.

  ○ A clear public posture on **cyber defence** will boost citizen confidence in the government thus enabling a more **engaging, stable and secure cyber ecosystem.**

➤ **Global Counter Terrorism Measures:** Terrorism in all its forms and manifestations should be condemned. The international community should r**ise above political difference**s and defeat the challenge of terrorism.

- ○ **Accepting a universal definition of terrorism** and **global sanctions against nations** that are state sponsors of terrorism can pave a way for peaceful world order.

➢ **Capacity Building**: India should move in the direction of **specialisation of military to fight cross-border terrorism ensuring** co-ordination among the **intelligence and security agencies** to check infiltration of terror activity.

- ○ Also in order to have speedy trials, India also needs to enhance its **National Criminal Justice system** and **implement strict legal protocol against terrorism**

➢ **Curbing Terror Financing**: There is a need to strengthen laws that require banks to perform **due diligence on their customers** and to **report suspicious transactions** to prevent terrorism. Also, India can move towards regulating cryptocurrency.

- ○ India to host "**No Money for Terror**" **Conference** in Delhi would be a step in this direction.

➢ **Reducing Youth's Exposure to Terrorism:** Given the important role of educational establishments in promoting the values of **non-violence,** peaceful coexistence and tolerance, **education must feature prominently in counter radicalization programs.**

- ○ Also, undertaking policies to tackle economic and social inequalities will help in **deterring disgruntled youth from being lured towards terrorism.**

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India's ASEAN Bonhomie

This editorial is based on "India's ASEAN challenge" which was published in Financial Express on 17/11/2022. It talks about Indo-ASEAN relations and challenges related to it.

Tag: International Relations, GS Paper-2, Bilateral Groupings & Agreements, Important International Institutions, Regional Groupings, Groupings & Agreements Involving India and/or Affecting India's Interests, Look East to Act East.

Against the backdrop o**f multi-dimensional developments and interventions in the Indo-Pacific region**, India's foreign policy underwent substantial changes in the past few decades.

Starting with the **Look East Policy in the 1990s**, India advanced its policy in 2014 as **Act East Policy** taking up its partnership with the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)** to a step further which provided an **opportunity for India to explore Southeast Asia.**

As there are several **geopolitical challenges that hinder smooth India-ASEAN transit,** it is critical to demonstrate how **India's Act East Policy fits into ASEAN's prospects** and overcoming the **challenges of India-ASEAN ties.**

What is the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN)?

➢ ASEAN, a **10-nation grouping**, is considered one of the most **influential groupings in Southeast Asia.**

- ○ It includes **Indonesia, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Brunei, the Philippines, Singapore, Cambodia, Malaysia and Myanmar.**

➢ ASEAN states are located at a **strategically important junction of the Indo-Pacific** which makes ASEAN a **focal point for both regional and global powers.**

What are the Areas of Cooperation Between India and ASEAN?

➢ **Economic Cooperation**: ASEAN is India's **4th largest trading partner**. India signed an **FTA (Free Trade Agreement) in goods in 2009** and an FTA in services and investments in 2014 with ASEAN.

- ○ ASEAN and India have also adopted a joint statement announcing the elevation of the existing **Strategic Partnership to Comprehensive Strategic Partnership.**

➢ **Peace and Security:** The two sides reaffirmed the importance of maintaining and promoting **peace, stability, maritime safety, and overflight freedom** in the Indo Pacific.

➢ **Financial Assistance:** India provides **financial assistance to the ASEAN nations** through various mechanisms like **ASEAN-India Cooperation Fund** and **ASEAN-India Green Fund.**

➢ **Connectivity:** India has been undertaking several connectivity projects like **India-Myanmar-Thailand Trilateral (IMT) Highway** and the **Kaladan Multimodal Project.**

➢ **India and ASEAN** countries recently gave a new vigour to their ties by establishing a comprehensive strategic partnership at the **19th ASEAN-India Summit** in **Cambodia.**

What are the Challenges Related to ASEAN?

➤ **Territorial Disputes: ASEAN member states** are enmeshed in **territorial disputes** with interested powers for a long time. For example, **China's claim to territories in the South China Sea** overlaps with competing claims by **Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, the Philippines and Vietnam.**

➤ **Indo-Pacific Rivalry:** For a long time, the **assumption of China as the primary economic partner** and the **US as the primary security guarantor** has been at the heart of the ASEAN balance.

   ○ Today, that **balance is falling apart** and the **Russia-Ukraine war has further aggravated this tension.** This sharpening of major power rivalry in the Indo-Pacific region is threatening the **underlying stability on which rested the regional growth** and prosperity.

➤ **Unstable Geoeconomics**: The geopolitical tension in the Indo-Pacific is **producing geoeconomic consequences** where issues of **trade and technology** cooperation as well as **supply chain resilience** is at peak.

   ○ And this is happening at a time when **ASEAN remains a divided organisation internally** on how to manage these challenges.

➤ **India-ASEAN Challenge:** Many bilateral deals with these nations are **yet to be finalised**, leading to the halting of various aspects of economic ties.

   ○ In spite of India's commitment to many connectivity projects, such as the **India-Myanmar-Thailand trilateral highway**, they have not been completed. By contrast, **China's Belt and Road Initiative** is gaining the trust of some ASEAN countries.

What Should be the Way Forward?

➤ **Building Resilient Supply Chain:** Current engagement in value chains between **ASEAN and India** is not substantial. **ASEAN and India can leverage the emerging scenario** and support each other to build new and **resilient supply chains.**

   ○ However, to explore this opportunity, ASEAN and India must **upgrade their logistics services** and strengthen the **transportation infrastructure.**

➤ **Maritime Security in Indo-Pacific:** The **maritime security** of the **Indo-Pacific region** is crucial for the protection of India's interests as well as those of ASEAN.

   ○ Both sides need to work towards ensuring **maximum utilisation of resources without harming the marine environment.** They need to adopt strong and responsible initiatives to harness the **potential of the ocean in a sustainable manner.**

   ○ Also **ASEAN should emphasise the principles of the UN Convention for the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)** to solve the disputes in the **South China Sea region.**

➤ **Regional Tourism:** India and ASEAN should also enhance **regional tourism** and **people-to-people connectivity** as they already have **civilisational and cultural influences** on each other.

➤ **Unfolding Act-East Policy:** Reciprocity and mutual understanding on common concerns will help both ASEAN and India to overcome some of the challenges**.**

   ○ Through coordination in the fields of **Digitalisation, Pharmaceuticals, Agriculture Education and Green Growth** will **unfold the potential of India's Act East Policy.**

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Revising India's Free Trade Agreements

This editorial is based on "Quest for transparency in FTA negotiations" which was published in The Hindu on 17/11/2022. It talks about the challenges in India's current foreign trade policy and suggests changes that can be made to the same.

Tag: Economy, GS Paper-3, Effect of Policies & Politics of Countries on India's Interests

India has been talking about **Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) with several partners** – both **bilateral and regional** – over the past two years in a **bid to boost export-oriented domestic manufacturing** with an ambitious export shipment target of **USD 450-500 billion by FY23.**

Exports from India reached **USD 418 billion in FY 2021-22**, surpassing their **pre-pandemic level** of **USD 331 billion** in **FY 2018-19.** Though achievements in trade are laudable, India still has much potential.

If we go by **India's Trade Portal estimates**, there is a huge difference in **India's exports potential and actual exports** in many sectors, especially **pharmaceuticals, gems and jewelry and chemicals.** Therefore, it is time to address sector-specific and market-specific problems so that we fully capitalize on exports across sectors.

What is a Free Trade Agreement (FTA)?

➤ FTA is an agreement between the **countries or regional blocks to reduce or eliminate trade barriers,** through mutual negotiations with a view to enhancing trade.

   ○ It includes **goods, services, investment, intellectual property, competition, government procurement** and other areas.

➤ This concept of free trade is the **opposite of trade protectionism** or **economic isolationism**.

➢ FTAs can be categorized as **Preferential Trade Agreement,** Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA), and **Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA).**

What is the Impact of FTA on the Global Economy?

➢ By blending **local production with foreign trade,** FTAs help boost growth in economies.
  ○ As **selected goods are produced by every country** at lower costs due to FTAs, international trade increases **production and consumption.**

➢ In addition to facilitating borderless trade, FTAs help diversify supply chains by making it easier for more businesses to **conduct business across borders.**

What is the State of India's Free Trade Agreements?

➢ India currently has **12 FTAs** and **India-UAE CEPA is the latest one.**

➢ After India opted out of the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)** in November 2019, the **15-member FTA grouping that includes Japan, China and Australia, FTAs went into cold storage for India.**

➢ But now the **bilateral free trade agreements of India are being negotiated** with the **United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom, Australia and Canada.**

➢ **Important Trade Agreements of India?**
  ○ **Comprehensive Economic Cooperation and Partnership Agreement (CECPA)**
  ○ **South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA)**
  ○ **Asia Pacific Trade Agreement (APTA)**
  ○ South Asia Preferential Trading Agreement (SAPTA)

What are the Major Issues Related to India's Foreign Trade Policy?

➢ **Lack of Transparency and Scrutiny**: India negotiates most FTAs **behind closed doors** with very little information about the objectives and processes followed and negligible scrutiny.
  ○ Furthermore, **no institutional mechanisms exist that enable the scrutiny of the actions** of the executive, **during and after the signing of the FTA**.

➢ **Negative Balance of Trade:** In the past decade, India signed FTAs with the **Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN),** the Republic of Korea, Japan, and Malaysia. But India remains in the **negative balance of trade** with countries **such as ASEAN and Japan despite the increase in exports.**

○ India has accounted for a trade deficit of **USD 15.95 billion in 2020-21 with ASEAN countries.** At the same time, the trade deficit with Japan **remained USD 6.49 billion in 20-21.**

➢ **High Dependence on Imports:** While India is **85% dependent on imports to meet its oil needs,** a domestic coal crisis is also forcing to tap the **overseas supplies of the dry fuel** for meeting the power demand.
  ○ Further, several developments in geopolitics that include the ongoing **Russia-Ukraine war** caused a **huge spike in global oil and commodity prices, and has disrupted the global supply chain.**

➢ **Misunderstanding Self-Reliance as Protectionism:** The **Atma Nirbhar Bharat Campaign** has exacerbated the view that India is increasingly becoming a protectionist **closed market economy.**

What Should be the Way Forward?

➢ **Towards Open and Competitive Economy**: The **trade policy framework** of India must be accompanied by economic reforms that result in an **open, competitive, and technologically advanced economy.**
  ○ Therefore, India must focus on **inclusion of entrepreneurs in global economic networks** that will also allow them to pursue **greater financial security.**

➢ **Strengthening MSME Sector:** With a contribution of about **29% to the GDP and 40% to international trad**e, MSMEs are the key players in achieving the ambitious export targets.
  ○ It is important for India to link **Special Economic Zones with the MSME sector** and incentivize small businesses.

➢ **Enhancing Domestic Base:** India needs to strengthen its domestic manufacturing base in **value-added products** like **engineering goods, electronic products, drugs and pharmaceuticals, textiles, and agriculture machinery**, that could be used to **boost exports**.

➢ **Infrastructural Evolution**: A robust infrastructure network - **warehouses, ports, testing labs, certification centers,** etc. will help Indian exporters compete in the global market.
  ○ It also needs to adopt modern trade practices that can be implemented through the **digitisation of export processes.** This will save **both time and cost.**

➢ **Scrutiny of FTAs**: The **Committee on Commerce** should be tasked with scrutinizing FTAs, discussing different aspects of agreements and negotiations, **thus ensuring executive accountability to the legislature.**

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Spotlighting Infrastructure Investments

This editorial is based on "The Infrastructure Imperative" which was published in Financial Express on 19/11/2022. It talks about the major challenges to strengthening India's infra sector and the measures that can be taken to overcome those issues.

Tag: Indian Economy, GS Paper-2, Government Policies & Interventions, GS Paper 3, Mobilisation of Resources, Government Budgeting, Fiscal Policy, Infrastructure

Infrastructure sector is a key driver for the Indian economy. The sector is highly responsible for propelling India's overall development and enjoys intense focus from the Government. Numerous initiatives have been taken to facilitate infrastructure projects across the country at centre as well as at state level.

But there are still several roadblocks to building class, state-of-the-art infrastructure across the sectors. India's road to sustainably higher growth and a competitive manufacturing sector will go through robust and reliable national infrastructure.

What is the Current Scenario of Infrastructure in India?

➤ **Infra-Deficit India:** India has the **second largest infrastructure deficit in the world (after Brazil)** as it has grown at a rapid pace of over 6% since the early 1990s without commensurate increase in supply.

  ○ As per the **World Bank's Financing India's Urban Infrastructure Needs** report, by 2036, 600 million people will be living in urban cities in India, representing 40% of the population.

    ● This is likely to put additional pressure on the already stretched urban infrastructure and services of Indian cities.

  ○ Only 5% of the infrastructure needs of Indian cities are currently being financed through private sources.

➤ **Significance of the Sector:**

  ○ Infrastructure sector acts as a **catalyst for India's economic growth** as it **drives the growth of the allied sectors** like townships, housing, built-up infrastructure and construction development projects.

  ○ Global investors have started to view **India as one of their top destinations for infrastructure projects**. India **offers a higher rate of return** on infrastructure projects, given its youth bulge, rise of the middle class, and a huge domestic market.

➤ **Related Initiatives:**

  ○ The government has launched the **National Infrastructure Pipeline (NIP)** for the period FY 2020-25 for **supporting development of infrastructure, urban infrastructure** being one of the key focus areas.

  ○ The Government also launched the ambitious **Gati Shakti scheme** with the aim of coordinated **planning and execution of infrastructure projects to bring down logistics costs.**

  ○ The **National Investment and Infrastructure Fund (NIIF)** is a government-backed entity established to provide long-term capital to the country's infrastructure sector. It was set up in December 2015 as a **Category-II Alternate Investment Fund.**

  ○ In November 2021, **India, Israel, the US, and the UAE (I2U2)** established a **new quadrilateral economic forum** to focus on **infrastructure development projects** in the region and strengthen bilateral cooperation.

  ○ In March 2021, the Parliament passed a bill to set up the **National Bank for Financing Infrastructure and Development (NaBFID)** to **fund infrastructure projects** in India.

What are the Related Challenges?

➤ India's **biggest challenge is the huge infrastructure financing gap**, which is estimated to be more than 5% of GDP.

➤ **Land acquisition, aggressive bidding** and **non-performing assets** are key challenges to infrastructure **PPPs (public-private partnerships)**.

➤ India is dealing with a **high level of stressed assets**, and there is a **need to restore credit growth for public sector banks** as fundamental to the future growth of the economy.

  ○ Stressed assets in banks combined with **little bank capital** could lead to additional and potentially crippling losses on these assets.

➤ Also, the **lack of stability of credit interest rates** poses a significant risk for investments in the sector.

  ○ The fact that **infrastructure investments in India are generally based on the expected return on USD** and **not on user charges** creates an imbalance and affects the total inflow of foreign infrastructure investments in the country.

Roadblocks in key sectors

HIGHWAYS
- Delays in land acquisition; lenders stop lending midway
- Tendering of projects to low-traffic entity
- Unclear exit policy for road developer; NHAI is a developer as well as the regulator which causes a conflict of interest in case of arbitration so there is a need for a clear distinction of roles for NHAI

PORTS
- Multiple changes in tariffs setup by the Tariff Authority for Major Ports make it difficult to evaluate the cost of projects
- Delays in tariff fixation

AIRPORTS
- Lack of consistency in tariff methodology and concession tariff framework
- Switching from single till tariff method to hybrid till creates difficulty in assessing the cost of projects
- Delays in the passage of tariff orders cause problems in the timely execution of projects

WIND
- Inconsistent policy at Central and State govt level
- Accelerated depreciation leads to non-viability
- State regulators do not honour renewable purchase obligation

TELECOM
- Lack of predictability
- Inconsistent policy and regulatory framework; govt refuses to honour PPAs signed earlier
- Aggressive bidding to some extent

POWER
- Coal block deallocation causing execution delays and losses to project developers
- New auction-based coal linkage approved by government in 2017, uncertainty remains regarding the validity of old contracts
- Inconsistency in the interpretation of PPA
- Inconsistency in Central & State regulation, for instance, the Central electricity Act allows open access, but State governments do not adhere to it causing the problem in execution
- Unstable financial health of State utility causes a delay in the payment cycle

GREENFIELD PROJECTS
- Land acquisition delay
- Nature of developers have been contractors which leads to low-cost bidding making the project unviable
- Bank loans are given out for 10/15/18 years but the interest reset clause poses a high risk on overall investment return evaluation, sometimes 8% interest rates are increased up to 14-15% rendering the project unviable

BROWNFIELD PROJECTS
- Government questions the validity of existing projects (eg, with rates of solar energy slashing, will the contracts entered on higher tariffs remain valid or not?)
- There is a strong need for the ability to have more credible infrastructure developers and partners

UNIFIED LOGISTICS INTERFACE PLATFORM (ULIP) IS DESIGNED TO ENHANCE EFFICIENCY AND REDUCE THE COST OF LOGISTICS BY CREATING A TRANSPARENT, ONE-WINDOW PLATFORM

What Measures can be taken to Strengthen the Infrastructure Sector?

➢ **Ensuring Consistency in Policy/Regulatory Framework:** There is a need for a better regulatory environment and consistency in the tendering process. **Lack of consistency and policy coherence** across different government departments should be **addressed as a priority.**
  - Between the government and the RBI, there needs to be a **holistic way to deal with the issue of stressed assets.** A dedicated policy needs to be formed across sectors for non-performing assets; **revamp of PSUs.**

➢ **Reasonable User Charges:** It is **necessary for augmenting infrastructure financing,** financial viability of infrastructure service providers, and for environmental and resource use sustainability.
  - User charges are crucial because in many areas across the country, partly **because of zero or very low user charges, there is over-use and wastage of the precious resources** (for instance, groundwater).
  - Besides the environmental sustainability and resource use efficiency that would emanate from reasonable user prices, this policy priority has **immense resource generation potential.**

➢ **Autonomous Regulation of Infrastructure:** As India and the world opens up more sectors to private participation, the private sector would essentially demand autonomous infrastructure regulation.
  - The world-wide trend is towards **multi-sectoral regulators** as the regulatory role is common across infrastructure sectors, and **such institutions build regulatory capacity, conserve resources** and **prevent regulatory capture.**

➢ **Asset Recycling (AR) and BAM:** The basic idea of **BAM (Brownfield Asset Monetisation)** is to **augment infrastructure resources through brownfield AR** for **accelerated greenfield investment** by freeing up funds tied up in de-risked brownfield public sector assets.
  - These **assets can be transferred to a trust (InvITs)** or a corporate structure (**TOT model**), which receive investment from institutional investors against a capital consideration (which captures value of future cash flows from these underlying assets).
  - India has a **large stock of brownfield assets across infrastructure sectors**.

➢ **Utilising Domestic Funds:** Domestic sources such as **India Pension Funds** which have been **lying dormant could give a big boost to the sector** if utilised efficiently.
  - India can emulate the practices in Canada, the Netherlands, Australia and the likes on e**fficient usage of domestic funds to push infrastructure development.**

➢ **Leveraging Global Leadership:** India will assume the **G20** presidency beginning December 2022. G20 countries, in their presidencies, have set the agenda for infrastructure, such as Roadmap to Infrastructure as an Asset class **(Argentina, 2018)**, Principles of Quality Infrastructure Investment **(Japan, 2019)**, InfraTech **(Saudi Arabia, 2020)**, and Financing Sustainable Infrastructure for Recovery **(Italy, 2021).**
  - **The Indian G20 presidency is an occasion for India to set the infrastructure agenda for itself and the world.**

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Towards Sustainable Urban Planning

This editorial is based on "What does the World Bank report say about India's cities?" which was published in The Indian Express on 08/07/2022. It talks about India's Urban Space and challenges related to it.

Tag: Governance, GS Paper-2, Urbanization, Separation of Powers, Local Self Governance, Government Policies & Interventions

India is one of the fastest growing economies in the world, and its **growth is propelled by its cities.** Studies have also shown that Indian cities are **likely to contribute to 70% of India's GDP by 2030.** According to the **World Bank**, India would need to invest **USD 840 billion over the next 15 years**, to meet the demands of its fast-growing urban population.

These findings are reflected in the exponential rate of **urbanisation** that the country is undergoing. While this is a turn towards great economic growth, it also comes with a **set of challenges with regards to liveability.** Delving deeper into those challenges reveal an inherent limitation within the framework of **urbanisation.**

Urbanisation is not a problem in itself, but **unsustainable and unplanned urbanisation is** bound to create socio-economic problems. **These problems need to be countered in a planned and scientific manner.**

How India Recognises Urban Space as a Development Entity?

➤ India's first pan-Indian urban vision was articulated in the 1980s with the creation of the **National Commission on Urbanisation (1988).**

➤ The Indian Constitution establishes a clear mandate for **Democratic Decentralization** (Municipality) in India's urban space through its **Directive Principles of State Policy** and **74th Amendment Act 1992.**

➤ Additionally, the **15th Finance Commission** report on local bodies emphasised the need to empower city governance structures financially.

> **What are the Recent Initiatives Related to Urban Development?**
> ➤ **Atal Mission for Urban Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT)**
> ➤ **Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana-Urban (PMAY-U)**
> ➤ **Climate Smart Cities Assessment Framework 2.0**
> ➤ **TULIP-The Urban Learning Internship Program**
> ➤ **Atmanirbhar Bharat Abhiyan (Self-Reliant India)**

What are the Major Challenges Related to India's Urban Space?

➤ **Lack of Efficient Transport:** People prefer to use **private transport more in the name of social status**. The dependency on cars has resulted in **overcrowding of roads, pollution, and the increase in travelling time** in cities.
　○ Also, the growing number of vehicles in Indian cities is viewed as the **essential driver of climate change** due to high dependence on combustible fuel.

➤ **Slums and Squatter Settlements:** Urban areas tend to have a **high cost of living** but most of the people who move from rural to urban areas are not in a condition to afford such living. This situation leads to the **growth of slums** as safe havens for migrants.
　○ According to the **World Bank,** the population living in slums in India was reported at **35.2 % of the total urban population.**

　○ Dharavi in Mumbai is considered the largest slum in Asia.

➤ **Degradation of Environmental Quality:** Urbanisation is one of the major causes of environmental degradation. The **congestion of people in limited spaces reduces the quality of air and contaminates water.**
　○ Destruction of **forests and agricultural land for the construction of buildings** and factories degrades the land quality.
　○ **Domestic waste, industrial effluents,** and other **wastes** that were directly channelized to the rivers, **degrade the water quality.**
　　● Also, **mountains of garbage outside the city** area have become the hallmark of any metropolitan city in India.

➤ **Sewerage Problems:** Rapid urbanisation leads to the **unplanned and haphazard growth of cities** and most of these cities are plagued with inefficient sewage facilities.
　○ Most cities do not have **proper arrangements for treating the sewage waste.** According to GOI almost **78%** of the sewage generated in India remains untreated and is disposed of in rivers, lakes, or sea.

➤ **Urban Heat Island:** Urban areas are characterised by dense concentrations of pavement, buildings, and other surfaces that **absorb and retain heat.**
　○ It increases **energy costs (e.g., for air conditioning), air pollution levels, and heat-related illness and mortality.**

➤ **Urban Flooding**: As a result of increasing land prices and limited land in city centres, new developments in Indian cities and towns are **occurring in low-lying areas, often encroaching on lakes, wetlands, and rivers.**
　○ Natural drainage systems have become less effective, **resulting in urban flooding.**
　○ A **lack of solid waste management** also contributes to **flooding and waterlogging** due to the blocking of storm water.

➤ **Ineffective Functioning of ULBs**: Although there is a **broad range of functions for Urban Local Bodies outlined by the Constitution,** the revenue required to deliver on those functions is dependent on the Centre and State.
　○ The imbalance between the **powers, responsibilities and funds assigned to ULBs and lack of time bound audits results in their ineffective functioning.**

What Should be the Way Forward?

➤ **Organised Urban Planning:** There is a need to align towards effective solutions for urban issues that can

include **green infrastructure, mixed-use of public spaces** and **use of alternative energy sources** such as solar and wind.

- ○ **Organised urban planning** can help improve the **welfare of people** shaping **their urban areas and neighbourhoods into healthier, more efficient spaces.**

- ○ More innovative ideas should be evolved for affordable and better city management. **Public-private partnerships** should also be invited.

➤ **Urban Employment Guarantee:** Urban areas need a **scheme similar to MGNREGA** to provide basic living standards to urban poor.

- ○ The **Indira Gandhi Urban Employment Guarantee Scheme has been rolled out in Rajasthan** is a good step in this direction.

➤ **Green Transport**: To achieve green mobility in India's urban space, public transport must be **rethought and rebuilt, including by introducing e-buses,** creating bus corridors, and **utilising bus rapid transit systems.**

➤ **Formalisation of the Informal Urban Economy:** The **data of migrants** needs to be compiled and used in city development activities in the interest of migrant workers.

- ○ In addition, the **Labour Ministry's** proposed **Unorganised Worker Index Number Card** would also help formalise the workforce.

➤ **Democratisation of Sustainable Development:** Prevailing preference of an **"economic" view of city development** has to be replaced by a **sustainable one,** which includes **ecological and social considerations**.

- ○ **Accordingly, Sustainable development** has to be democratised at the local level in India by citizen's participation in governance, such as **participative budgeting** should be used in every city, **selecting the locally most appropriate tools and targeting most urgent issues.**

  - ● **Sustainability Impact Assessments (SIA)** should be mandatory at local levels related to any developmental activity.

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Upscaling Start-ups in India

This editorial is based on "Policy engine on, Keep going, startup India" which was published in Economic Times on 21/11/2022. It talks about the Start-up Ecosystem in India and challenges related to it.

Tag: Indian Economy, GS Paper-3, Employment, Growth & Development, IT & Computers, Mobilisation of Resources

India is often described as "**the poster child of emerging markets**" for its vast commercial potential for startups. **Startups in India** as in many other parts of the world, have received increased attention in recent years. Their **numbers are on the rise, and they are now being widely recognised as important engines for growth and jobs generation**.

However, due to lack of forward-looking policies and financial constraints, India's startup ecosystem faces a number of problems. Therefore, there is a need to push for **innovation** and scale emerging technology to generate impactful startup solutions, and thereby it can act as vehicles for India's **socio-economic development** and **transformation.**

What is the Current Status of the Start-up Ecosystem in India?

➤ In 2021, Indian start-ups raised **USD 23 billion** across 1,000+ deals, with 33 start-ups becoming **unicorns.** So far, the year **2022 has added 13 more start-ups to the unicorn club.**

- ○ The start-up ecosystem in India **ranks third after that of the United States (US) and China.**

➤ According to the **India Venture Capital Report 2021** published by Bain and Company, the **number of cumulative start-ups has grown at a CAGR of 17% since 2012 and crossed 1,12,000.**

What are Government's Initiatives Related to Start-ups?

➤ **Start-up India Seed Fund Scheme (SISFS)**: This scheme provides financial assistance to start-ups to help them **prove their concept, develop prototypes, test products, and enter the market.**

➤ **National Start-up Awards**: This program **recognizes and rewards outstanding start-ups** and ecosystem enablers contributing to economic dynamism by stimulating innovation and **stimulating competition**.

➤ **SCO Start-up Forum:** Established in October 2020 as a means of developing and improving start-up ecosystems in SCO member states, the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) Startup Forum is the first of its kind.**

➤ **Prarambh:** The **'Prarambh' Summit aims to provide a platform to startups** and young minds from around the world to come up with new ideas, innovation and invention.

➤ **National Initiative for Developing and Harnessing Innovations (NIDHI):** It is an end-to-end plan for start-ups to double the number of incubators and start-ups in the duration of five years.

- **Ranking of States on Support to Startup Ecosystems (RSSSE):** The **Department for Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT)** under the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has been conducting the **States' Start-up Ranking Exercise since 2018.**

What are the Major Challenges Related to Start-ups in India?

- **Lack of Forward Thrust to Innovation:** India's education system lacks vocational training **and industry exposure that** keeps students deprived of **pursuing innovation**. As a result, this makes the **Indian higher education system** lags behind in terms of **research and development.**
  - This also leads to many **young bright minds leaving India for research and business abroad**, which comes at an immense cost to the country.
- **Lack of Recognition:** Since nearly **70% of the Indian population lives in rural areas** that are still deprived from reliable internet access**.** Consequently, many village-based start-up **go unrecognised and are deprived of government funding initiatives.**
- **Bootstrapped Nature:** For running a start-up, a significant amount of working capital is required. Many start-ups in India, especially at early stages, are **bootstrapped, i.e., self-funded through the founders' own savings, since domestic financing is limited.**
  - **As a result, majority of start-ups in India fail within the first five years** and the most common reason is – **lack of formalised funding.**
- **Scalability Concern:** Small start-ups in India have limited understanding of customers and are confined **to only certain regions**, where they know the **local language and local people**.
  - Due to this **language barrier** and **lack of connected supply chains,** it makes it hard for startups to **scale their products to customers across the country**
- **Marginal Penetration in Space Sector:** Indian startups in fintech and e-commerce are doing exceptionally well, but space startups remain outliers.
  - Globally, the space economy is valued at **USD 440 billion, with India holding less than 2% of the market.**
    - The reason is the **lack of independent private participation** in the space sector.

What Should be the Way Forward?

- **School-Entrepreneurship Corridor:** The **National Education Policy, 2020** promotes student entrepreneurs by providing vocational education in partnership with industry and innovation at school level.

- This can have a **favourable impact on the start-up ecosystem in India**, if **entrepreneurial skills are integrated with the education curriculum** under new education policy.
- **Fostering Entrepreneurism:** Besides policy-level decisions to encourage entrepreneurship, India's corporate sector must also **foster entrepreneurialism** and build synergies to **create sustainable and resource-efficient growth.**
  - **Companies in India can be encouraged to collaborate with startups** and support them with various **corporate-specific resources.** These engagements can be mutually beneficial.
- **Harnessing India's Demographic Dividend:** Given the scale of India and its resource constraints**, low-cost, high-impact solutions are required. Technology startups** must be incentivised especially in the field of semiconductor, **space and** artificial intelligence to harness the potential of India's **demographic dividend** to the fullest.
  - Emerging Start-up can also be **incentivised to provide innovative measures** to reduce digital divide in India.
- **Social Acceptability of Start-ups:** By **collaborating with various unicorns of India,** the government needs to work towards **social acceptance of entrepreneurial careers** and channelize the youth in the right direction to choose a career with ease.
- **Made in India, Made for World:** Indian start-ups have the potential to not only look at Indian problems, but offer customised solutions for markets abroad. The **vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat** will definitely be **boosted by this** as well as making **India an entrepreneurship hub around the world.**

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Developmental Needs of Andaman and Nicobar Islands

This article is based upon "Development of Great Nicobar: strategic imperative and ecological concerns" which was published in the Indian Express on 22/11/2022. It talks about the strategic and ecological significance of Andaman and Nicobar and challenges related to it.

Tag: Biodiversity & Environment, GS Paper-2, Government Policies & Interventions, Issues Related to SCs & STs, GS Paper-3, Growth & Development, Environmental Pollution & Degradation.

The **Andaman and Nicobar Islands(ANI)**, located in the Indian Ocean, are a group of **572 islands** in the **south eastern part of the** Bay of Bengal**.** These islands are situated close to **Indonesia** and **Thailand.**

ANI's strategic importance has not been fully appreciated by India from a security and economic standpoint, and environmental degradation is a major concern in ANI at present, so a greater focus on sustainable development is needed to flourish the economy of the island, as well as strengthen India's maritime capabilities.

What is the Significance of ANI for India?

➤ **Treasure of Tribes**: The **Andaman and Nicobar Islands** are home to 5 Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups: **Great Andamanese, Jarwas, Onges, Shompens and North Sentinelese.**

➤ **Space for Maritime Partners:** India's key maritime partners such as the **US, Japan, Australia and France** acknowledge and **recognise the strategic location of the Andaman and Nicobar.**

  ○ These islands not only provide India with a key maritime space but also ca**rry significant potential in shaping the strategic and military dynamics** of the Indian Ocean region.

➤ **Recent Developmental Plans for ANI:**

  ○ **Japan's Overseas Development Assistance:** Japan approved a **USD 265 crore grant** aid for Andaman and Nicobar Islands development projects **in 2021.**

  ○ **NITI Aayog's Project for Great Nicobar:** It includes an **international container transhipment terminal**, an airport, a power plant, and a township.

  ○ **NITI Aayog's Proposal for Little Andaman**: The plan calls for the development of a new greenfield coastal city to **compete with Singapore and Hong Kong.**

What are the Challenges Related to Andaman and Nicobar Islands?

➤ **Illegal Migration and Smuggling:** Andaman and Nicobar Islands face greater challenges to their internal security through non-conventional threats such as illegal migration from **littoral states of the Bay of Bengal,** poaching of marine and forest resources, **arms and narcotics smuggling through uninhabited islands and natural disasters.**

➤ **Unsustainable Development:** Andaman and Nicobar have become a **major tourist attraction,** and this has resulted in **many development projects** being initiated in this region. While at one side **it will transform the islands substantially,** it would also cause loss of ecological stability.

  ○ Developmental activities are also impacting the coral reefs in the area, which are **already under threat from warming oceans**, and are of enormous ecological importance.

○ **Environmentalists** have also flagged the **loss of mangroves on the island as a result of the development project.**

➤ **Geological Volatility:** The Andaman and Nicobar island's groups lie in a **seismically highly active zone.** Due to this, the **region is prone to a number of natural disasters.**

  ○ For instance, in **2004 an earthquake and accompanying tsunami** devastated large parts of the island chain.

    ● **Nicobar and Car Nicobar (northernmost Nicobar Island)** lost almos**t one-fifth of its population and close to 90% of its mangroves**.

➤ **Geo-Political Instability:** Andaman and Nicobar islands are part of the **Indo-Pacific geopolitical theatre,** where **China is actively trying to expand its influence,** potentially posing a **threat to India's blue economy and maritime security.**

  ○ The **aspirations of China to register its presence in this region** can be seen in **Hambantota, Sri Lanka** where China is in possession of Sri Lankan real estate.

➤ **Encroachment in Tribal Space:** While **Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs)** are accorded the highest level of protection by local administration, they still face numerous challenges due to **encroachment into their areas in the name of development,** and lack of effective **rehabilitation program.**

What Should be the Way Forward?

➤ **Sustainable Island Development Framework:** Infrastructure and developmental projects in Andaman and Nicobar will **no doubt aid India's strategic and maritime capabilities**, but such development **should not come at the cost of the exploitation of the ecosystem** that the Andaman and Nicobar offers.

  ○ Prior to any development activity in this region, an **Environmental and Social Impact Assessment** should be made mandatory.

  ○ A **Sustainable Island Development framework** is not only important for the Andaman and Nicobar but should also be **applicable to other Indian islands as well.**

➤ **Master Plan for Community Development:** The laws must be strengthened to **protect indigenous communities**, and a proper rehabilitation plan should be formulated to protect them during times of calamity.

  ○ Due to the high demand from visiting tourists, the **Islands provide opportunities for the handicrafts industry**. In line, **India can set a template for other islands across the world by** preparing a master plan for the **formalising Handicraft Industries in island regions and promoting Make in India initiative.**

➢ **Developing Island Security Model:** There is a need for India to **invest in capacity building in maritime security and incentivize research**, to develop an **Island Security Model**, and to equip its **Navy with the latest technology to track any infiltration attempt.**

➢ **Revitalising Linking Projects:** There is a need to revitalise the plan of linking the **Andaman and Nicobar Islands to the mainland** through **Submarine Optical Fibre Cable (OFC).**

  ○ **Submarine Cable** will also assist A&N in **providing cheaper and better connectivity and all of Digital India's advantages**, especially in **improving online education, telemedicine, banking and online trading.**

➢ **Thrust to Shipbuilding and Repair Industry**: The **lifeline of the Andaman and Nicobar Islands** is shipping operations, as most construction activities are related to it. The **ship repair facilities need to be established in order to keep the shipping operations alive without any disruption**.

  ○ The **shipbuilding and repair industries** will also enable India to become a **junction in the Indian Ocean and developing trans-shipment ports** will also facilitate trade with **Southeast Asia.**

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Fixing India's Malnutrition Problem

This article is based upon "Fixing India's malnutrition problem" which was published in The Hindu on 24/11/2022. It talks about Malnutrition in India and related challenges.

Tag: Social Justice, Issues Related to Children, Issues Related to Women, Health, Government Policies & Interventions, GS Paper-2, Issues Arising Out of Design & Implementation of Policies, Issues Relating to Poverty & Hunger

India's malnutrition problem, especially that of young children, is one of the most pressing public health issues. It causes about **half of child deaths and is a major cause of morbidity** in children. It has **medical and social disorder rooted in poverty and discrimination.** It has an **economic ripple** effect that **hampers development.**

Government is running various schemes that aim to curb the malnutrition problem. However, there are **still gaps in their funding and implementation**. In order to address this issue holistically, a comprehensive approach is necessary.

What is Malnutrition?

➢ In malnutrition, the body becomes deficient in **vitamins, minerals, and other nutrients required** to maintain healthy tissues and organs.

  ○ It occurs in **people who are either undernourished or over nourished.**

➢ Multiple dimensions of malnutrition in India includes:

  ○ **Calorific Deficiency**

  ○ **Protein Hunger**

  ○ **Micronutrient Deficiency**

What are the Current Government Initiatives to Tackle Malnutrition?

➢ **National Nutrition Mission (NNM):** The government of India has launched the National Nutrition Mission (NNM), also known as **POSHAN Abhiyaan**, to **eradicate malnutrition by the year 2022.**

➢ **Anemia Mukt Bharat Abhiyan:** The mission was launched in 2018 with the **aim of accelerating anemia decline by one to three percentage points annually.**

➢ **Mid-day Meal (MDM) scheme**: It aims to **improve nutrition levels among school children** in addition to increasing **enrolment, retention, and attendance.**

➢ **The National Food Security Act (NFSA), 2013**: Assuring **food and nutrition security** for the most vulnerable is the aim of this law, which makes **access to food a legal entitlement.**

➢ **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme:** It was launched in 1975 and the programme aims to provide food, preschool education, primary healthcare, immunization, health checkups and referral services to **children under 6 years old and their mothers.**

What are the Issues Associated with Malnutrition in India?

➢ **Arbitrary Identification of Hunger**: Because the criteria for determining a household's below poverty line status is **arbitrary**, and **vary from state to state. Also, food consumption has declined significantly** due to an inaccurate classification of **above poverty line (APL) and below poverty line (BPL).**

  ○ Furthermore, **poor quality grains** have contributed to the problem.

➢ **Micronutrient Deficiency:** A severe micronutrient deficiency has been observed in India, which is also known as **hidden hunger**. It has several causes, including poor diet, disease, and **failure to meet micronutrient needs during pregnancy and lactation.**

  ○ There is also a **lack of adequate knowledge** among mothers regarding **nutrition, breast-feeding, and parenting.**

➢ **Vicious Cycle of Poverty**: Because of **low purchasing power,** poor cannot afford to buy the desired amount and desired quality of food for the family. This **adversely affects their capacity for physical work, and they earn less.**

○ Thus, starts a **vicious cycle of poverty, undernutrition, diminished work capacity, low earning and poverty.**

➢ **Infection Driven Malnutrition:** Infections like **malaria and measles** may **precipitate acute malnutrition** and aggravate the existing nutritional deficit. It is also worsened by **lack of accessibility and affordability to health services.**

○ Also, a child may consume fewer calories during an infection because of reduced appetite which **leads to malnutrition.**

➢ **Socio-Cultural factors:** In most of the poor households, **women and preschool children especially girls receive less food** than the economically active male members

○ In large families, **rapid succession of pregnancies adversely affects the nutritional status of the mother.** As she tries to manage the big family and **neglect her own health** and **antenatal checkups during pregnancy.**

● Undernutrition in mothers may also **lead to low-birth-weight babies.**

What Should be the Way Forward?

➢ **Nutritional Awareness**: Promoting **nutritional awareness** at the ground level is necessary by educating the public on the **importance and nutritional quality of locally available low-cost foods.**

○ The **best recipes for preparing proper weaning foods and supplementary foods from low-cost, locally available ingredients can also be shared with women of the family via self-help groups.**

➢ **Early Detection of Malnutrition:** A **well recorded growth health chart of newborn babies** and **pregnant womens** can detect malnutrition very early.

○ The **mid-day meal scheme must also be subjected to a social audit** in every district by the states and union territories.

● Use of **information technology to improve program monitoring** is also a worthwhile consideration.

➢ **Improving Health Care Facilities:** Improving the **primary health centers** and other health care services in **especially rural areas** will definitely improve the nutrition profile of women and children.

○ A **good healthcare system that provides immunization,** oral rehydration, periodic deworming and proper treatment of common illnesses can go a long way in preventing malnutrition in the society.

➢ **Comprehensive Nutrition Profile**: Nutrition is more than food; it involves health, water, sanitation, gender perspectives, and social norms. Therefore, it is imperative that comprehensive policies are developed to address nutritional deficiencies.

○ Bringing together **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Beti Bachao Beti Padhao,** and **Poshan Abhiyan** can change India's nutritional status holistically.

➢ **Agriculture-Nutrition Corridor:** India's nutritional hubs (villages) are the most undernourished, and there is a need to develop mechanisms to check the nutritional security of villages.

○ The **Ministry for Women and Child Development has also** launched the **Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh in 2019** in recognition of this link.

➢ **Availability, Accessibility, Affordability: Improved supplies and production of food,** programs to increase purchasing power, and better agricultural guidance to help farmers yield better crops are essential for **nutritional security**.

○ Government should **assist farmers in marketing their produce** and at the same time ensure that good quality food is available at affordable prices through a **proper well monitored public distribution system**, etc.

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Shifting Focus Towards Natural Farming

This article is based upon "Cultivate natural farming" which was published in Hindu Business Line on 24/11/2022. It talks about the issues related to Farming practices in India and the need of Natural Farming.

Tag: Agriculture, GS Paper-1, Agricultural Resources, GS Paper-2, Government Policies & Interventions, GS Paper-3, E-Technology in the Aid of Farmers, Cropping Patterns.

To feed the growing population, it is estimated that **food production will need to increase by 60% by 2050**. This increasing food demand is promoting farmers worldwide to **increase crop production,** which builds **pressure on the environment** and exceeds its carrying capacity to repair or replace itself, leading to its **serious degradation**.

'Natural Farming' Is suggested as a **neoteric approach to improve both traditional and modern agricultural practices**, which aims to **safeguard the environment, public health, and communities. It** has the potential to enable food production **without compromising the needs of future generations.**

What is the Significance of Natural Farming?

➢ **Ensures Better Health:** As **Natural Farming does not use any synthetic chemicals**; health risks and hazards are eliminated. The **food has higher nutrition density and therefore offers better health benefits.**

➢ **Increased Farmers' Income:** Natural Farming aims to make farming viable and **aspirational by increasing net incomes of farmers** on account of cost reduction, reduced risks, similar yields, incomes from **intercropping.**

➢ **Rejuvenates Soil Health**: The most immediate impact of Natural Farming is on the **biology of soil—on microbes** and other living organisms such as earthworms. It improves soil health and in turn increase productivity.

➢ **Minimized Cost of Production**: Natural Farming aims to **drastically cut down production costs** by encouraging farmers to prepare essential biological inputs using **on-farm, natural and home-grown resources.**

What is Zero Budget Natural Farming?

➢ It is a unique model that relies on **Agro-ecology**, it calls for chemical-free farming based on **sustainable agricultural practices.**

  ○ In the mid-1990s, **Subhash Palekar** developed it as an **alternative to the Green Revolution's** chemical **fertilisers and pesticides** and intensive irrigation methods.

➢ This model aims to **lower production costs** and **return to pre-green revolution farming practices** which **do not require expensive inputs such as fertilisers, pesticides, and irrigation.**

What are the Major Challenges Related to Farming in India?

➢ **Per Drop More Crop:** Only 52 % of India's **Gross Cropped Area (GCA)** is irrigated at the national level. Even though **India has made significant strides since independence, many farms still rely on the monsoon for irrigation**, limiting their ability to plant more crops.

➢ **Lack of Readily Availability of Natural Inputs:** Farmers often cite the lack of readily available natural inputs as a barrier to converting to chemical-free agriculture. **Not every farmer has the time, patience, or labour to develop their own natural inputs.**

➢ **Lack of Crop Diversification:** In spite of the rapid **commercialization of agriculture** in India, most farmers assume cereals will always be their main crop (due to skewed **Minimum Support Prices** in favour of cereals) and **ignore crop diversification.**

➢ **Decline in Yields: Sikkim,** the **first organic state** in India has seen some **yield declines following conversion to organic farming**. Many farmers have switched back to conventional farming after seeing their **ZBNF (Zero-Budget Natural Farming)** returns drop.

What are the Recent Government Initiatives Related to Sustainable Agriculture?

➢ **National Mission on Sustainable Agriculture**

➢ **Paramparagat Krishi Vikas Yojana (PKVY)**

➢ **Sub-mission on AgroForestry (SMAF)**

➢ **Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana**

➢ Mission Organic Value Chain Development for North Eastern Region (MOVCDNER)

What Should be the Way Forward?

➢ **Women's Participation in Natural Farming:** Studies have indicated that there is a **direct correlation between women's control over agricultural resources as a primary producer** and the **socio-economic characteristics of their household.**

  ○ Since women mostly cook for their families**, they understand the importance of natural products to nurture and nourish their children.** As a result, w**omen are likely to adopt natural farming sooner than men**.

    ● **Women's Participation in Natural Farming** will increase their involvement in decision-making. It would also **positively impact the health and nutritional status of the family.**

➢ **Integrating Traditional and Frontier Technologies: Rainwater harvesting** and recycling of **organic waste for plant nutrient, pest management,** etc., are examples of traditional technologies that can be used to complement frontier technologies like **tissue culture, genetic engineering,** to achieve higher productivity.

➢ **Knowledge-Intensive Agriculture:** India is known for its **diversity of farming practices,** making it important to **involve diverse perspectives in a national agricultural dialogue to find suitable solutions.**

  ○ A **smart and precise move towards high-tech farming balanced with a naturalistic approach** will increase farmers' incomes and **many other issues of scale will be addressed.**

➢ **Enterprising Natural Inputs for Farming: Microenterprises that produce inputs for chemical-free agriculture** shall be provided support from the government to address the challenge of **unavailability of readily available natural inputs**.

  ○ The promotion of natural farming needs to be combined with the setting up of **village-level input preparation and sales shops.**

➢ **Towards Mimic Natural Ecosystem**: Developing **mutually reinforcing relationships** between agricultural productivity and conservation of nature is necessary.

○ There can be modifications made to farming systems in order to **make it a mimic natural ecosystem. Ecological and economically useful trees, shrubs and perennial grasses can be integrated into farms** in ways that mimic the **natural vegetative structure.**

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Time for Transformative Judicial Revolution

This article is based upon "A burdened judiciary needs help" which was published in Hindu Business Line on 23/11/2022. It talks about the Indian Judicial system and issues related to it.

Tag: Indian Polity, GS Paper-2, Judiciary, Indian Constitution

The **Judiciary** is the body responsible for interpreting the law and imparting meaning to it. It is the **defender of the constitution** and the **guardian of democracy**. Under the Indian constitution, the **judiciary is a single integrated system of courts for the Union and the states with the Supreme Court** at the apex.

However, the **Indian judiciary is currently experiencing a number of problems** that are **eroding its legitimacy.** As a result, the **public is losing faith in the judicial system** and is hesitant to turn to this institution for assistance in resolving their issues.

Since **"justice delayed is justice denied,"** it is crucial that the **judiciary solves these obstacles as soon as possible** to ensure that Indian citizens do not hesitate to approach it.

What are the Major Norms Related to Judiciary in India?

➢ **Security of Tenure:** A judge can r**emain in office till he has attained the age of 65 years.** He can be removed by the **President** on the grounds of "**proved misbehaviour or incapacity."**

➢ **Security of Salaries and Service Conditions**: Judges' salaries, allowances, etc., **shall not be changed to their disadvantage during their term of office.** The salaries of the Judges cannot be reduced except during periods of **financial emergency.**

   ○ Their salaries allowances are charged on the **Consolidated Fund of India** and so are **not subject to vote of Parliament**.

➢ **No Discussion in the Legislature on the Conduct of Judges:** No discussion can take place in the parliament regarding the conduct of any judge or about the **discharge of his duties except when there is a motion for his removal.**

➢ **Full Control Over its Procedure of Work and Establishment:** The **Supreme Court** is free to decide its own procedures of work and its establishment as well as the conditions of service of its employees. Thus, it is **free from influence of any outside agency.**

➢ **Punishment for Contempt of Court:** The Supreme Court can punish for the **contempt of court** if a person or authority makes an attempt to lower its authority.

What are the Challenges Related to the Indian Judicial System?

➢ **Huge Pendency of Cases:** As many as **30 million cases are still backlogged in India's court system.**

   ○ Over **4 million of them involve the High Court,** and **60,000 involve the Supreme Court.** The fact that **this figure keeps rising demonstrates the inadequacies of the justice system.**

➢ **Undertrial Prisoners:** The majority of Indian prison inmates are still awaiting the verdict on their cases, and they are being held there until that time.

   ○ A majority of people **end up serving a longer sentence in prison than they would have otherwise incurred**, and the **costs, suffering, and anguish associated with defending themselves in court are more costly and painful** than serving the actual sentence.

➢ **Recruitment Delays**: Judicial posts are not filled as quickly as necessary. For a country of **135 million, there are only about 25000 judges**.

   ○ There are almost **400 vacancies in the high courts.** And around **35% of the posts are lying vacant in the lower judiciary.**

➢ **Favouritism and Nepotism in CJI Appointment:** Because there are no specific criteria for **evaluating candidates for the post of Chief Justice of India**, nepotism and favouritism is common.

   ○ Consequently, there is **no transparency in the judicial appointment,** which **negatively impacts the country's ability to regulate law and order.**

   ○ Also**, they are not accountable to any administrative body** that may lead to the wrong choice of the candidate while overlooking the right candidate.

➢ **Inequality of Representation:** Another area of concern is the composition of the **higher judiciary**, where **women are fairly underrepresented**. **Out of 1.7 million advocates registered, only 15% are women.**

   ○ In high courts, the **percentage of women judges is a mere 11.5%,** while in the Supreme Court there are **four sitting women judges out of 33 in office.**

What Should be the Way Forward?

➢ **Transforming the Appointment System:** Vacancies must be filled immediately, and it is **necessary to establish an appropriate timeline** for the **appointment of judges** and to **provide the suggestions in advance.**

○ Another significant element that can **unquestionably aid India** in developing a **better judicial system** is the **All India Judicial Services (AIJS)**.

➢ **Reforming Investigation**: India lacks an **active investigation policy,** which leads to **many innocent people being wrongfully charged and punished.**

○ Therefore, the Indian government needs to frame an investigation policy that is **effective, proactive and comprehensive**, taking into **account all the stakeholders in the justice system.**

➢ **Innovative Solutions to Justice**: The solution to clearing the massive backlog of cases requires more than just appointing more judges, it also requires innovative solutions.

○ For example**, solving basic civil cases through Metaverse techniques, using blockchain technology to store data, researching IT solutions that simplify workflow,** and **improving courtroom facilities** are some ways to move past the current backlog.

➢ **Better District Courts:** The **district courts are the primary area of concern** in India's need for judicial reform, which requires a **bottom-up strategy.**

○ In order to improve judicial effectiveness at the lowest level, **judicial audits of lower courts should be taken into account.**

➢ **Ensuring Gender Parity:** There is a **need to maintain and promote Gender Diversity in Higher Judiciary with a fixed percentage of its members as women judges** that will lead to the evolution of a **gender-neutral judicial system of India.**

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India's Green-Energy Transition

This editorial is based on "A green-energy boost" which was published in Financial Express on 26/11/2022. It talks about the impact of climate change and the need for a green energy transition.

Tag: Indian Economy, GS Paper-3, Issues Relating to Development, Growth & Development, Renewable Energy, Environmental Pollution & Degradation

Climate change is an existential threat that has the potential to change the course of human history for the worse. **Fossil fuels are the traditional energy sources that constitute the largest contributors to climate change.** They account for over **75% of global greenhouse gas emissions** and approximately **90% of all carbon dioxide emissions**.

For a better future, **green energy is the key solution** through which **India's net zero emission target by 2070** can also be accomplished.

Therefore, India should pioneer a new model of **economic development that could avoid the carbon-intensive approaches** that many countries have pursued in the past and **provide a blueprint for other developing economies for clean energy transition.**

What is Green Energy?

➢ **Green energy** is a term for **energy that comes from renewable sources**. Green energy is often referred to as **clean, sustainable, or renewable energy.**

○ The **production of green energy does not release toxic greenhouse gases** into the atmosphere, meaning it causes **little or no environmental impact.**

➢ Some important green energy sources include power produced by **solar, wind, geothermal, biogas, low-impact hydroelectricity,** and **certain eligible biomass sources.**

How is India Facilitating the Green Energy Transition?

➢ India is the **world's third-largest energy consuming country.** Energy use has doubled since 2000, with **80% of demand still being met by coal, oil and solid biomass.**

○ On a per capita basis, **India's energy use and emissions are less than half the world average.**

➢ **Efforts Towards Green Energy Transition:**

○ In **2019** India announced that it would take up its installed capacity of **renewable energy to 450 GW by 2030.**

○ The **Production Linked Incentive Scheme (PLI) scheme** is another initiative of the Government of India with respect to enhancing the **manufacturing sector for the production of raw materials for renewable energy.**

○ The **PM- KUSUM (Pradhan Mantri-Kisan Urja Suraksha evam Utthaan Mahabhiyan)** aims to provide financial and water security to farmers through harnessing **solar energy capacities of 25,750 MW by 2022.**

● **Solarisation of water pumps** is a step in distributed power provided at the doorstep of the consumer.

○ The **Ministry of New and Renewable Energy** on its website also hosts **Akshay Urja Portal** and I**ndia Renewable Idea Exchange (IRIX) Portal.**
- IRIX is a platform that **promotes the exchange of ideas among energy conscious Indians** and the Global community.

> **What are the Other Initiatives Shaping India's Energy Transition?**
> ➢ **Pradhan Mantri Sahaj Bijli Har Ghar Yojana (SAUBHAGYA)**
> ➢ **Green Energy Corridor (GEC)**
> ➢ **National Smart Grid Mission (NSGM) and Smart Meter National Programme**
> ➢ **Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of (Hybrid &) Electric Vehicles (FAME)**
> ➢ **International Solar Alliance (ISA)**

What are the Challenges Related to India's Energy Sector?

➢ **Energy Poverty and Inequality: Access to energy** is a tremendous problem in India and major inequalities of access plague the country. Around **77 million households in India still use kerosene for lighting.**
  ○ The problem is even more acute in rural India where up to **44% of households lack access to electricity.**
  ○ While India has undertaken various programs and initiatives to address **energy poverty,** they have been faced with **logistical problems and inadequate implementation locally.**

➢ **Import Dependence and Weaponization of Supply Chain:** India's crude oil import bill **surged 76%** to **USD 90.3 billion** in the first half of **2022-23** and total import quantity increased by 15%.
  ○ With its growing dependency on **imported oil, India's energy security is under severe strain**, and the current **disrupted global supply chain due to disturbed geopolitics** is compounding the problem.
  ○ In terms of renewable energy, India is also largely dependent on foreign countries like China for **solar modules.**
    - **Backward integration in the solar value chain** is absent as India has currently **no capacity for manufacturing solar wafers** and polysilicon, which is hindering clean energy transition.

➢ **Climate Change Induced Energy Crisis:** Climate change directly affects **fuel supply, energy requirement** as well as the **physical resilience of current and future energy infrastructure.**
  ○ **Heatwaves** and **disturbed monsoon** due to climate change are **already putting existing energy generation under stress,** making it even more important to reduce fossil fuel emissions.

➢ **Women's Health at Risk:** Women tend to take an active part in household activities and are at risk when long-term household energy is derived from non-clean resources such as **firewood, coal, and cow dung.**
  ○ The **use of non-clean energy sources increases women's risk of respiratory, cardiovascular, and psychological diseases** and also **increases maternal and infant mortality.**

➢ **Widening Gap Between Demand and Supply of Coal:** Data from the **Ministry of Coal in 2021,** reveal that the **gap between demand and domestic supply of coal is widening.**
  ○ Despite the availability of adequate reserves, coal extraction has been declining in the larger coal producing States.
  ○ **Owing to the rising prices and** unresolved pending contractual issues with power plants is worsening the issue.

➢ **Increasing Demand, Increasing Energy Cost:** With an **increasing rate of urbanisation and industrialisation,** the **International Energy Agency** said in its **World Energy Outlook report** that the need for energy in India alone would rise by more than 3% annually.
  ○ At the same time, **there is a sharp increase in costs of petroleum globally**.

What Should be the Way Forward?

➢ **Interlinking Women Empowerment with Green Energy:** Women's empowerment and leadership in the energy sector could help **accelerate the transition to a low-carbon economy by promoting clean energy**.
  ○ The **"just transition" should also include a gender perspective,** to **guarantee equal opportunities in green jobs for both men and women** in the workforce.
  ○ Particularly in the household as responsible **mothers, wives and daughters,** women can also play an important role in the green energy transition in **entrepreneurship and policy making.**

➢ **Diversifying Green Supply Chain:** Supply chains for clean energy need to be diversified to a much larger number of countries rather than just confined to developed countries.
  ○ In this regard, **COP27's agenda of climate finance can be used as a carrier.** As traditional energy sources get replaced, **revenues and employment will shift from certain geographies to others** and this will **need to be carefully managed.**

➢ **Incentivising in Least-Cost Energy Solutions:** India can encourage **university-level innovations that help India pursue an economically viable clean energy transition**. Thus**, India's demographic dividend can also**

be utilised and students will be pushed more toward research and innovation than traditional education.

- ○ For example, the **Unnat Jyoti by Affordable LEDs for All (UJALA) program** decreased the unit cost of LED bulbs by over 75%.

- ○ The **Ministry of Environment, Forestry and Climate Change**, along with the **United Nations Development Programme (UNDP),** jointly launched **'In Our LiFEtime'**, a campaign that both urges and encourages young people between the **ages of 18 to 23 years to adapt and promote sustainable lifestyles is also a good step in this direction.**

➤ **Focusing on Green Transport:** There is a need to **rethink and restore confidence in public transport**, including the procurement of more buses, the **adoption of e-buses**, bus corridors and **bus rapid transit systems with digitization of public transport.**

- ○ Emission norms should be tightened as well as biofuels should replace fossil fuels.

- ○ The development of **several electric freight corridors to promote electrification is also crucial** to reaping the benefits of electric vehicles.

➤ **Multisectoral Approach to Energy Transition:** In India, **future growth will demand resilience on multiple fronts,** such as energy system design, urban development, industrial growth and internal supply-chain management, and the livelihoods of the underprivileged.

- ○ India can gradually **reduce its exposure to commodity imports and foreign supply chains** through **distributed energy systems and the promotion of domestic manufacturing.**

- ○ **India's manufacturing prowess and technology leadership** present an opportunity to leverage **Make in India** to turn India into a more self-sufficient **green economy** and **globally competitive green energy export hub over time.**
  - ● **Circular economy** solutions linked with green energy should become a core feature of India's future economy.

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Strengthening Guardian Body of Elections

This editorial is based on "Is Election Commission becoming a victim of judiciary-government crossfire over appointments?" which was published in Economic Times on 28/11/2022. It talks about the Election Commission of India and issues related to it.

The **Election Commission of India (ECI)** is an **autonomous and permanent constitutional body** responsible for organising **free and fair elections** in the **Union and States of India.**

The **Constitution grants the ECI** with the **power of direction, superintendence, and control of elections to Parliament,** State legislatures, the office of **President of India** and the office of Vice-president of India. The ECI does not deal with the elections to the urban bodies such as **Municipalities and Panchayats** in the states.

The **ECI has been caught in several controversies** in the recent past over its **independence and credibility** as the **guardian body of elections** in India especially in regard to the **appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC),** which **needs special attention.**

What is the Structure of the Election Commission?

➤ Originally the **commission had only one election commissioner** but after the **Election Commissioner Amendment Act 1989,** it has been **made a multi-member body.**

➤ The commission consists of **one Chief Election Commissioner** and **two Election Commissioners.**
  - ○ The **President appoints Chief Election Commissioner** and **Election Commissioners.**
  - ○ They have a **fixed tenure of 6 years**, or **up to the age of 65 years,** whichever is earlier.
  - ○ They also enjoy the **same status** and receive salary and perks **as available to Judges of the Supreme Court of India.**

What are the Powers and Responsibilities of the Election Commission?

The Commission's functions and powers with respect to elections are divided into three categories (**Administrative, Advisory, and Quasi-judicial**). These powers include:

➤ Determining the **Electoral Constituencies' territorial areas** throughout the country.

➤ **Preparing and periodically revising electoral rolls** and registering all eligible voters.

➤ **Notifying the schedules and dates of elections** and scrutinising nomination papers.

➤ **Granting recognition to the various political parties** and allocating them election symbols.

➤ The **Commission also has advisory jurisdiction in the matter of post-election disqualification** of sitting members of Parliament and State Legislatures.

- ➢ It is also **responsible for conducting bye-elections** in any constituency whenever the need arises.
- ➢ It issues the **Model Code of Conduct (MCC) in elections for political parties** and candidates so that no one indulges in unfair practice or there is no arbitrary abuse of powers by those in power.

What are the Recent Issues Related to the Election Commission?

- ➢ **Truncated Tenure of CEC:** The Supreme Court of India has recently pointed out that "**No Chief Election Commissioner has completed a six-year tenure since 2004**", and because of the **truncated tenure,** the **CEC is unable to do anything substantial.**
  - ○ **Silence of the Constitution: Article 324** of the Constitution talks about the appointment of ECs. It, however, **only envisages the enactment of a law to this effect and does not lay down any procedure for these appointments.**
- ➢ **Executive Influence in Appointment:** The Election Commissioners are appointed by the current government and are therefore **potentially obligated to the government** or may feel that they are **held to a specific level of loyalty.**
  - ○ The **Supreme Court** has remarked that **while an election commissioner may be proficient, competent, completely honest** and armed with an outstanding record of service, **they may also have personal political leanings,** compromising the institution's neutrality.
  - ○ Also, the **Constitution has also not debarred the retiring election commissioners from any further appointment by the government**, so they might try to remain in good books.
- ➢ **Dependence on Centre for Finance:** Despite several provisions designed to make the ECI an independent body, the Union Government still controls its finances. **The expenses of EC are not charged on the Consolidated Fund of India.**
- ➢ **Lack of Independent Staff**: Because **ECI does not have its own staff,** it has to **rely on staff from Central and State Governments** whenever elections are held.
  - ○ As a result, the **administrative staff is also responsible for ordinary administration, as well as electoral administration,** which is not conducive to the Commission's impartiality and efficiency.
- ➢ **No Statutory Backing for Enforcing Model Code of Conduct (MCC):** In regard to the **enforcing Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and other election-related decisions**, there is **no clarity regarding the scope and nature of the powers** available to the Election Commission of India (ECI).

- ➢ **Limited Power to Regulate Inner-Party Democracy**: The ECI is limited to advising parties on internal elections and has **no authority to enforce inner-party democracy** or regulate party finances.

What Should be the Way Forward?

- ➢ **Reimagining Appointment of Election Commissioners:** Various committees like **Justice Tarkunde Committee (1975),** Dinesh Goswami committee (1990), **Law Commission (2015)** have recommended that **Election Commissioners be appointed on the advice of a committee comprising the Prime Minister, the Lok Sabha Opposition Leader and the Chief Justice of India.**
  - ○ Also, the **2nd Administrative Reforms Commission** recommended that the **Law Minister and the Deputy Chairman of the Rajya Sabha** should also be included in such a Collegium.
    - The **Anoop Baranwal v. The Union of India (2015)** case also raised the **demand for a Collegium system for the ECI.**
- ➢ **Equality Among Commissioners:** Equal **Constitutional protection** should be given to **all members of the ECI in matters of removability from office.** Curbing reappointment for ECs. And bringing in a **dedicated election management cadre** and **personnel system.**
- ➢ **Backing Model Code of Conduct:** It is necessary to provide statutory backing for the ECI Model Code of Conduct, especially when it comes to **election-related politicisation of social media.**
- ➢ **Law Commission 255th Report on Electoral Reforms:** The report recommends that **Article 324 of the Constitution be amended to provide for an independent and permanent Secretariat for the Electoral Commission of India (ECI)** along the lines of the **Lok Sabha/Rajya Sabha Secretariats.**
  - ○ In addition, **state election commissions can be provided with similar provisions to guarantee their autonomy** and fairness in their elections.

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Role of Sport in Aspirational India

This editorial is based on "The pivotal role of sport in an aspirational India" which was published in Hindustan Times on 27/11/2022. It talks about the importance of sport and why India should rethink its model of governing various disciplines.

Tag: Governance, GS Paper-2, Government Policies & Interventions

A sound mind lies in a sound body. There is growing evidence that **sports act as a catalyst for the development of personal and social skills among youngsters.** The **potential of sports to be considered as a career** option gives rise to the question of its position and preference compared to other **conventional career alternatives.**

Pursuing sports as a career face numerous obstacles in India, including **socioeconomic, linguistic, cultural, dietary habits, societal taboos, and gender bias** that **hinder a huge chunk of India's young aspiring population** to continue their passion for sports.

There is a need to **reshape sports governance in India and look forwards towards democratisation of sports culture.**

What is the History of Sports Governance in India?

➤ In the early **1950s,** the Federal Government created the **All India Council of Sports (AICS)** to apprehend the declining standards of sports in the country.

➤ In 1982, after Asian games, the **Department of Sports** was transformed into the **Department of Youth Affairs and Sports.**

➤ In 1984, the **National Sports Policy was initiated.**

➤ In 2000, the Department was converted into a **Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports (MYAS).**

➤ In 2011, the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Sports notified the **National Sports Development Code of India 2011**.

➤ In 2022, the Ministry of Civil Aviation launched **National Air Sport Policy 2022 (NASP 2022) for Aerobatics, Aeromodelling, Ballooning, Drones, Hang gliding and powered hang gliding, Parachuting** etc.

What are the Current Challenges Related to the Sports Sector in India?

➤ **Lack of Parental Push:** In India **most families pressurise their children to outshine in academics** and work hard towards becoming an **Engineer, Doctors or successful entrepreneur.**
  - ○ The underlying feeling is that **sports do not fetch a decent livelihood** or **make one wealthy.**

➤ **Social and Economic Inequalities**: Social and economic inequalities have a negative impact on Indian sport.
  - ○ Denial of access to sports infrastructure **due to poverty,** concentration of stadiums and other sports avenues only in cities, **lack of encouragement to girls to participate in sports,** etc, have **impaired the development of a positive sports culture** in the country.

➤ **Policy Lacunae**: For the development of any sector, formulation and execution of an effective policy is a sine qua non.
  - ○ This is true for sports also. Till date, the **sports policy planning and implementation is centralised in the country** due to the **paucity of resources,** this has led to many incidents like **IPL Spot Fixing, Olympic** Games bidding scam, Sexual harassment incidents in women's hockey teams.

➤ **Corruption and Mismanagement of Sports Authorities**: Corruption has become synonymous with sports administration in India.
  - ○ Whether it is the most popular cricket or hockey or weightlifting, most of the **sports authorities in India have come under attack due to corruption charges.**
  - ○ Besides, the **involvement of politicians in the administration of sports bodies for a very long period** and **controversies surrounding the 2010 Commonwealth Games,** dented the image of sports administrators in India.

➤ **Use of Performance Enhancing Drugs**: Use of **performance enhancing drugs** is still a major problem in the sports sector. India ranks **first when it comes to Anti-Doping Rule Violations** or the World Anti-Doping Agency's Adverse Analytical Findings.
  - ○ This problem still needs to be addressed effectively, despite the creation of the **National Anti Doping Agency** in the country.

➤ **Empty Playgrounds:** Modern technology and **video games have distracted children from playing physical games.** Today many children are on their mobile phones instead of playing with their friends on the playground.
  - ○ Due to this the **young children are becoming susceptible to many diseases at an early age,** like **diabetes and hypertension.**

What are the Recent Government Initiatives Related to the Sports Sector?

➤ **Samagra Shiksha Abhiyaan**

➤ **Fit India Movement**

➤ **Khelo India**

➤ SAI Training Centers Scheme

➤ Sports Talent Search Portal

➤ **National Sports Awards Scheme**

➤ **Target Olympic Podium**

What Should be the Way Forward?

➤ **Democratisation of Sports Culture:** There is a need to **revive India's sports culture at the grass-root**

level by creating a **strong framework for sports governance in India.**

- ○ **Sport has historically taken a back seat in the Indian education system.** A **shift in school attitudes about sports has the potential to reshape the sporting landscape** in India.
  - The **Fit India Movement mentions** that the **schools are also allowed to include traditional and regional games in the curriculum but** making **sports a mandatory component of the curriculum** needs to be clarified.

➤ **Equal Push to All Sports:** It is high time the **public and private sector should come together** to lift the Indian sport sector from the **present deplorable situation.**

- ○ Extension of **Justice Lodha Committee recommendations on BCCI to all other sports bodies** will be a right step in this direction.

➤ **Promoting Gender Equality:** There is a need to **break down the stereotypes that continue to make women less likely to take up sporting activities.** It also means promoting women's advancement as professional athletes and **leaders in the sport sector.**

- ○ There is also a need to **close the gap in investment in women's sport** and **promote equal economic opportunities for women and girls.** BCCI's **Gender Pay Parity** initiative is a good step in this direction.

➤ **Filling Up Infrastructural Loopholes:** India must **invest heavily in building modern infrastructure** with **international best practices in sports training, sport medicine, research, and analysis** across all sports institutions in order to become a **leading sports nation.**

- ○ The quality of infrastructure can be scaled up to the village level and **regional centres should be made available for those who are serious at taking their sporting career to professional level.**

➤ **Ocean of Job Opportunities:** Sports are being revolutionised by new technological interventions like **Semi-Automated Offside Technology (SAOT), an artificial intelligence sensor getting used inside footballs in FIFA World Cup 2022 games to detect offsides.**

- ○ There are many jobs being created via this technological revolution in sports, **especially in the field of Artificial Intelligence and Data Science.** This can benefit India's young demographic dividend.

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Drishti Mains Questions

1. Highlight major challenges related to MSME sector in India and suggest reforms in order to maximise their potential and propel the Indian economy forward.

2. Discuss major issues associated with increasing air pollution in India. Cite some recent government initiatives for improvement of air quality.

3. "Digitalisation is inducing Centralisation in India". Comment.

4. What are the issues related to OTT regulation in India and discuss salient features of Information Technology (Intermediary Guidelines and Digital Media Ethics Code) Rules, 2021.

5. Discuss the major gaps in global energy security in light of the disrupted global supply chain.

6. Examine the significance and roadblocks to the implementation of Uniform Civil Code in India.

7. "Despite significant growth in the installed solar capacity, the contribution of solar energy to the country's power generation has not grown at the same pace". Discuss.

8. Discuss to what extent has the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act 2016 contributed to curbing the stigma associated with disability in India?

9. Explain how the inflationary pressure is impacting rural India more than its urban counterpart. Also, suggest solutions to major challenges related to rural development in India.

10. Describe major challenges related to India's informal sector, as well as measures that can be taken to formalize the informal economy.

11. Do you agree that the constitutional seat of governor has tilted towards the agent of the centre. Also, discuss major friction points between governor and state legislature.

12. Discuss major reasons for the sinking groundwater table in India. Also suggest measures to tackle this problem.

13. Discuss major issues faced by Tribals in India. Also provide suggestions for mainstreaming tribes and empowering tribal women.

14. Discuss the evolution of terrorism with technological advancement. Also, suggest measures that should be adopted to curb the menace of Terrorism.

15. Examine the importance of ASEAN for India to maintain an open and free Indo-Pacific region.

16. Provide an overview of India's Free Trade Agreement (FTA) journey and propose major changes in the country's foreign trade policy.

17. "In order to meet India's aim of reaching a US$ 5 trillion economy by 2025, infrastructure development is the need of the hour". Comment.

18. Discuss some major issues related to the existing urban space in India and how it can be reimagined.

19. How is the Start-up ecosystem in India responding to recent government initiatives?

20. What is the strategic and economic significance of Andaman and Nicobar for India? Also discuss major environmental and geopolitical challenges related to this region.

Drishti Mains Questions

21. How is India tackling the menace of malnutrition? How can this problem be eliminated from the society?

22. "The road to agricultural sustainability in India begins with natural farming." Discuss.

23. Discuss the major challenges related to Indian Judiciary. Also suggest some innovative solutions to increase the effectiveness of Indian judicial system.

24. Examine the current state of India's energy sector and suggest innovative ways to move the country towards green energy.

25. The Election Commission of India is the bedrock of electoral democracy in India but concerns about its institutional credibility have emerged lately. Comment

26. Examine how sports are regulated in India and what are the major loopholes in India's sports governance.