



Monthly Editorial Consolidation



1st October to 31st October 2021

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Benefits of GI Ecosystem

This article is based on **The many benefits of a strong GI ecosystem** which was published in *The Indian Express* on 01/10/2021. It talks about the Geographical Indication (GI) tags and suggests a way forward to harness it for growth.

Tags: Indian Economy, GS Paper - 3, Government Policies & Interventions

India's global brand recall and attributes of multi-cultural ethos, authenticity, and ethnic diversity are potential turbochargers for the country's economy. One channel through which these attributes can be brought out are **Geographical Indications or GI tags**.

Today, with the emphasis on climate change and sustainability, these products can be ready revenue generators. A modern distribution system exists in India's robust global e-commerce backbone which can propel the nascent GI industry onto the national and world stage.

Potential Benefits of Geographical Indicators (GI)

- **Benefits to Local Community:** GI protection has wider positive benefits, especially for local communities. In particular, it encourages the preservation of biodiversity, local know-how and natural resources and this is where India can do well.
- **Economic and Soft Power:** Multiple benefits flow from a strong GI ecosystem, which can be a **wellspring of economic and soft power**.
 - It will automatically resolve the three fraught India issues of poor pay for talent, low female participation in the labour force, and urban migration.
- It will convert **talent into entrepreneurship** with gig workers, and create a **"passion" economy**, that is, a new way for individuals to monetise their skills and scale their businesses exponentially.
 - It removes the hurdles associated with freelance work to earn a regular income from a source other than an employer.
- **Boost Employment-to-population:** The **labour-intensive nature of GI** offers the best solution to boosting the employment-to-population ratio in India, an abysmal 43% compared with the 55% global average.
 - Monetising artisanal work done at home will increase India's low female labour force participation rate, which at 21% in 2019 was half the 47% global average.
- **Reverse Urban Migration:** The hyper-localised nature of GI offers solutions to reverse urban migration and conserve India's ancient crafts, culture and food.

- A rejuvenation of MSMEs, which account for 31% of India's GDP and 45% of exports, will follow.
- An estimated 55.80 million MSMEs employ close to 130 million people; of this, 14% are women-led enterprises and 59.5% are rural.
- Another revenue-earner, **GI tourism**, is typically a by-product of a strong GI ecosystem.

GI and Digital Commerce

- **Amazon's local to global programme** has taken Indian producers and their products such as Delta Leather Corporation's leather and SVA Organics's organic products to 18 global markets in over 200 countries, increasing demand and company size by as much as 300 times.
 - In the two years ending March 2021, Amazon exported such Made in India goods worth \$2 billion.
- GI products need the support of governments. The EU has an USD 87 billion GI economy. China has also done very well by GI, strengthening e-commerce in rural areas and actively promoting agricultural special product brands in lesser developed areas.
- Several studies show that the **patents and copyright protection** of products under GIs result in higher economic gains, fostering quality production and better distribution of profits.

Drawbacks

- The **potential of GI has not yet been realized** in India as the efforts have so far mainly focused only on the first step of filing the GI.
- **Filing a GI application is a huge task** that involves documenting historical evidence about the linkage of the product with the region and the application has to be filed by an association or group of persons.
- **Post registration activities** in terms of utilizing the GI certification as a marketing/branding tool to benefit the producers have not been attempted in most of the registered products due to limited awareness about GI in the country among producers, consumers and policymakers.

Way Forward

- **Capacity Building:** GI businesses are micro, it is necessary to address the challenges of capacity-building, formal or easy access to credit, forming marketing linkages, research and development, product innovation and competitiveness in both domestic and international markets.
 - The groundwork for MSME access to formal credit has already been done with the new Account Aggregator data-sharing framework.

- **Need to Shift to Digital Platforms:** There is the vexed issue of middlemen, who run the system. With the shift to digital platforms, the distribution margins of these gatekeepers or mandi agents must be competitive so they do not act as countervailing agents by getting into similar businesses or product lines which will erode GI producer incomes.
 - As seen from the experience of the new farm laws, this will be a task for the central and state governments; they must ensure the transition without breaking down too many existing linkages.
- **Local GI Cooperative Bodies:** Local GI cooperative bodies or associations should be established which can be nationally managed by a **GI board** under the auspices of the Department for the Promotion of Industry and Internal Trade (DPIIT), the Ministry of Commerce department which should be tasked with developing this new sector.
- **Spreading Digital Literacy:** A required skill for GI producers is digital literacy. This should be a priority agenda item for NGOs and stakeholders like the DPIIT.
 - It is an opportunity for India to redefine the future of work using automation, technology and artificial intelligence while simultaneously enhancing and adorning the country's talented local workforce.

Conclusion

The Indian GI economy can be a platform for India to showcase to the world a model for ethical capitalism, social entrepreneurship, de-urbanisation, and bringing women to the workforce, on the back of a robust digital system. It will be truly Made in India.



Reimagining Global Food Systems

*This article is based on **Reimagining food systems with lessons from India** which was published in *The Hindu* on 04/10/2021. It talks about the success of food security in India and how the developing world can learn from India.*

Tags: Social Justice, GS Paper - 2, GS Paper - 3, Food Security, Types of Resources

Recently, the first and historic **United Nations Food Systems Summit (UNFSS) 2021** concluded after an intense '**bottom-up**' process conceived in 2019 by the UN Secretary-General to find solutions and '**catalyse momentum**' to transform the way the world produces, consumes, and thinks about food and help address rising hunger.

In terms of larger goals, the food system transformation is considered essential in achieving the **sustainable development agenda 2030**. This makes strong sense as 11 **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** out of 17 are directly related to the food system.

In this context, it is imperative that the developing countries learn from the success of Indian food security.

Role Model For Other Countries

- **Lessons From India' Tryst With Food Insecurity:** The long journey from **chronic food shortage to surplus food producer** offers several interesting lessons for other developing countries in Asia, Africa, and Latin America in the area of land reforms, public investments, institutional infrastructure, new regulatory systems, public support, and intervention in agri markets and prices and agri research and extension.
- **Diversification of Agriculture:** The period between 1991 to 2015, saw the diversification of agriculture beyond field crops and brought **greater focus on the horticulture, dairy, animal husbandry, and fishery sectors**.
 - The learnings encompassed elements of nutritional health, food safety and standards, sustainability, deployment of space technology, and the like.
- **Equitable Distribution of Food:** One of India's greatest contributions to equity in food is its **National Food Security Act 2013** that anchors the **Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS)**, the **Mid-Day meals (MDM)**, and the **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS)**.
 - Today, India's food safety nets collectively reach over a billion people.
- **Food Distribution:** Food safety nets and inclusion are linked with public procurement and buffer stock policy.
 - This was visible during the global food crises 2008-2012 and more recently during the COVID-19 pandemic fallout, whereby vulnerable and marginalised families in India continued to be buffered against the food crisis by its robust TPDS and buffer stock of food grains.

Challenges in Achieving Food Security

- **Climate Change and Unsustainable Agriculture:** Climate change and unsustainable use of land and water resources are the most formidable challenges food systems face today.
 - The latest **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** report has set the alarm bells ringing, highlighting the urgency to act now.
- **Dietary diversity, nutrition, and related health outcomes** are another area of concern as a focus on

rice and wheat has created nutritional challenges of its own.

- India has taken a bold decision to fortify rice supplied through the **Public Distribution System with iron**.
- Agricultural research institutes are about to release varieties of many crops having much higher nutrition as a long-term solution for undernutrition and malnutrition.
- **Prevalence of Undernourishment:** It is ironic that despite being a net exporter and food surplus country at the aggregate level, India has a 50% higher prevalence of undernutrition compared to the world average.
 - The high prevalence of undernutrition in the country does not seem to be due to food shortage or the low availability of food.
 - The Government of India and States are seriously concerned about this paradoxical situation of being food surplus and at the same time, having 15% of the population undernourished.
 - They are trying to address other possible reasons for low nutrition through several nutritional interventions. As announced recently, the supply of **fortified rice in PDS** and **Poshan Abhiyan** are the two steps among many to address the challenge of undernutrition and malnutrition.
- **Reducing food wastage or loss of food** is a mammoth challenge and is linked to the efficiency of the food supply chain.
 - Food wastage in India exceeds Rs. 1-lakh crore.

Way Forward

- **Sustainable Approaches:** We must collaborate to invest, innovate, and create lasting solutions in sustainable agriculture contribution to equitable livelihood, food security, and nutrition.
 - This surely requires reimagining the food system towards the goal of balancing growth and sustainability, mitigating climate change, ensuring healthy, safe, quality, and affordable food, maintaining biodiversity, improving resilience, and offering an attractive income and work environment to smallholders and youth.
- **Crop Diversification:** Diversification of cropping patterns towards millets, pulses, oilseeds, horticulture is needed for more equal distribution of water, sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture.
- **Institutional Changes in Agri-Sector:** **Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs)** should help get better prices for inputs and outputs for small holders.
 - **E-Choupal** is an example of technology benefiting small farmers.

- Women's empowerment is important particularly for raising incomes and nutrition.

- Women's cooperatives and groups like **Kudumbashree** in Kerala would be helpful.

- **Sustainable Food Systems:** Estimates show that the food sector emits around 30% of the world's **greenhouse gases**.

- Sustainability has to be achieved in production, value chains and consumption.

- **Non-Agriculture Sector:** The role of non-agriculture is equally important for sustainable food systems. Labour-intensive manufacturing and services can reduce pressure on agriculture as income from agriculture is not sufficient for small holders and informal workers.

- Therefore strengthening rural **Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs)** and food processing is part of the solution.

Conclusion

It is important to reiterate that hunger and food insecurity are key drivers of conflict and instability across the world. 'Food is peace', is a catchphrase often used to highlight how hunger and conflict feed on each other.

The **Nobel Peace Prize 2020** conferred on the United Nations WFP highlighted the importance of addressing hunger to prevent conflicts and create stability. The citation communiqué articulated this well by quoting the line: **"Until the day we have a medical vaccine, food is the best vaccine against chaos."**



Outer Space Geopolitics

*This editorial is based on **India and the geopolitics of the moon and The growing strategic importance of outer space** which were published in *The Indian Express*. It talks about outer space geopolitics and the way forward for India.*

Tags: International Relations, GS Paper - 2, Bilateral Groupings & Agreements

In opening new pathways for outer space cooperation with the US and Quad partners—Australia and Japan. India has engaged itself more productively with a rapidly evolving domain that is seeing more commerce and contestation.

India's new strategic interest in outer space is based on a recognition of two important trends. One is the centrality of emerging technologies in shaping the 21st-century global order. The other is about the urgency of writing new rules for the road to peace and stability in outer space.

Geostrategy of Outer Space

- The US has traditionally dominated outer space in the commercial domain. Its military competition with Russia set the norms in the security field.
 - China's emergence as a major space power — in both civilian and military — is reshaping astropolitics.
- The dramatic expansion of Chinese space capabilities and China's ambition to dominate outer space have lent a new urgency for democratic powers to come together to secure their national interests as well as promote sustainable order in the skies above.

Significance For India

- Space is emerging as a potential **fourth arm of the country's defence setup**.
- With the US, Russia and China already in pursuit of becoming a Space power, India will need to equip itself appropriately to meet emerging security challenges.
- Space power has the ability to use space while denying reliable use to any foe.
 - India already has a significant ability to use space. But it's ability to deny space use to an adversary is, understandably, negligible.
 - When it comes to satellites, India has a handful of military satellites in operation, compared to over 40 civilian ones. Our first dedicated military satellite was launched only in 2013.
- However, India has made some progress in pursuit of becoming a space power.
 - Recently conducted Mission Shakti has demonstrated India's capability to target enemy satellites.
 - Newly instituted **DSA (defence space agency)** will be supported by a defence space research organization (DSRO) that has the mandate to create weapons to "degrade, disrupt, destroy or deceive an adversary's space capability".

Issues Associated With Outer Space Geopolitics

- **Weaponisation of Space:** The militarisation and weaponisation of space are fundamentally at odds with constructive commercial and scientific projects. The war in space would destroy the intrinsic trust and cooperation necessary to maintain the systems deployed in space for peaceful purposes.
 - Despite these facts, the development projects for militarisation and weaponisation of outer space have been on the increase with the aim of one country.
- **Issue of Space Debris:** A satellite that is destroyed by a missile disintegrates into small pieces, and adds to the space debris. The free floating space debris is a

potential hazard for operational satellites and colliding with them can leave the satellites dysfunctional.

- With countries launching more and more satellites, each one of them being a strategic or commercial asset, avoiding collisions could become a challenge in the future.
- **Quest For Space Mining:** This quest for space mining will trigger a new era of conflict and cooperation and lead to a new space race.
 - According to the US Chamber of Commerce, the commercial space industry is estimated to be USD 1.5 trillion industry by 2040.
- **Moon Rush:** After the discovery of water on the moon and "**Peaks of Eternal Light**", the **moon rush** on the earth aimed at the lunar south pole, has become a new phenomenon. For example:
 - China's Chang'e 4 soft-landed in the Von Karman crater on the dark side of the south polar region.
 - The US lunar programme now aims to put man back on the moon in the next decade.
 - NASA's focus is on the south pole and if it succeeds, it will be the first manned crew to arrive at the south pole.
 - Jeff Bezos (owner of Amazon) unveiled the Blue Moon project that seeks to land men and women on the moon in the next few years.
- **Space Situational Awareness (SSA)** involves monitoring the movement of all objects — natural (meteors) and man-made (satellites) — and tracking space weather.
 - Today, space is integral to our lives and disruption of space-based communications and earth observation will have serious consequences.

Space Situational Awareness (SSA)

- There are tens of thousands of objects in Earth orbit that pose a potential threat to satellites and launches. Space Situational Awareness (SSA) refers to keeping track of objects in orbit and predicting where they will be at any given time.

Potential For India's Outer Space Destiny

- India, which has developed significant space capabilities over the decades, is a deeply invested party. The US recognises that it can't unilaterally define the space order anymore and is looking for partners.
 - The India-US joint statement issued in Washington highlighted plans to finalise, "a Space Situational Awareness Memorandum of Understanding that will help in sharing of data and services towards ensuring the long-term sustainability of outer space activities by the end of the year".

- **International cooperation on space situational awareness** is similar to the agreements on maritime domain awareness — that facilitate sharing of information on a range of ocean metrics.
- The new space working group set up by the **Quad** will identify new collaboration opportunities and share satellite data for peaceful purposes such as monitoring climate change, disaster response and preparedness, sustainable uses of oceans and marine resources, and on responding to challenges in shared domains.
 - The Quad leaders also promised to “consult on rules, norms, guidelines and principles for ensuring the sustainable use of outer space.”

Way Forward

- **Collaboration of Public and Private Institution:** India needs to structurally separate the regulatory, commercial and scientific research elements of the space programme.
 - Funding on Space Research and development must be enlarged and ISRO & private research institutions should be encouraged to work in tandem.
 - There is a need to establish an independent regulator that governs both ISRO and new space operators on a level playing field.
- **Need For a Strong Regulatory Framework:** Delhi must also legislate a strong regulatory framework to promote India’s space activity and protect its international interests.
 - India should take a hard look at the emerging challenges to the current space order, review some of its past political assumptions about the nature of outer space and contribute to the development of new global norms that will strengthen the essence of the Outer Space Treaty.
- In order to effectively defend our space assets, India must have **reliable and accurate capabilities to track space objects**, from debris and spacecraft to celestial bodies.
 - Since accurate tracking forms the basis of almost every conceivable action in space, therefore, this crucial capability must be developed indigenously.
- For space defence to be effective, **India must acquire a minimum, credible capacity** across the various types of space weapons, physical, electronic and cyber.

Conclusion

The scale of the challenges and opportunities in outer space, however, demand more urgent and sweeping reform. That can only be mandated by the highest political level. Back in 2015, the Prime Minister’s speech on the

Indian Ocean focused national attention on maritime affairs. India could do with a similar intervention on outer space today.



Sustainability of Public Debt

*This editorial is based on **How to make public debt sustainable** which was published in The Hindu BusinessLine on 05/10/2021. It talks about the issues related with the burgeoning public debt and suggests a way forward.*

Tags: Indian Economy, GS Paper - 3, Government Budgeting, Fiscal Policy, Banking Sector & NBFCs

In its recent research report, Morgan Stanley forecasted that India will be included in **global bond indices** in early 2022 and this will result in investment inflow of USD 170-250 billion into the Indian sovereign bond market during the next decade.

Global Bond Indices

It includes the emerging markets in debt, which monitor local currency bonds issued by governments of developing countries. India has been present in most benchmark equity indices but absent in the bond indices market.

Of late, the Indian bond market has been in the news for various reasons. Out of all, sustainability of public debt is one of the critical issues from the point of view of policymakers.

Objectives of Public Debt / Borrowing

- **Income and Revenue:** The target of public debt normally is to cover the gap that developed due to mismatch between proposed expenditure and expected revenue.
 - Whenever because of increased administrative expenditure or flood, feminine, earthquake and communicable diseases like unexpected problems, the government’s income becomes less because they have to spend it to cover these problems.
- **In Times of Depression:** Depression is the condition when costs reduce, there is a lack of courage in people spending money on industries and in future there is no possibility of getting gain.
- **To Curb Inflation:** Inflation is the name of that condition at the time of increased cost. So, the government by taking debt can take back a big quantity of work power from the hands of people.
- **To Finance Development Plans:** In a developing economy, there is always a lack. The government cannot take shelter on heavy taxation. But to remove

poverty from the country, this is also most needed and important to do arrangements of development plans.

- In this condition, the only way is to take public debt. So, the government takes debts from within the country or from foreign governments or from people to do finance arrangements.
- **Expansion of Education and Health Services:** Government also takes debt for the construction and development of education and health services and other services like this.
- **To Make the Public Verdict Favourable:** When the citizens are not able to pay the tax then the government has to take debt. Sometimes even then the more capability of the public, the government never increases taxes because the public verdict sticks to favourable (populist measures).

Burgeoning Public Debt

- India's public debt (combined liabilities of the Central and State governments) to gross domestic product (GDP), at constant prices, increased to a record high of 100.86 per cent in 2020 as against 76.86 per cent in 2014, as per the data from the Reserve Bank of India.
- Now, India has become the most indebted nation after Brazil and Argentina among the emerging market economies. In South Asia too, India is the most indebted after Bhutan and Sri Lanka. Interestingly, Brunei, United Arab Emirates, and Russia have low debt-to-GDP ratios with 2.46 per cent, 19.35 per cent, and 19.48 per cent respectively.

Reasons of Higher Public Debt

- **Bank Recapitalisation:** Infusing capital in state-run banks using recapitalization bonds in 2017-18 increased the total central government debt in both absolute terms and as a percentage of GDP that fiscal.
 - In 2017-18, Rs 80,000 crore of recapitalization bonds were used to fund state-run banks.
- **UDAY bonds:** The liabilities of states have increased during 2015-16 and 2016-17, following the issuance of **Ujwal Discom Assurance Yojna (UDAY)** bonds.
- **Small Share of Taxes in National Income:** After India got independence, there is an increase in national income four times more.
 - Gross tax-to-GDP in India is around 10.2% in 2021.
 - And the most part of the tax income is from indirect taxes.
- **Imperfect Tax System:** The Indian tax system has many loopholes. In India, there is very high tax evasion because our tax system is full of errors.
- **Misuse of Public Income:** There is a big quantity spent on government departments where there is

corruption, bribe, and red tapism available and work is completed with very difficulty. For this reason, there is a reduction in production.

Impact of Burgeoning Public Debt

- It is well-recognised that excessive public debt leads to higher risk premium in interest rates, which results in reduction of private investment (**crowding out effect**) as well as **contraction of GDP** in the long run.
- Though an increase in public debt will stimulate aggregate demand and output in the short-run, the economic growth will turn negative in the long run if the debt-GDP ratio exceeds 90%.

Way Forward

- **Privatisation of Loss-making PSUs:** The government may think of privatising loss-making public sector undertakings (PSUs) such as Air India.
 - Further, '**minimum government and maximum governance**' principle may be adopted in privatising any PSU.
- **Prudential Stance:** As per the **Fiscal Responsibility Budget Management (FRBM) Act 2003**, it is the onus of the government to achieve fiscal consolidation and to achieve long term macro-economic sustainability through effective conduct of monetary policy and prudential debt management in a transparent manner.
 - In line with this, the RBI has been sensitising States such as Chhattisgarh, Goa, Manipur, etc., about prudential measures of cash and debt management.
- **Leveraging of PFMS:** The Central Government has been implementing over one thousand social welfare schemes through its various ministries with an annual expenditure outlay of around Rs. 3-lakh crore.
 - As part of better fiscal deficit management, maintaining enhanced transparency and accountability, the **Public Financial Management System (PFMS)** should be leveraged to the maximum possible through real-time consolidated and granular data on advances, transfer of funds and utilisation.
- **PPP Model in Social Schemes:** The government may think of a public private partnership (PPP) model in social schemes such as **Deen Dayal Upadhyay Grameen Kaushalya Yojna (DDU-GKY)**.
- **Harmonisation of tax regime:** Though Goods and Services Tax (GST) subsumed almost all the indirect taxes, it is not applicable to alcohol, petroleum products, electricity, etc., as on date. Besides, multiple GST rates are in vogue.
 - Hence, GST needs to be harmonised and expanded to other areas to reach national consensus with a view to improving the tax-GDP ratio.

- Besides, the government should create an investor-friendly environment for additional sources of financing to replace the high public debt.
- **Thrust on renewable energy:** India imports nearly 80% of its domestic requirement of crude oil. India can become a USD 5 trillion economy by 2025 if it gives more thrust on renewable energy by reducing its reliance on fossil fuels, thereby saving on foreign exchange.
- Further, the government should enhance efficiency of public debt management by adhering to the canons: low cost, risk mitigation and market development.



India And Present Global Order

*This editorial is based on **A strategy for India in a world that is adrift** which was published in The Hindu on 07/10/2021. It talks about the current status of global order and the way forward for India to utilise it.*

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

Like any other country, India's foreign policy envisages to widen its sphere of influence, enhance its role across nations, and make its presence felt like an emerging power.

The year 2021 presents a bunch of challenges and opportunities in pursuit of fulfilling foreign policy objectives. New situations require fresh thinking. Changing dynamics of the present global order requires India to take calculated actions.

Present Global Order

- The world is adrift today. We are neither in a bipolar Cold War nor in a multipolar world, though perhaps tending towards a world of several power centres. We are in a world between orders.
- The lack of a coherent international response to the **Covid-19 pandemic** is proof of an absence of international order and of the ineffectiveness of multilateral institutions. So is the ineffective international response to climate change and other transnational threats.
- A retreat from globalisation, the regionalisation of trade, a shifting balance of power, the rise of China and others, and structural China-United States strategic rivalry have shifted the geopolitical and economic centres of gravity from the Atlantic to Asia.

- Inequality between and within states has bred a narrow nationalism and parochialism. We are entering a new polarised information age, and face ecological crises of the Anthropocene, making climate change an existential threat.

Asian Century

- Over the next decade it is expected that Asia will remain the cockpit of geopolitical rivalries, and that the US remains the most formidable power, though its relative power is declining.
- China sees a window of opportunity but acts in a hurry, suggesting that it believes that window may close or is already closing due to pushback from the West and others.
- China's crowded geography constrains it both on land and at sea. It is expected that her profile and power will continue expanding, particularly in our periphery.
- The result is likely continued friction, some cooperation, and quasi-adversarial relations between India and China, which others will take advantage of. As neighbours and in the present situation, a mix of confrontation and cooperation is likely to continue to mark India's relations with China.
- Overall, conventional conflict between the great powers in Asia may not be a reality but other forms and levels of violence and contention in the international system will rise.

Challenges For India

- **A Stronger China:** China is the only major country that had a positive growth rate at the end of 2020, and its economy is poised to grow even faster in 2021.
 - Militarily, China has further strengthened itself and now seeks to dominate the Indo-Pacific Ocean with its announcement of its third aircraft carrier's launch in 2021.
 - In this context, any breakthrough in Sino-Indian relations is unlikely to occur, and the confrontation between Indian and Chinese armed forces is expected to continue.
- **Growing Russia-China Axis:** Russia is beginning to display more significant interest in its periphery's affairs. Moreover, the sanctions imposed on Russia after Crimea's annexation in 2014 has pushed Russia towards a tighter embrace of China.
 - This seems to signal reduced interest in countries such as India.
 - Also, India's closeness to the U.S. has weakened its links with traditional friends such as Russia and Iran.

- **Changing Middle East Equations:** The US-brokered rapprochement between Israel and four Arab countries — the UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan — reflected the changing landscape in the region.
 - However, despite the hype surrounding **Abraham Accords**, the situation remains fluid and has not reduced the risk of a confrontation between Iran and Israel.
 - Given the region's strategic flux, Iran could well be tempted to use its nuclear capability to enhance its position.
 - This does pose problems for India since both have relations with it.
- **Self-Imposed Isolation of India:** Currently, India remains isolated from two important supranational bodies of which it used to be a founding member, viz., the **Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)** and the **South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC)**.
 - Moreover, India has opted out of the **Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP)**.
 - This self-imposed isolation doesn't synergise with India's aspiration of becoming a global power.
- **Weakening Ties with Neighbors:** A more worrying concern for Indian foreign policy is weakening ties with the neighbours.
 - This can be seen from instances like **China's Cheque Book Diplomacy** vis-a-vis Srilanka, strain in relation with **Bangladesh on NRC issue** and recent **border controversy with Nepal** due to the release of the new map.

Way Forward

- The **uncertainty and changing geopolitical environment** clearly pose considerable challenges to Indian policy but also throw up certain opportunities, enhancing our strategic options and diplomatic space, if we adjust policies internally and externally, particularly in the subcontinent.
 - We should aim for multipolarity in Asia.
- **Issue-based Coalitions:** India must adjust to changing circumstances. It has no choice but to engage with this uncertain and more volatile world. One productive way to do so would be through issue-based coalitions including different actors, depending on who has an interest and capability.
- **Increasing security congruence** with the U.S. could enable growing cooperation in fields significant for India's transformation: energy, trade, investment, education and health.
 - Other areas in which India and the U.S. could increase cooperation are: climate change and

- energy, on tech solutions for renewable energy, and on digital cooperation.
- **Revive SAARC:** India could be the primary source of both prosperity and security in the neighbourhood — the subcontinent and the Indian Ocean Region. The over securitisation of policy towards our neighbours has driven trade underground, criminalised our borders, and enabled large-scale entry of Chinese goods destroying local industry in the north-east.
 - While lessening dependence on China, and seeking external balancing, our primary effort has to concentrate on self-strengthening.
 - If there is one country which in terms of its size, population, economic potential, scientific and technological capabilities can match or even surpass China, it is India.
- **Self-strength is key:** Several steps that India can take in ensuring its role and influence abroad continue to serve the task of transforming India. Economic policy must match political and strategic engagement.
 - Globalisation has been central to India's growth. A more active regional and international role for India is incompatible with a position on the margins of the global economy.
 - Self-reliance in today's world and technologies can only be realised as part of the global economy. We should not imitate China's claims to being a civilisational state and its adoption of victimhood. Instead we should affirm our own strength and historic national identity.
- **External Aid in Adequate Measure:** The current standoff with China has reinforced JL Nehru's belief in 1963 that India needs "external aid in adequate measure".
 - In this context, India will need continuing support from the US, Japan, Australia, besides European leaders such as France, Germany and the UK.
 - India should appreciate European entry into Indo-pacific narrative, as France and Germany have already come up with their Indo-Pacific strategy.

Conclusion

In sum, self-strengthening is an absolutely essential precondition as also safeguarding the foundational sources of India's international influence. We cannot separate our domestic trajectory from the external course we need to pursue to transform India into a strong, secure and prosperous country.



Role of Panchayats in Disaster Management

This Article based upon *“Stronger At The Grassroots”* which was published in *The Hindu* on 08/10/2021. It talks about the role that Panchayati Raj Institutions can play in Disaster Resilience Programs taking into account the part they have played in Covid-19 Pandemic Management.

Tags: Governance, GS Paper 2, Local Self Governance, Paper-3, Disaster Management

The **73rd amendment to the Indian Constitution** paves the way for the popularly elected local governments to play a substantive role in matters of immediate concern. The amendment envisions the Panchayats as the institutions of local self-governance.

In this context, the role of the **Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs)** in both disaster risk reduction and post-disaster management is very significant.

Unfortunately, these institutions have **not been fully operationalised for the handling of disasters** either during the preparatory stages or during disaster and post-disaster operations.

India, as a whole, **must integrate disaster preparedness into its core system**, starting from the ground-level.

PRIs and Disaster Management

➤ Panchayati Raj Institutions in India:

- **About:** The system of 2,60,512 Panchayati Raj Institutions present across the country, acts as the backbone of Indian democracy.
 - It is a local self-governance system which represents about 31 lakh members across India.
- **PRIs' Response to Covid-19:** Amid the peak months of the **pandemic**, the PRIs played a remarkable role by providing **essential leadership at the local level**.
 - **Performed Regulatory and Welfare Functions:** PRIs set up containment zones, arranged transport, identified buildings for quarantining people and provisioned food for the incoming migrants.
 - Moreover, effective implementation of welfare schemes like **MGNREGA** and the **National Rural Livelihood Mission** quickened the pace of recovery while ensuring support to the vulnerable population.
 - **Made Effective Collaborations:** During the pandemic, gram sabhas resolved to adhere to **Covid-19 norms**.

- Also, regular engagement with frontline workers like **ASHA workers** and **Anganwadi workers** through committees further assisted in handling the pandemic at local levels.

- **Organised Local Monitoring Bodies:** PRIs **organised community-based surveillance systems** involving village elders, the youth and **self-help groups (SHGs)** to keep a strict vigil in quarantine centres and monitor symptoms in households.

➤ Disaster Management in India:

- **Vulnerability to Disasters:** India is the **10th most disaster-prone country** in the world with 27 out of 28 States and all of the seven Union Territories being most vulnerable.
- **Inefficient SOPs:** Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) are **virtually non-existent** and even where such SOPs exist, the **authorities concerned are unfamiliar** with it.
- **Lack of Coordination:** The States also suffer from **inadequate coordination among various government departments** and other stakeholders.
 - The Indian system for disaster management also suffers from the **absence of an institutional framework** at the Center/State/District level.
- **Poor Warning and Relief Systems:** India lacks a proper early warning system.
 - Slow response from relief agencies, lack of trained/dedicated search and rescue teams and poor community empowerment are other important challenges.

Significance of PRIs in Disaster Management

- **Handling Disasters at Grass-root Level:** The devolution of power and responsibilities to the panchayats will result in **flexible and committed response at the grass-root level** in the case of natural calamities.
 - Effective and Strong PRIs, working in harmony with the state government, will help tackle the disaster through early warning systems.
- **Ensuring Better Relief Operations:** Local bodies being nearer to the people are in a better position to undertake relief tasks as they are **more familiar to the requirements of the local people**.
 - This **ensures total transparency** in working and usage of funds as in every disaster situation.
 - They can also be relied upon for undertaking day to day running of civic services, providing shelter and medical assistance to affected people etc.
- **Spreading Awareness and Gaining Cooperation:** Local government institutions have grass root level contact with people and they can **help effectively in**

spreading awareness and ensure people's participation in fighting the crisis.

- They are also ideal channels for NGOs and other agency's participation in the rescue and relief operations.

Issues Faced by PRIs

- **Interference from MPs and MLAs:** The interference of area MPs and MLAs in the functioning of panchayats adversely affects the performance of Panchayats.
- **Unavailability of Funds:** The Panchayats are not given enough funds and are **bypassed by State-controlled line departments** that continue to implement programmes falling within the rightful domain of the former.
- **Incomplete Autonomy:** Panchayats **lack systems, resources and capacities to act independently** due to numerous constraints imposed by district administrations and state governments.
 - Instead of becoming 'institutions of local self-governance', as envisaged by the constitution, panchayats **mostly act as field implementers of decisions made by state** and central governments.
- **Unclear Domains of Panchayats:** Though PRIs are a three tier integrated arrangement of the village, block and district level, they have remained largely ineffective as a consequence of **ambiguous jurisdictions and unclear linkages**.
 - Even in respect of **National Disaster Management Act 2005**, the **powers and responsibilities of panchayats are inadequately defined** and left to be determined by respective state governments.

Way Forward

- **Legal Backing for Disaster Management Programmes:** It is crucial to **include disaster management chapters in Panchayat Raj Acts** and making disaster planning and spending a part of Panchayati Raj development plans and local-level committees.
 - This will ensure **citizen-centric mapping** and planning of resources.
- **Resource Availability and Self-Reliance:** Local governance, local leaders and local communities, when empowered, respond to any disaster rapidly and effectively.
 - The local bodies require information and guidance and **must have resources**, capacities and systems in place to act with confidence, **without waiting for instructions from above**.
- **Shift in Disaster Management Paradigm:** There is an urgent need for a shift from a risk mitigation cum

relief-centric approach in disaster management into an **integrated plan for economic development with social justice**.

- Early warning systems, preparedness, preventive measures and awareness among people are as much an important part of disaster management as is recovery planning, rehabilitation and other relief measures.
- **Collective Participation:** Conducting regular, **location-specific disaster-management programmes** for the community and organising platforms for sharing best practices will strengthen individual and institutional capacities.
 - Assigning roles to individual members and providing them with the necessary skills can make such programmes more meaningful.
- **Financial Contributions from People:** Financial contributions from the community should be encouraged through the **establishment of community disaster funds** in all gram panchayats.
 - It is imperative to make disaster resilience an inherent part of the community culture now more than ever.



Digital Revolution in Indian Agriculture

*This editorial is based on the article **Seeding a data revolution in Indian agriculture** which was published in The Hindu on 08/10/2021. It discusses the need for digital technologies for the agriculture sector and suggests a way forward.*

Tags: Agriculture, GS Paper - 2, GS Paper - 3, Government Policies & Interventions, Agricultural Marketing, Agricultural Pricing

Digital technologies are transforming all the sectors of the economy and the society in innumerable ways. Communications, banking, payments, travel, energy, healthcare, taxation, and governance have significantly benefited by deploying digital solutions. Agriculture and allied sectors call for the need of digital disruption in order to convert challenges of agriculture into opportunities.

Recently, a consultation paper on the **India Digital Ecosystem of Agriculture (IDEA)** from the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare (MoA&FW) was released. It talks about a digital revolution in the agriculture sector. The fact is that every segment of present-day life is data-hungry.

Concept of IDEA

- The farmer and the **improvement of farmers' livelihood** is the aim of the IDEA concept and it is proposed to happen through tight integration of agri-tech innovation and the agriculture industry ecosystem to farming and food systems.
- The IDEA principles explicitly talk about openness of data, which means open to businesses and farmers, indicating the integration.
- **Value-added innovative services** by agri-tech industries and **start-ups** are an integral part of the IDEA architecture.

Objective of IDEA

- To enable the farmer **to realize higher income and better profitability** through access to right information at the right time, and from innovative services.
- To enable better planning and execution of policies, programs, and schemes of the Central and State governments, and also of the private sector and **Farmers Producer Organizations (FPOs)**.
- **To enhance efficiencies** in the usage of resources including land, water, seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, and farm mechanization by providing easier access to information.
- To **build capacities** across the gamut of digital agriculture and precision agriculture
- To give a fillip to R&D and Innovations in agriculture through access to high-quality data.
- To **adopt the best principles of cooperative federalism** while working with the states and union territories for the realization of the vision of IDEA.
- To formulate and leverage PPP frameworks for realizing the 'power of the digital'.

Issues of Adoption of Technologies

- **Potential of Data Misuse:** The IT industry has opposition to IDEA mainly due to the ethics of creating a Unique Farmer ID based on one's Aadhaar number and also the potential for data misuse.
- **Digital Disruption is a Double-Edged Sword:** The digital ecosystem relies on digital disruption to improve farmers' livelihoods. However before bringing such disruptions it must be studied how much farmers would be prepared to benefit from these newly emerging business environments.
 - In this context, the Union government has emphasised the significance of the farmer's database being prepared and has sought the support of States.
- **Lack of Awareness:** A majority of small and marginal farmers are not technology-savvy. That most of them

are under-educated for capacity building is ignored amidst these ambitious developments.

- However, more investments into the agriculture sector can benefit farmers and how the technology fix will help resolve all the issues of Indian agriculture is unclear in the IDEA concept.
- **Reaction of the Farmers Against Reforms:** The farmers do not always take reforms in a positive way. In this regard, the government will need to take farmers and their organisation in confidence.

Way Forward

While agreeing on the fact that a data revolution is inevitable in the agriculture sector, given its socio-political complexities, we cannot just count on technology fixes and agri-business investments for improving farmers' livelihoods.

- **Capacity Building of the Farmers:** There need to be immense efforts to improve the capacities of the farmers in India – at least until the educated young farmers replace the existing under-educated small and medium farmers.
 - This capacity building can be done through a mixed approach – preferably building the capacities of individual farmers or coping with the new situation by establishing support systems, through **FPOs** and other farmers associations where technical support is available for farmers.
 - Considering the size of the agriculture sector of the country this is not going to be an easy task but would need a **separate programme across the country** with considerable investment.
- **Adopting Recommendations of World Bank Report:**
 - 'The **digital revolution**—and the data it generates—are key to building an agriculture and food system that is efficient, environmentally sustainable, equitable, and able to link the world's 570 million farms with 8 billion consumers'.
 - The Bank has suggested 7 strategies (as in infographic below) to achieve the much desired digital transformation.

Digital Transformation of Food Systems - a global perspective*



* Digital Transformation of Agri-food systems – World Bank Group (2021)

Conclusion

Adoption of a holistic ecosystem approach to address the multiple challenges faced by the agriculture sector is of national importance, to fulfil the aspirations like Doubling Farmer's Income and achieving the SDG's. A multi-stakeholder approach is essential with the government playing the role of an enabler of the ecosystem players.



Agriculture and Environment

This article is based upon "A Carbon Policy for the Farm" which was published in the Indian Express on 11/10/2021. It talks about India's contribution to climate change and how it can prevent further damage by bringing a change in its agricultural regime.

Tags: Biodiversity and Environment, GS Paper 3, Environmental Pollution & Degradation, Conservation

The **Sixth Assessment Report** by the **Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)** has issued a "code red" to humanity declaring 1.5°C warming of the planet as inevitable.

Although environmental health is being given importance globally, the pace of recovery is not as fast as the pace of degradation.

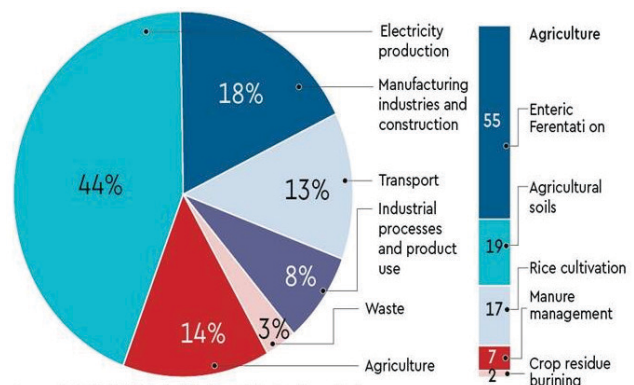
In India's context, the agriculture and allied sector is the third largest emitter of **greenhouse gas** after energy and manufacturing sectors.

Being extensively dependent on the sector, India needs to bring certain changes in its agriculture regime and introduce carbon-efficient methods of farming and **livestock management**.

India: Climate Change and Agriculture

- **India's Position in Air Pollution:** As per the **World Air Quality Report, 2020**, 22 of the 30 most polluted cities in the world are in India and Delhi is the world's most polluted capital.
 - Delhi suffers severely from air pollution during the winter months due to **stubble burning** in adjoining states.
 - The **Air Quality Index (AQI)** goes beyond 300 on average, with some days going as high as 600 to 800, while the safe limit is below 50.
- **Greenhouse Gas Emissions:** Globally, India is the **third largest emitter of greenhouse gas** after China and the US, emitting around **2.6 billion tonnes CO₂ equivalent annually**.

- However, **India's per capita emissions** is just 1.8 tonnes, **significantly lower than the world average** of 4.4 tonnes per capita.
- India, in its **Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs)**, has committed to "reduce emission intensity of its GDP by 33 to 35% by 2030 from 2005 level."
- **India's Sector-wise Emissions:** At global level, electricity and heat production, agriculture, forestry and other land use make up 50% of the emissions.
 - However, India owes its **largest chunk of emissions to the energy sector** (44%), manufacturing and construction sector (18%), and **agriculture, forestry and land use sectors (14%)**
 - The remaining is shared by transport, industrial processes and waste sectors.
- **Agriculture and Climate Change:**
 - **Total GHG Emissions:** The share of agriculture in total emissions has gradually **declined** from 28% in 1994 to 14% in 2016.
 - However, in absolute terms, emissions from agriculture have **increased to about 650 Mt CO₂ in 2018**.
 - **Emission Classification:** Agricultural emissions in India are primarily from the **livestock sector** (54.6%) and the use of **nitrogenous fertilisers** (19%).
 - **Rice cultivation** in anaerobic conditions accounts for a major portion of agricultural emissions (17.5%).
 - Agricultural soils are the largest single source of nitrous oxide (N₂O) emissions.
 - N₂O emissions from use of nitrogen-fertiliser increased by ~358% during 1980-81 to 2014-15.



Source: MoEFCC, (2021). India: Third Biennial Update Report to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Going Towards Carbon-Efficient Agriculture

- **Providing Legal Support to the Idea:** A carbon policy for agriculture must be framed with the aim to reduce its emissions and **reward farmers through carbon credits** which should be **globally tradable**.

- Also, India shall clearly spell out in its policy how it would adjust carbon credits when it sells to polluting industries abroad so that emission reductions are not double counted in India and the country buying carbon credits.
- **Changing Feeding Practices:** With the world's largest livestock population (537 million), India needs **better feeding practices** with **smaller numbers of cattle** by raising their productivity.
- **Promoting Water-Efficient Crops:** Besides livestock, **rice cultivation is another culprit for methane emissions**, especially in the irrigated tracts of north-west India.
 - While **direct seeded rice** and alternative wet and dry practices can reduce the carbon footprint in rice fields, the real solution lies in **switching areas from rice to maize** or other less water-guzzling crops.
 - Also, devising a system for **rewarding farmers for switching to corn** will make it more profitable than paddy, it can be a **win-win situation**.
- **Promoting Biofuels:** Encouraging the use of water-saving crops, such as **maize, to produce ethanol**, and production of **ethanol from non-food feedstock**.
 - It will help not only reduce India's huge dependence on crude oil imports but also reduce the carbon footprint.
- **Encouraging Fertigation:** An alternative for better and efficient fertiliser use would be to promote **fertigation (injection of fertilizers)** and **subsidise soluble fertilisers**.
 - The government should incentivise and **give subsidies on drips for fertigation**, switching away from rice to corn or less water-intensive crops, and promoting soluble fertilisers **at the same rate of subsidy as granular urea**.
- **Sustainable Dairy Practices:** There is a need to proactively ramp up **sustainable dairy practices**, which may include:
 - Realising the existing potentials for GHG emission reduction through **technological and farm best practices interventions** and solutions.
 - Reducing its demand for resources by better **integrating livestock into the circular bio-economy**.
 - This can be achieved by **recycling and recovering nutrients** and energy from animal waste.
 - **Closer integration of livestock with crops** and agro-industries at various scales to make use of low value and low-emission biomass.

Conclusion

- Keeping in mind the damages already done to the environment are irreversible, there is a need for a drastic and immediate cut in carbon emissions.

- India being an agriculture-dependent economy, can neither abandon the practice nor undermine the damages that are being caused by it.
 - Better carbon-efficient approach is needed to fulfil its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).



EU in Indo-Pacific

*This editorial is based on the article **How Delhi came to see Europe as a valuable strategic partner** which was published in *The Indian Express* on 09/10/2021. It talks about the developments related to the entry of the European Union in the Indo-Pacific region.*

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

The **European Union (EU)** is set to push for a closer relationship and stronger presence in the **Indo-Pacific**, as released in the **EU Strategy for Cooperation in the Indo-Pacific**.

The European Commission President said, "If Europe is to become a more active global player, it also needs to focus on the next generation of partnerships." Besides the Indo-Pacific strategy, the EU is also looking to launch the "Global Gateway" as a scheme to compete with China's **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)**.

Recently, members like Germany, France, and the Netherlands have all started embracing the notion of the Indo-Pacific and are also integrating the Indo-Pacific in their own national security strategies. Therefore, these EU member states have been the driving force behind pushing the EU to adopt the Indo-Pacific as a strategic concept.

EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy

- **Sustainable Supply Chain:** The primary objective of this engagement with Indo-Pacific partners is to build more resilient and sustainable global value chains.
- **Partnership With Like-Minded Countries:** The EU strategy currently appears to be pointed more towards building on established partnerships and developing new ones with like-minded countries in the Indo-Pacific to ensure its role and growing presence in the **Indo-Pacific region**.
- **Willingness to Work With Quad Members:** There is a willingness to work with Quad partner countries, especially on climate change, technology and vaccines.
 - Given China's expansionist tendencies in the Western Pacific and its growing footprints in the

Indian Ocean, the EU is willing to work with the Quad countries in the Indo-Pacific region.

- The EU is feeling the need to play a bigger role in Asia, to bear greater responsibility and to have an impact on the affairs of this region, whose fate is intertwined with that of Europe.
- Defence and security are important elements of the EU's Indo-Pacific strategy that "seeks to promote an open and rules-based regional security architecture, including secure sea lines of communication, capacity-building and enhanced naval presence in the Indo-Pacific".

Significance of EU For India as well as Indo-Pacific

- **Denmark**, a country of barely six million people, can establish a **significant green partnership** with India, is a reminder that even smaller countries of Europe have much to offer in India's economic, technological, and social transformation.
 - Tiny Luxembourg brings great financial clout, Norway offers impressive maritime technologies, Estonia is a cyber power, Czechia has deep strengths in optoelectronics, Portugal is a window to the Lusophone world, and Slovenia offers commercial access to the heart of Europe through its Adriatic sea port at Koper.
 - As India begins to realise this untapped potential, there are new openings with the 27-nation EU.
- The EU and the Indo-Pacific are natural partner regions in terms of trade and investment.
 - The EU is the top investor, the leading provider of development cooperation, and one of the biggest trading partners in the Indo-Pacific region.
 - Together, the Indo-Pacific and Europe account for over 70% of the global trade in goods and services, and over 60% of foreign direct investment flows.
 - Trade exchanges between the Indo-Pacific and Europe are higher than between any other geographical regions in the world.
 - The Indo-Pacific region hosts major waterways that are of vital importance to EU trade, including the **Malacca Straits, the South China Sea, and the Bab el-Mandeb Strait**.

Impacts of EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy

- **Contribute to Regional Security:** A stronger Europe with greater geopolitical agency is very welcome in India. India is conscious that Europe can't match America's military heft in the Indo-Pacific. But it could help strengthen the military balance and contribute to regional security in multiple other ways.

- Europe could significantly boost India's capacity to influence future outcomes in the Indo-Pacific. It would also be a valuable complement to India's Quad coalition with Australia, Japan and the United States.

- **Military Security With Development Infrastructure:** The EU's Indo-Pacific strategy is likely to have a much greater impact on the region more immediately and on a wider range of areas than military security.
 - They range from trade and investment to green partnerships, the construction of quality infrastructure to digital partnerships, and from strengthening ocean governance to promoting research and innovation.
- **Multipolar World:** As the deepening confrontation between the US and China begins to squeeze South East Asia, Europe is widely seen as widening the strategic options for the region.
 - The perspective is similar in India, which now sees the EU as a critical element in the construction of a multipolar world.

Associated Issues

- Few Asian countries view Europe with strategic suspicion. Many in Asia see Europe as a valuable partner.
- There are other imminent issues which the **Indo-Pacific region** faces that can have an impact on the European countries' own security interests too, like the potential risks of emerging technologies, ensuring supply chain resilience, and countering disinformation.
- Given the bloc's limited joint military capabilities and continued reliability on the US, the military dimension of the security agenda has not been delved deep into.
 - There has been mention of joint exercises, port calls to ensure freedom of navigation and to combat piracy as France and Germany are already getting engaged in joint exercises with the other Indo-Pacific countries

Way Forward

- EU member states need to further fine-tune their engagement with China and within the region, adding an extra layer of sophistication to the EU's role there.
- EU cooperation with its partners must become concrete and show its value as an alternative sustainable model.
- If the EU is to promote and lead a comprehensive approach in the Indo-Pacific, coherent and coordinated actions with India, ASEAN, Japan, Australia and the UK are the only way forward.

- Implementing joint projects to boost digital connectivity could be the first step.

Conclusion

India must welcome the entry of the EU in the region, as Europe with its much greater economic weight, technological strength, and normative power promises to boost India's own quest for a multipolar world and a rebalanced Indo-Pacific.

India's strategy is to "engage America, manage China, cultivate Europe, reassure Russia, bring Japan into play". However, there is also a need to emphasize on how to "cultivate Europe".



Reflections On The Quasi-Federal Democracy

This editorial is based on the article *Reflections on the 'quasi-federal' democracy* which was published in *The Hindu* on 09/10/2021. It talks about the flaws in our federal structure of democracy.

Tags: Indian Polity, GS Paper 2, Federalism, Centre-State Relations, Indian Constitution

Parliamentary disruption is quite a common phenomenon in the Indian political system. Amidst the disruption, a large number of Bills affecting the federal structure of the State (for eg. the three Farm Laws Bills), have been passed without any deliberation in the Parliament.

This has raised several issues with respect to structural flaws in India's Federal democracy which require serious consideration.

Indian Federalism

- Federalism in essence is a dual government system, constituting a Centre and a number of States.
- **Unique Characteristics of Indian Federalism:** Apart from the above Characteristics, Indian Federalism also has the below mentioned features:
 - **Single Constitution:** In India, there is only one Constitution. It is applicable to both the Union as a whole and the States. In a true federation, there are separate Constitutions for the Union and the States.
 - **Division of Power:** In a federation, power is divided equally between the two governments.
 - But in India, the Central government has been given more powers and made stronger than the State governments. (In the Union List of

Schedule 7, there are more and important items than in the State List)

- **Constitution is not strictly rigid:** The Constitution of India can be amended by the Indian Parliament as per the needs of time.
 - On many subjects, the Parliament does not need the approval of the State legislatures to amend the Constitution. (Article 3 allows alteration of areas, boundaries or names of existing States).
 - However, on certain subjects affecting States' functions and rights, the consent of half the States is necessary. (Article 368 of the Constitution)
- **Unified Judiciary:** India has a unified or integrated judicial system. The High Courts which are the highest Courts in the State come under the Supreme Court in the hierarchy.
- **Single Citizenship:** Indian States do not provide separate citizenship (Single Citizenship under Part II of the Constitution).
 - All the Indian citizens are the citizens of State. This is unlike USA, where there is dual citizenship: one, federal and the other, State.

Nature of Indian Constitution

- Federal theorist K.C. Wheare has argued that the nature of Indian Constitution is quasi-federal in nature.
- The SC in *S R Bommai vs Union of India (1994)*, a nine-judge Bench of Supreme Court held federalism a part of the Basic Structure of the Constitution.
- The SC in *Sat Pal v State of Punjab and Ors (1969)*, held that the Constitution of India is more Quasi-federal than federal or unitary.

Benefits of a Quasi Federal System

- **National Integration:** The Constituent Assembly's decision to not create a true federation was taken after looking at the precarious situation of the time.
 - With creation of Pakistan, a Nation created on the basis of religion, there were voices of separate Nation States in other states too. As a result, various provisions like Article 356 were added. A federal structure with unitary features allowed scope for such maneuver.
- **Cooperation and Coordination:** A Quasi Federal structure allows Centre to coordinate National level programmes like Pulse Polio Programme.
 - The recent case of allocation of oxygen to different States as per their requirement during Covid-19 was possible because of a Central authority.
- **Single Market Economy:** Having a quasi federal structure allows India to be a single market for the

World. The recent introduction of **Goods and Services Tax (GST)** has allowed creation of India as a single market.

- Moreover, there is a **single Income Tax** in all of India and the States do not have power to impose it. Thus, Indian citizens are saved from double taxation.
- **Procedural Ease:** The Indian Parliamentary system with its **bicameral legislature** allows for easy passage of law as compared to passage in a true federation like the USA.
 - A bicameral legislature also ensures proper representation of States in the Upper House.
- **Resolving Inter State Conflicts:** A quasi federal structure allows **centre to act as an arbiter** in case of Inter State dispute. For eg, Border dispute and **River Water dispute (Article 262 Constitution of India: Adjudication of disputes relating to waters of inter-State rivers or river valleys).**

Challenges of Quasi Federal System

- **Abuse of Power by Centre:** The federal provisions of the Constitution can only be amended with consent of the States. **Schedule 7** of the Constitution provides for a separate List for Centre and State.
 - However, the Centre regularly violates the provision by legislating on State subjects. **For eg, the recent Farm Laws.**
- **Office of Governor:** The power vested upon the governor by the **Article 154 of the Indian Constitution** states that all the executive powers of the state are held by him.
 - This provision implies that the Governor can appoint the Chief Minister and the Advocate General of the State, and State Election Commissioners. This has been frequently misused by the Centre to favour its State unit or a regional Party which is in coalition to it.
 - The most paramount executive power at his disposal is that he can **recommend the imposition of constitutional Emergency in a state.**
- **Regionalism:** Regionalism establishes itself through demands for autonomy on the grounds of language, culture etc.
 - The nation thus faces the challenge of internal security in the form of insurgency and this causes upheavals in the basic notion of Indian federation.

Way Forward

Reforms at the **institutional and political level** can deepen the roots of federalism in India.

- The contentious role of the Governor in undermining the States' authority for Centre's interest needs to be reviewed.
- Proper utilisation of the institutional mechanism of the **Inter-State Council** must be ensured to develop political goodwill between the Centre and the states on contentious policy issues.
- The gradual widening of the **fiscal capacity of the states has to be legally guaranteed** without reducing the Centre's share.

Conclusion

The Chairman of Drafting Committee, **Dr. Ambedkar** had rightly said that, "*Our Constitution would be both unitary as well as federal according to the requirements of time and circumstances*"

In view of the above, It would be more apt to consider Indian federalism as a separate type of federalism or **Federalism sui generis.**



Stimulus For Governance

*This editorial is based on the article **A stimulus for governance** which was published in The Hindu BusinessLine on 13/10/2021. It talks about the advantages and issues associated with the induction of ex-bureaucrats in the Cabinet.*

Tags: Governance, GS Paper - 2, Government Policies & Interventions, Transparency & Accountability

It is argued that since Independence, India has often fallen short of efficient execution of policies. Notwithstanding the huge progress made in areas such as space and information technology, India appears to be struggling in several basic, yet key, social sector areas such as health-care, education, sanitation, housing and food security.

To ameliorate the living standard of the people, it is appropriate for the present dispensation to trust bureaucrats/professionals, given their training and experience in policy implementation at the grassroots levels, as the country embarks on celebrating its 75th anniversary of Independence.

Now inducting professionals as Cabinet ministers in the **Council of Ministers (COMs)** seems to have become a new paradigm in India. The decision has its own advantages and disadvantages and thus, there is a need to evaluate the decision.

Advantages of Ex-Bureaucrats in COMs

- **Execution Friendly Policies:** The experience of

bureaucrats helps them shape policy which is both feasible and execution-friendly.

- **Low Allegiance to any Ideology:** Another advantage of their induction into the council of ministers is that their relatively low allegiance to any ideology means little or no political baggage, thus paving the way for long-term decisions in public interest.
- **Avoid Populist Measures:** Elected representatives have an inclination to take populist measures for short term political gains, which later take a toll on the overall health of the economy.
 - Such policies often become instruments of patronage and pilferage. Seasoned bureaucrats turned politicians think pragmatically and seldom make promises that are difficult to fulfil
- **Bureaucrats Know the System Inside out:** Knowing the system inside out, it is much easier for them to break inter- and intra-departmental silos, which can lead to a significant reduction in red tape and, thereby, improvement in productivity.
 - Several economies bear testimony to the fact that when policies were entirely re-engineered, it led to dramatic progress — India liberalising its economy in the early 1990s is one such example.
- **Quick And Seamless Implementation of Welfare Measures:** The experiment of involving professionals with elected representatives will not only strengthen our parliamentary democracy but also help in quick and seamless implementation of welfare measures for the common man.
 - Crisis management and skill sets to utilise resources optimally give professionals the extra edge vis-à-vis their elected counterparts in the Cabinet.
- **Strategic Intellectual and Managerial Skills:** While they may have to struggle initially to gain the acceptance and trust of the workforce and the general public, their ability to encourage team effort should work in their favour soon.
 - Besides, given their administrative experience they can be of immense value to the government for tackling conflicts, disputes, and protests.
 - Also, their strategic intellectual and managerial skills can be utilised for building consensus among sparring stakeholders. Hence, their involvement should help raise the governance bar.

Challenges of Inducting Bureaucrats as Ministers

- **Not Elected Representatives:** The bureaucrats are not elected representatives and sometimes may ignore people's will in carrying out their duties.

- It is thus many times said that the populist politics favours the concept of democracy and listens to the people's voices.
- But seasoned politicians always have a better understanding of what people want. They know the pulse of the people better.
- India, with its diversity in respect of geography, demography, climate, economy, culture and social structures, requires specialised treatment for its problems at various locations.
 - A one-size-fits-all approach is not a panacea for all its problems, especially in policy execution.
 - Thus there is a need for a wide representation of communities in the Cabinet. Moreover, the inclusion of hand picked bureaucrats may cause exclusion of participation rather than inclusion in the council of ministers (COMs).

Way Forward

- **Strengthening the Institutions of Governance:** Parliament is the supreme representative institution in India. The political representative represents the electorate.
 - Hence, there is a need to develop good practices and procedures of parliamentary functioning and make Parliament a dynamic institution in tune with the changing times.
- **Open Government is a Key Element of Governance Reform:** The environment of secrecy that pervades government functioning encourages malpractices. There is no early check because decisions are taken behind closed doors.
 - Thus there is a need to strengthen the **Right to Information** system in India.
- **Not Only Governance, But Good Governance:** The objectives of the government and administration must be achieving '**good governance**'.
 - Good governance is characterised by **participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law.**
- **Capacity Building of Local Self Government:** There is a lack of human resources, knowledge (skill-based and "knowhow") or infrastructural resources available to local self governments to carry out tasks.

Conclusion

Having said that, a fine balance between elected representatives and bureaucrats/professionals is the need of the hour for the Indian parliamentary system in view of the ever growing global and domestic socio-economic challenges.

Participation of both would be vital for the government to improve governance and service delivery to its people.



Social Media and Youth

*This editorial is based on the article **How do we protect youth in the Digital Age?** which was published in The Indian Express on 14/10/2021. It talks about the need to regulate social media platforms to protect youth from its ill-effects.*

Tags: Indian Society, GS Paper - 2, Issues Related to Children, GS paper - 1

Recently, **Instagram and its parent company, Facebook** faced public backlash after Reports suggesting their usage has a negative impact on youth. Facebook whistleblower, Frances Haugen also revealed that for the big social media companies, profit is a higher priority than youth's mental health. This has brought forth the **impact such social media apps and websites have on the youth.**

Positive Impact of Social Media

- **Connection:** Platforms like Facebook and Twitter give teens and young adults a **sense of belonging and acceptance**. This is particularly true for those who feel isolated or marginalized, such as **LGBTQ youth**.
 - Its allround effect was clear **during the pandemic**, when it connected people and loved ones living in isolation.
- **Positive Inspiration:** Social networks can create **peer motivation** and inspire young people to develop new and healthy habits. Teens can also find **positive role models** online.
- **Identify Formation:** Adolescent years are a time when youth are attempting to master their identities and finding their place in society. Social media provides a **forum for teens to practice skills** related to identity development.
 - **A study has shown** that young people who express their opinions on social media experience increased well-being.
- **Research:** **Mental health** experts and researchers can use it to **collect data** that subsequently informs research. In addition, **therapists and other professionals can network with each other** within online communities, thereby **expanding their knowledge and reach**.
- **Giving Voice:** Social media has allowed teens to develop a **voice of advocacy**. This can be a **very positive influence when exposed to the right outlets**.

- **Gateway to Talent: Social media outlets** provide students with a **platform to share their creativity and their ideas** with a neutral audience and get an honest response. The response becomes a guide for them to better shape their skills if they are looking to pursue that skill professionally.
 - For example, a photographer or videographer starts by posting their shots on Instagram. Many youngsters are already **making a career** out of it.
- **Boost to creativity:** Social media can help youth to **enhance their confidence and creativity**. It connects young people with a world of ideas and a world of possibilities. These platforms encourage students to exercise their creative skills in terms of engaging with their friends and their general audience.
- **Digital activism and social change:** Social media can be a **vehicle for making an impact in the community**. It exposes them to essential issues not only in their community but all over the world as well. **Greta Thunberg** is one such example of youth activism.

Negative Impact of Social Media

- **Mental Health problems:** Studies have found **close links between social media usage and teen depression**. As per a study, youth with moderate to severe depressive symptoms were **nearly twice** as likely to use social media almost constantly. Teenagers on social media spend much of their time observing the lives and images of their peers. This leads to constant comparisons, which can damage self-esteem and body image, exacerbating depression and anxiety among adolescents.
- **Physical Health problems:** Over usage of social media has resulted in less time being spent on doing healthy, real-world activities. **sleep deprivation** due to staying up late to continue scrolling through their social media feeds, a habit known as **vamping**.
- **Social Relations:** Adolescence is a key time for developing social skills. However, as teens spend less time with their friends face-to-face, they have fewer opportunities to practise them.
- **Tech Addiction:** Scientists have found that teen social media overuse creates a **stimulation pattern similar to the pattern created by other addictive behaviors**.
- **Reinforcing Prejudices:** Social media allows **reaffirmation of prejudices and stereotypes** they have about others. This is exacerbated by meeting like-minded people online, giving them a sense of community. For eg. **Flat Earth Theory**.
- **Cyberbullying or Trolling:** It has posed serious problems and has even led to cases of teenage suicides. Moreover, even teens who commit acts of cyberbullying

are more likely to report substance use, aggression, and delinquent behaviors.

- **Online Child Sex Abuse and Exploitation:** A study in USA found that nearly **half of all American children** surveyed indicate that they have been **made to feel uncomfortable, been bullied, or had an interaction of a sexual nature while online**. In another study, it was found that over **50 percent of the victims of online sexual exploitation are between the ages of 12 and 15**.

Way Forward

- **A dedicated Social Media Policy:** A holistic policy to **regulate social media** by creating **accountability of social media platforms** to not target youth as **consumers or future consumers**. This will make the algorithms more attuned towards adults rather than youth.
- **Safeguards for inappropriate content:** Platforms should be **prohibited from recommending or amplifying certain content** involving sexual, violent, or other adult material, including gambling or other dangerous, abusive, exploitative, or wholly commercial content.
 - **Standards of Ethical Design:** These standards will set forth **principles for tech companies to prevent, avoid, and discourage digital distraction** and prioritize ethical human learning.
- **Digital Literacy:** It is important to not lose sight of the **digital divide prevailing in India**, esp. in the education sector. A policy decision in the name of protecting youth should not result in youth of underprivileged background to lose out on opportunities of the future.
- **Governance and Regulation:** Government regulation in form of **greater accountability of platforms for their content, Data Localization, third party digital audits, strong Data Protection Laws etc.**
- **Role of Social Media Platforms:** Banning certain features like **“auto-play” sessions, push alerts** and more importantly to create products which do not target youth.
- **Role of Social Agencies: Parents, Educational Institutions and the society** as a whole have the important role to control the correct and limit the use of social media. This can be done by using **Parental control, limits to screen time, constant communication with kids, and promoting outdoor activities**.

Conclusion

The effects of digital technology on youth is important because these **effects will colour their adult behaviour** and the way future societies will behave. It is interesting

that tech titans like **Bill Gates and Steve Jobs** severely restricted their youth's access to technology.

All technologies have obvious benefits and potential harmful effects. As in mostly everything in life, the **key could lie in moderate use of social media**.



Tax Justice in the Global World

This article is based on “The pursuit of tax justice” which was published in The Indian Express on 18/10/2021. It talks about the need to eliminate tax abuse as a part of the global struggle for human rights.

Tags: Governance, GS Paper - 2, Inclusive Growth, Paper - 3

Recently, **Pandora Papers investigation** revealed that many of the world's wealthiest people have used tax havens and other nefarious means to evade taxation. This has brought into limelight the concept of tax justice and why elimination of tax abuse and tax havens should be seen as a human rights issue.

Tax justice simply means that the tax should be paid by those from whom it is due. The concept of tax justice entails that the **taxes should be paid equitably by each and everyone who is bound to pay**.

The Present Situation

- **Annual Global Loss:** As per ‘**The State of Tax Justice Report, 2020 published by the Tax Justice Institute**, the annual global loss due to tax abuse (**Tax abuse: Tax Evasion and avoidance**) is **nearly \$427 billion**. Of this, nearly **\$245 billion** is lost to “multinational corporations (MNCs) **shifting profit into tax havens**”. The other **\$182 billion** is lost to wealthy individuals hiding undeclared assets and incomes offshore.
- **Inequitable Impact:** The impact of tax evasion is **more on the lower-income countries**, they lose a much larger equivalent proportion than higher-income countries.
- **Role of Higher-income Countries:** Though they suffer a loss of \$382 billion in tax revenue annually, they are responsible for facilitating 98% of all global tax losses.
 - The **Corporate Tax Haven Index 2021 published by the Tax Justice Institute** finds that countries that are members of the **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)** are together responsible for **68% of the world's corporate tax abuse risks**.
- **India:** As per the **Tax Justice Network**, India is **ranked 47** in the **2020 Financial Secrecy Index published by the Tax Justice Institute**, based on a low secrecy score of 47.84.

- India loses **\$10 billion annually** in tax due to global tax abuse. This is equivalent to **0.41% of annual GDP** of India.
- The main countries through which maximum **tax abuse** happens are **Mauritius, Singapore and the Netherlands**.
- On the plus side, **India does not figure as a corporate tax haven** in any of the global index. Thus, India causes no tax loss to any other country.

Steps Taken to Control Tax Evasion

Global Steps:

- **OECD's Inclusive Framework's Statement:** The **Inclusive Framework's Statement** adopts a **two-pillar solution**.
 - **Pillar one** applies to about 100 of the biggest and most profitable **MNCs** and re-allocates part of their profit to the countries where they sell their products and provide their services.
 - Under **Pillar two**, any company with over **EUR 750 million of annual revenue** would now be subject to an **effective minimum rate of 15 per cent**.
 - As per OECD, the global minimum tax **may generate around \$150 billion** in additional global tax revenues per year.

Steps by India:

- **Legislative Action:**
 - **The Fugitive Economic Offenders Act, 2018**
 - **The Black Money (Undisclosed Foreign Income and Assets) and Imposition of Tax Act, 2015**
 - **Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002.**
- **International Cooperation:**
 - **Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements (DTAAs):**
 - India is proactively engaging with foreign governments on **Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements (DTAAs)/Tax Information Exchange Agreements (TIEAs)/Multilateral Conventions**.
 - **Automatic Exchange of Information:**
 - It will greatly assist the global efforts to combat tax evasion by **proactive sharing** of financial information.
 - **Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act of USA:**
 - India has entered into an **information sharing agreement** with the USA under the **US Act**.

Way Forward

- **ABCs of Tax Justice:** All the major economies should incorporate the three transparency measures designed to tackle corporate and private tax abuse and other corruption. They are **automatic exchange**

of information, beneficial ownership registration and country by country reporting.

- **Automatic exchange of information** is a data sharing practice between countries that allows information exchange about corporations and individuals doing cross border transactions in each of the countries.
- **Beneficial ownership registration** is the **practice of registering the identity of companies and other legal vehicles' beneficial owners**. A beneficial owner is the real person who ultimately owns, controls or receives profits from a company or legal vehicle. This will **uplift the corporate veil** behind which many persons hide to **avoid accountability**.
- **Public country by country reporting** is an **accounting practice** designed to expose multinational corporations that are **shifting profit into tax havens** for the purpose of paying less tax.
- **Unitary Taxation:** It is a way of taxing multinational corporations **based on where they genuinely do work i.e.,** employ staff, operate factories, sell goods and services, **instead of where they set up shell companies** in order to underpay tax i.e., **tax havens**.
- **A UN Convention on Tax:** Establishing a UN Tax Convention would allow **international tax rules to be determined through a genuinely representative process** at the UN that reflects the needs of countries around the world. UN convention on tax can hold countries to **legally binding, equitable standards on corporate taxation, financial transparency and tax justice**.
- **Global Asset Register:** It is a proposal to create a **comprehensive international registry of all wealth and assets** in order to give policymakers and the public the data needed to tackle global tax abuse and redress inequality.
- **India-specific:**
 - Greater **disclosure by companies** of how much profit they make and how much tax they pay in each country they operate in.
 - **Indian Finance Code:** There is a need for simplification of taxation laws in India. In this context there is a need to **implement recommendations of the Financial Sector Legislative Reforms Commission**.
 - The Commission proposed Indian Financial Code which would contain new legislation for the Indian financial system as it is considered to be fragmented, with gaps, overlaps, inconsistency and arbitrary.
 - **Adopting International Best Practice:** India may explore the option to revise the **standard of treatment clause** to align it with international

practices and include the traditional standard of protection of fair and equitable treatment.

- Also, India should clarify the open-ended terms in the **Model BIT**. This could result in India facing fewer disputes and BIT claims.

Conclusion

Corporate tax abuse fuels **inequality, fosters corruption and undermines democracy**. To repair this injustice, we must **reprogramme our tax and financial systems** to give equal weight to the needs of **all members of society**, instead of prioritising the desires of the wealthiest multinational corporations.

India, inter alia, other **developing countries** have a particular need to increase their tax revenue, to ensure that they can pay for essential activities. To achieve this objective, it is necessary that **tools of tax abuse are dismantled** and an **equitable tax system is established** to achieve tax justice.



Nuclear: A More Reliable Source of Energy

This article is based on “Nuclear Power: A Climate Response That Gets Short Shift” which was published in Livemint on 17/10/2021. It talks about the issues associated with renewable energy sources and how nuclear energy can prove to be a more viable alternative for fossil fuels.

Tags: Science & Technology, GS Paper - 1, Mineral & Energy Resources, GS Paper - 3, Nuclear Technology

In the immediate past, the world was dealing with a power and energy crisis. While the factors that caused this emergency differ country to country, the upshot has been a clamour to **reduce dependence on fossil fuels** and increase production of renewable energy.

However, the current green **energy paradigm needs some serious examination** in terms of 24x7 availability of these renewable resources.

Notwithstanding that **Nuclear Power** may be the cheapest, greenest and safest source of energy currently known to man. Every time the word “nuclear” is uttered, it gets a **negative and often hysterical response** rather than a reasoned fact-based one.

In the Indian context, nuclear, despite being a cleaner fuel, remains outside the priority list of power sources in India; **India contributes only 1.72% of global nuclear installed capacity**.

Nuclear Energy

- **About:** Nuclear energy comes from splitting atoms in a reactor to heat water into steam, turn a turbine and generate electricity.
 - Inside **nuclear power plants**, nuclear reactors and their equipment contain and control the chain reactions, most commonly fuelled by **Uranium-235**, to produce heat through fission.
- **Emissions from Nuclear Power Generation:** Nuclear power is **zero-emission**. It has **no greenhouse gases or air pollutants**.
- **Land Usage:** According to US government data, a 1,000-megawatt nuclear plant **requires 360 times less land than a similar-capacity wind farm** and 75 times less land than solar plants.
- **Nuclear Over Renewables:**
 - **Renewables are Unstable Sources:** **Solar** and **wind energy** are intermittent and unstable. The power from these sources can only be generated when the sun shines or wind blows.
 - Even in the best case scenario, solar and wind farms do not and **can never generate power round the clock**, they **require fossil-fuel back-up**.
 - Currently, 24% of Britain’s power comes from wind. But the country saw an unexpected **“windless summer”** this year, which is one of the reasons for the UK power crisis.
 - **Ecological Damage from Renewables:** Wind and solar projects can cause **ecological damage to the relatively pristine areas** where they are set up.
 - It is conservatively estimated that 500,000 birds are being killed every year by **collision with wind turbines** in the US.
 - **Nuclear as an Alternative:** In contrast to the intermittent nature of renewables like solar and wind, nuclear power can be used both to cover the electrical base load and for peak load operations.
 - Among the EU nations, Germany’s household-sector electricity price is the highest in the EU: \$0.37 per kilowatt-hour (KwH) whereas in France, it’s \$0.19.
 - **Power in France is much cheaper and cleaner** as the **country is mainly dependent on nuclear energy**.
 - In 2020, nuclear power made up 78% of the energy France generated, and renewables 19%. Fossil fuels accounted for only 3%.
- **Nuclear Energy and India:** India under the Prime Ministership of Dr Manmohan Singh signed the **Indo-US nuclear deal**.

- However, due to the usual protests and short-term political thinking not much strict actions were taken in the direction and **only 3% of the power India generates is nuclear.**
- In September 2021, the government announced that India would **triple its nuclear power capacity in the next 10 years.**

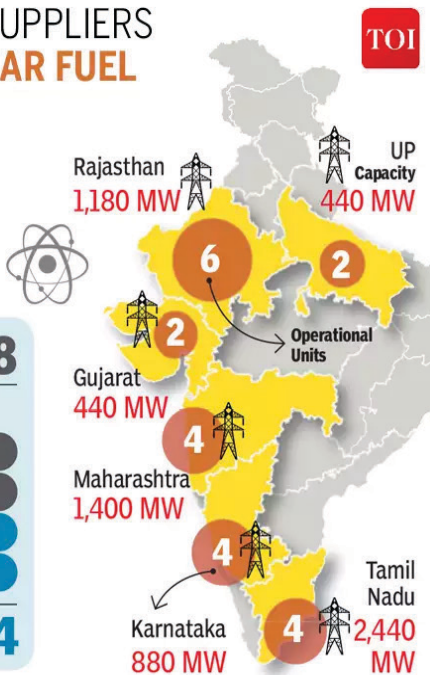
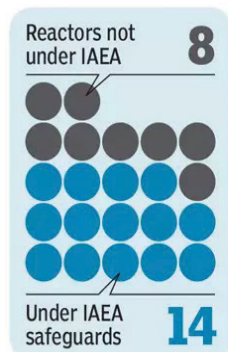
Issues Associated to Nuclear Energy

- **Lack of Public Funding:** Nuclear power has **never received the quantum of generous subsidy** the fossil fuel received in the past and renewable is receiving currently.
 - In **absence of public funding**, nuclear power will find it tough to compete against natural gas and renewables in the future.

- **Factors Pulling Nuclear Out of Competition:** Increasingly **poor economics of nuclear power** across the world, **skyrocketing construction costs**, made worse by the **post-Fukushima safety upgrades**, and **reliance on massive government subsidies** are making nuclear power uncompetitive.
- **Poor Financial Conditions of Investors:** The dire financial state of the foreign companies (**Toshiba-Westinghouse and Areva**) that were planning to build nuclear power plants in India is also the cause of failure of nuclear energy as a priority resource for India.
 - The very survival of these companies is at stake today as either they are **indebted to the State** or their **value has been degraded** due to competition.
- **Grassroots Resistance:** Reluctance towards new nuclear power plants in India resulted in considerable delay in commissioning the **Kudankulam plant** and forced the shifting of Westinghouse’s first planned project from Gujarat to Andhra Pradesh.
- **Acquisition of Land:** Land acquisition and **selection of location** for Nuclear Power Plant (NPP) is also a major problem in the country.
 - NPP’s like Kudankulam in Tamil Nadu and Kovvada in Andhra Pradesh have met with **several delays** due to the land acquisition related challenges.

BIGGEST SUPPLIERS OF NUCLEAR FUEL TO INDIA

22 nuclear power plants can generate **6,780 MW**

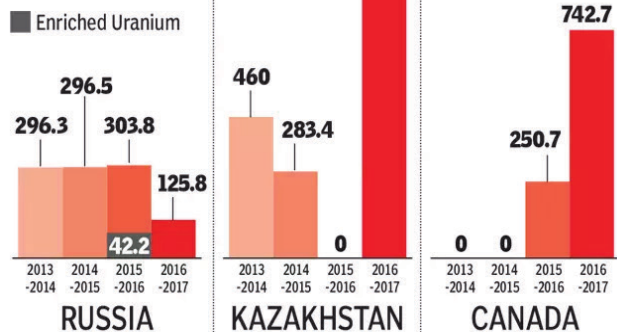


Way Forward

- **Utilising the Available Resources:** The estimated natural deposits of Uranium are about 70,000 tonnes and Thorium are about 3,60,000 tonnes in the country.
 - Hence, India imports much of the uranium it uses. However, it is both expensive and geopolitically tricky.
 - Instead of spending large amounts in imports of uranium, it shall **invest ambitiously in projects that convert thorium to fissile uranium** and produce power.
- **Addressing the Pre-Project Issues:** The government must address issues related to the **pre-project activities** such as **land acquisition at new sites, clearances from various ministries** especially from the environment ministry and **finding timely foreign collaborators.**
 - In addition, continuous efforts must be made to **bring down the capital cost of nuclear power plants.**
- **Addressing Safety Concerns:** Safety which is a major concern should be addressed on priority basis.
 - Complete phasing out of nuclear power generation for the fear of nuclear accident would be a wrong move.
 - If nuclear energy is generated adhering to the highest standards of safety, there is less possibility of catastrophic accidents.

Kazakhstan and Canada are currently the biggest suppliers of uranium to India

Supply in metric tonnes



Source: Department of Atomic Energy

Research: Atul Thakur

- In this regard, setting up a **Nuclear Safety Regulatory Authority** at the earliest would be helpful to the nuclear power programmes in the country.
- **Technological Support:** Reprocessing and enrichment capacity also require boost in India. For this India needs **advanced technology to fully utilise the spent fuel** and for **enhancing its enrichment capacity**.

Conclusion

- The global energy crisis should spur a rational relook at an energy source as clear as nuclear which needlessly seen as a hot potato.
 - We must make the right choices between various low-carbon technologies, all of which have some social and environmental impact.
- To meet rising energy demands, nuclear power is one of the better solutions. Considering lower capacity utilisation of renewables, rising fossil fuel prices and ever soaring pollution problems, the potential of nuclear power must be fully exploited.



Tackling Hunger

This article is based on "Alarming hunger or statistical artefact?" which was published in The Hindu on 18/10/2021. It talks about India's malnutrition problem.

Tags: GS Paper - 2, GS Paper - 3, Government Policies & Interventions, Issues Arising Out of Design & Implementation of Policies, Health, Issues Relating to Poverty & Hunger, Important International Institutions, Food Security

India has slipped to **101st position in the Global Hunger Index (GHI) 2021** of 116 countries, from its **2020 position of 94th**. With a score of **27.5**, India has a level of hunger that is in the serious category. This has brought to fore the urgency and the need to bring changes in India's nutritional policy.

GHI Findings

GHI has four components. **India's performance in the four components** is:

- **Undernourishment:** Share of undernourished in the population: **15.3%** in 2018-2020.
- **Child Stunting:** Prevalence of stunting in children under 5 years: **34.7%** in 2016-2020.
- **Child Wasting:** Prevalence of wasting in children under 5 years: **17.3%** in 2016-2020.
- **Child Mortality:** The Under-5 Mortality Rate: **3.4%** in 2019.

- **Analysis:** Since 2000, India has made substantial progress, but there are still areas of concern, particularly regarding child nutrition.
 - India's GHI score has decreased.
 - The proportion of undernourished in the population and the under-five child mortality rate are now at relatively low levels.
 - While child stunting has seen a significant decrease, it is still considered very high.
 - Despite improvements over the year, India has the highest child wasting rate of all countries covered in the GHI.

Causes of Malnutrition

- There are multiple dimensions of **malnutrition in India** that include
 - **Calorific deficiency:** Though the government has **surplus of foodgrains**, there is calorific deficiency because the allocation and distribution is not proper. Even the yearly budget allocated is not fully utilised.
 - **Protein hunger: Pulses** are a major contributor to address protein hunger. However, there is not enough budgetary allocations done to tackle the problem. With Eggs missing from menus of Mid-day Meals in various States, an easy way to improve protein intake is lost.
 - **Micronutrient deficiency (also known as hidden hunger):** India faces a severe crisis in micronutrient deficiency. Its causes include poor diet, disease, or increased micronutrient needs not met during pregnancy and lactation.
- **Other Causes:** Access to nutritious food is only one of the determinants of nutrition.
- **Other factors like:**
 - Poor access to **safe drinking water** and
 - Poor access to **Sanitation** (especially toilets),
 - Low levels of **immunisation** and
 - Education, especially of women, contributes equally to this dismal situation.

Government Interventions

- **Eat Right India Movement:** An outreach activity organised by the **Food Safety and Standards Authority of India** (FSSAI) for citizens to nudge them towards eating right.
- **POSHAN Abhiyan:** Launched by the **Ministry of Women and Child Development** in 2018, it targets to reduce stunting, undernutrition, anemia (among young children, women and adolescent girls).

- **Pradhan Mantri Matru Vandana Yojana:** A **centrally sponsored scheme** executed by the **Ministry of Women and Child Development**, is a maternity benefit programme being implemented in **all districts** of the country with effect from 1st January, 2017.
- **Food Fortification:** Food Fortification or Food Enrichment is the **addition of key vitamins** and minerals such as iron, iodine, zinc, Vitamin A & D to staple foods such as rice, milk and salt to improve their nutritional content.
- **National Food Security Act, 2013:** It legally **entitled up to 75% of the rural population** and 50% of the urban population to receive subsidized food grains under the **Targeted Public Distribution System**.
- **Mission Indradhanush:** It targets **children under 2 years of age and pregnant women** for immunization against **12 Vaccine-Preventable Diseases (VPD)**.
- **Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme:** Launched on **2nd October, 1975**, the ICDS Scheme offers a **package of six services** to children in the age group of 0-6 years, pregnant women and lactating mothers.
 - Supplementary Nutrition,
 - Pre-school non-formal education,
 - Nutrition & health education,
 - Immunization,
 - Health check-up and
 - Referral services.

Way Forward

- **Agriculture-Nutrition linkage schemes** have the potential for greater impact in dealing with malnutrition and thus, needs greater emphasis.
 - Recognising the importance of this link, the **Ministry for Women and Child Development** launched the **Bharatiya Poshan Krishi Kosh** in 2019.
 - There is a need to promote schemes directed to nutrition-agriculture link activities in rural areas. However, implementation remains the key.
- **Early fund disbursement:** The government needs to ensure early disbursement of funds and optimum utilisation of funds in schemes linked to nutrition.
- **Underutilisation of Resources:** It has been pointed out many a times that expenditure made under many nutrition-based schemes is considerably lower than what was allocated under them. Thus, emphasis needs to be on implementation.
- **Convergence with other Schemes:** Nutrition goes beyond just food, with economic, health, water, sanitation, gender perspectives and social norms contributing to better nutrition. This is why the proper

implementation of other schemes can also contribute to better nutrition.

- The convergence of **Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, Jal Jeevan Mission** with schemes pertaining to nutrition, will bring holistic changes to India's nutrition scenario.
- **Mid Day Meal Scheme:** The **Mid-Day Meal Scheme** aims to enhance the nutrition of school children by providing a balanced diet in schools. By including milk and eggs in each states' menu, preparing a menu based on climatic conditions, local foods etc. can help in providing the right nutrition to children in different States.

Conclusion

- With the largest number of undernourished people in the world, India needs to hasten to achieve **Sustainable Development Goal 2** of 'Zero Hunger' by 2030.
- According to the **World Food Programme** and **World Bank**, malnutrition affects cognitive ability, workdays and health.
- In that sense, fixing the nutrition problem of India, can make a difference not just to better nutrition but to build a wealthier nation too.
- The GHI ranking should prompt us to look at our policy focus and interventions and ensure that they can effectively address the concerns raised, especially against **Covid-19**-induced nutrition insecurity.



The Need for a New National Security Policy

This article is based on "The Outlines of A National Security Policy" which was published in The Hindu on 21/10/2021. It talks about the inclusion of cyber technology in warfare and the changing prospects of the National Security Policy for India in the technological era.

Tags: Science & Technology, GS Paper 3, IT & Computers, Cyber Security, Cyber Warfare

Cyber is often touted as the fifth dimension of warfare — in addition to land, sea, air and space. It increasingly appears that the cyber warfare is going to become a regular part of the arsenal of nations

As far as India is concerned, it ranks 3rd in terms of the highest number of internet users in the world after the USA and China, but still, its **cybersecurity architecture** is in a nascent approach.

The changing military doctrines, all across the world, favour the need to raise cyber commands reflecting a

shift in strategies along with building deterrence in cyberspace.

Cyber Warfares and India

- **About:** It is the use of computer technology to disrupt the activities of a state or organization; deliberately attacking information systems for strategic or military purposes.
 - Cyber warfare typically involves the use of **illegal exploitation methods on the internet**, corruption or **disruption of computer networks** and software, hacking, computer forensics and **espionage**.
- **Arguments in Favour of Cyber Warfares:** Tempered by responsible use and appropriate controls, cyberwarfare is a **safer and more flexible strategic alternative**, one critical step between sanctions and bombs.
 - **Minimises Human-life Loss:** Reducing loss of human lives **forms one of the core principles of ethics of war**.
 - Cyberwars can be seen as an opportunity to decrease global violence and can **shift wars' focus away from human casualties**.
 - **Prevents Physical Territorial Invasions:** Fighting digitally offers a unique opportunity; the continuation of politics by other means, **without the physical invasion of a sovereign territory**.
- **Arguments Against Cyber Warfares:**
 - **Threat to International Security:** Cyber warfare **attacks on military infrastructure**, government and private communications systems, and financial markets pose a **rapidly growing but little understood threat** to international security and **could become a decisive weapon in future** conflicts among States.
 - **More Number of Countries to Engage in Wars:** Once cyber technology enters as an important variable in nations' defence policies, the size of a country will cease to matter.
 - Even **smaller countries empowered by cyber-technology will be equal to the larger countries** like the US, Russia, India or China, in their capability to cause unacceptable damage.
 - **Lowering Threshold of Entry into War:** Weapons in the 21st century will merely mean a cyber button on the desk of the nation's military/ the leader of the government.
 - Geographical land, population, or GDP will be **irrelevant in war-making capacity** or deterrence.
 - **More Frequent Conflicts:** With cyber warfares becoming a norm, each nation will have to be **more prepared for bilateral conflicts that are based on cyber warfare** rather than in multilateral

acts of conventional war or rely on military blocs for mobilisation.

➤ **Threats to India:**

- **Past Experiences:** India has been the victim of cyber attacks multiple times in the past.
 - In 2009, a **suspected cyber espionage network dubbed GhostNet** was found to be targeting, amongst others, the Tibetan government in exile in India, and many Indian embassies.
 - The **power outage in Mumbai in 2020** is also suspected to be the result of an attack by a Chinese state-sponsored group.
- **Threats from China:** The real danger to India lies in **targeted cyber attacks coming from adversarial nation** states.
 - Countries like China can bring immense assets to bear in carrying out sophisticated cyber attacks.
- **Lack of Cyberspace Infrastructure:** India is one of the few countries which **still does not have a dedicated cyber component in its military**.
 - The setting up of a Defence Cyber Agency was announced but came out only as a typical half-hearted step characterising India's lack of strategic planning process.

Way Forward

- **Bringing Changes to the National Security Policy:**
 - **Clarifying the Objectives:** The National Security Policy in the 21st century **shall define what assets are required to be defended** and the identity of opponents who seek to overawe the people of a target nation by unfamiliar moves to cause disorientation of people.
 - **Setting Priorities:** The national security priorities will require new **departments for supporting several frontiers of innovation and technologies; hydrogen fuel cells**, desalination of seawater, **thorium** for **nuclear technology**, anti-computer viruses, and new immunity-creating medicines.
 - This focus on a new priority will **require compulsory science and mathematics education**.
 - Also, **every citizen will have to be made aware** of the new remote controlled military technology and be ready for it.
 - **Changing the Strategy:** The strategy required for the new national security policy will be to **anticipate the enemies** in many dimensions and by **demonstrative but limited pre-emptive strikes** by developing a strategy of deterrence of the enemy.
 - For India, it will be China's cyber capability factor which is the new threat for which it has to devise a new strategy.

- **New Agenda:** The agenda for the new strategy will be to focus on; **critical & emerging technologies, connectivity & infrastructure, cyber security** and maritime security.
- **Role of Policy Makers:** The government should **carve out a separate budget for cybersecurity**.
 - Creating a central body of **cyber warriors to counter state-sponsored hackers**.
 - India's talent base in software development should be harnessed by providing career opportunities.
 - Bootstrapping the cybersecurity capability programme in states through central funding.
- **Defence, Deterrence and Exploitation:** These are the three main components of any national strategy to counter cyber threats.
 - **Critical cyber infrastructure must be defended** and individual ministries and private companies must also put procedures in place to honestly report breaches.
 - **Deterrence in cyberspace** is a hugely complex issue. Nuclear deterrence is successful because there is clarity on the capability of adversaries but cyber warfare lacks any such clarity.
 - **Exploiting cyberspace to achieve national security objectives.** The preparation for this will have to start with the Indian military gathering intelligence, evaluating targets and preparing the specific tools for cyber attacks.

Conclusion

- Once cybertechnology becomes a key variable in the defence policies of a nation, land size or GDP size are irrelevant. Hence, clearer strategy and greater transparency are the need of the hour to improve India's cybersecurity posture.
- A clear public posture on cyber defence and warfare boosts citizen confidence, helps build trust among allies and clearly signals intent to potential adversaries, thus enabling a more stable and secure cyber ecosystem.



Delivering Soft Power

This article is based on "How to deliver abroad" which was published in The Indian Express on 21/10/2021. It talks about the need to create an independent development partnership agency.

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

Soft power is the **ability of a country to persuade others to do what it wants without resorting to force or coercion**. Soft power lies in a country's attractiveness and comes from three resources: its **culture**, its **political values**, and its **foreign policies**.

According to **Brand Finance's Global Soft Power Index**, India **ranks 27th** in terms of soft power. India's main challenge, though, has been to timely deliver on International projects especially on infrastructure projects. For eg. **Iran's Chabahar Port**.

Need to Deliver on Soft Power

- **For creating Goodwill:** Indian ethos and practices has helped it build a benevolent image and tremendous goodwill globally, but it has to be backed with quality project delivery.
- **As a Strategic Investment:** To become a leading strategic investor in commercially viable and financially attractive **public-private partnership** infrastructure projects, India needs to deliver on its promises.
- **Post Pandemic Changes:** With increased scope of cooperation and the realization that global problems require global efforts, India's role has gained prominence as the **pharmacy of the World**.
- **Trade and Investment flow:** To build an **image of a trusted and reliable partner**, India needs to make other countries believe in its commitment to deliver. This will **lead to rising trade and investment flows** to growing Indian markets.

India's Delivery Framework

India's development cooperation has converged to an all-encompassing integrated framework, a development compact that has five modalities.

- **Capacity Building:** India focuses on **three main components: providing training** in India, **sending teams of experts** to partner countries and providing **equipment for project sites**. India has also taken up **larger issues at various multilateral forums** including the **World Trade Organization (WTO)** and the **World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO)**.
- **Concessional Finance:**
 - Concessional financing constitutes close to **70%** of India's development cooperation portfolio.
 - Development assistance in the form of concessional **Lines of Credit (LOCs)** is extended by the Government of India under the **Indian Development and Economic Assistance Scheme (IDEAS)** through the

Exim Bank of India. In total 306 LOCs worth US\$ 30.59 billion have been extended to 65 countries.

➤ **Technology Sharing:**

- **Innovation and entrepreneurship** should be the soft power of choice both within the country and outside.
- For instance, in **Ethiopia**, Indian engineers provided support and training in areas such as irrigation, electrical power and railway management.

➤ **Grants:**

- India provides **development assistance of \$6.48 billion** and receives assistance of **\$6.09 billion annually** from key partners as **Official Development Assistance (ODA)**.

➤ **Trade:**

- By providing **duty-free and quota-free access** to the Indian market. India was one of the first few countries that announced **duty free, quota free access to low income countries**.
- Indian **private investment** in the world has also surged over a period of time with major investments in **telecommunications, IT, energy, and automobile sectors**.

Concerns/Challenges

➤ **Lack of Institutional Framework:**

- India needs an **independent development partnership agency** that develops **long-term and short-term strategies, identifies priorities, builds knowledge and facilitates learning**.
- It needs to **remove Internal institutional hurdles**, such as policy and bureaucratic delays, to meet its infrastructure targets.

➤ **Lack of Funds:**

- With **limited capacity to fund** infrastructure projects, India needs to **rationaly allot its funds**, keeping in mind its strategic objectives.
- Moreover, **improving the Indian economy and opening up the market** can help India to accumulate funds for international projects.

➤ **Delivery-Deficit Nation:**

- India's neighbors have often complained of India **making big promises but suffering from a delivery deficit**.
- This is the **case with most countries** in which India has taken up projects, for instance, road and railway lines, establishing **integrated border checkpoints**, and hydropower projects.

➤ **Protectionism:**

- Protectionism is leading to a **significant impact on economic diplomacy**. India stood at **rank 24 out**

of 25 countries in the Asia-Pacific region in terms of **trade openness** as per an **Asian Development Bank (ADB)** report.

- **Integrated Check Posts** set up at borders have suffered under cumbersome procedures, like **additional checks of trucks and delays in paperwork**, that consume both time and profits.

Way Forward

➤ **Creation of Institutional structure:**

- A specialised agency for proficient delivery of outcomes is the need of the hour. For example, In 2018, **China founded its international development cooperation agency**.
- An **independent development partnership agency** that facilitates **information sharing and creates platforms for policy coordination** across government departments, ensures coordinated efforts needed for development gains and mobilises resources quickly.
- The agency must **work towards Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** coordinating the **government, private sector, academia and civil society**.

➤ **Private sector and civil society engagement:**

- Exploring innovative **public-private partnership (PPP) models** with Indian businesses to leverage their expertise in helping realise India's development cooperation goals.

➤ **Multilateralism:**

- **Covid-19** showed that **cooperation among countries** can accelerate the response within individual nations and across regions **during a global health crisis**. It involves creating, adapting, transferring, and sharing knowledge and experiences to improve health, while making the most of existing resources and capacities.

➤ **Non Sovereign funds:**

- A **non-sovereign window** like the private sector window of **Asian Development Bank**, would provide greater flexibility and bandwidth.
- **In addition to greenfield projects**, the fund may take up incomplete projects and prepare future timelines for their execution.

➤ **Trade openness:**

- India needs to **work on smoothening clearance procedures, import policy barriers, testing and certification requirements, anti-dumping and countervailing measures**.
- India must **increase its investments and trade** with neighboring countries to reap the benefits

of greater regional and economic integration, making India open rather than being closed to its neighbors' economies.

Conclusion

It is high time **India restructures its development finance apparatus** for deeper and effective engagement and to address the rapidly evolving newer competitive development financing landscape.

India's own development experience is also evolving with programmes like the **JAM Trinity, Ayushman Bharat and other initiatives like Gati Shakti** - the learnings from which should be absorbed in the portfolio to be shared with fellow developing countries.



Women Representation In the Temple of Democracy

This article is based on "The 40 per cent promise" which was published in The Indian Express on 22/10/2021. It talks about the need to increase women representation in representative institutions at the Center and the State levels.

Tags: Social Justice, GS Paper - 1, GS Paper - 2, Issues Related to Women, Women's Issues, Inclusive Growth, Human Resource, Government Policies & Interventions, Parliament

Recently, a political party decided to reserve 40% of its party tickets for women in the State Assembly elections to be held next year. This has again started the debate on increasing women representation in Parliament and State assemblies.

- As per the data compiled by the **Inter-Parliamentary Union**, of which India is a member, women represent 14.44% of the total members of the **Lok Sabha**.
- As per the latest **Election Commission of India (ECI)** data:
 - As of October 2021, **Women represent 10.5%** of the total members of the **Parliament**.
 - The scenario for women **Members of Legislative Assemblies (MLAs)** across all state assemblies in India is even worse, with the national average being a pitiable 9%.
 - In the last 75 years of independence, women's representation in Lok Sabha has **not even increased by 10%**.

Reasons for Low Representation

- **Gender stereotypes:**
 - The role of managing household activities has been traditionally assigned to women.

- Women should be **encouraged to move outside** their stereotypical roles and participate in the decision-making process of the country.
- **Competition:**
 - Politics, like any other field, is a **field of competition**. At the end of the day, Women politicians are their competition as well.
 - Many of the politicians fear that, in case of women reservation, **their seats can rotationally be reserved** for women candidates, thus, making them lose any chance of even fighting from their seats.
- **Lack of Political Education:**
 - Education influences the **social mobility** of women. Formal education such as provided at educational institutions create opportunities for leadership, and impart leadership essential skills.
 - Because of a **lack of understanding of politics**, they do not know about their basic and political rights.
- **Work and Family:**
 - **Uneven distribution of family care** responsibilities means that women spend far more time than men in home- and child-care.
 - A woman not only has to give her time and effort at time of pregnancy and childbirth, but it **continues till the child is dependent** on parents for care.
- **Lack of Political Networks:**
 - The **lack of openness** in political decision-making and **undemocratic internal processes** pose a challenge for all newcomers, but particularly for women as they tend to lack insider knowledge or political networks.
- **Lack of Resources:**
 - Because of their low proportion in the inner **political party** structure of India, women fail to gather resources and support for nurturing their political constituencies.
 - Women do not get adequate financial support from the political parties to contest the **elections**.
- **Social Conditioning:**
 - They have to **accept the dictates imposed on them** and bear the burden of society.
 - **Public attitudes** not only determine how many female candidates win a general election **but also directly and indirectly** how many are considered and nominated for office.
- **Unfriendly Environment:**
 - Overall political parties' environment too is not women-friendly, they have to **struggle hard and face multi-dimensional issues** to create space for them in the party.

- There has been **increasing violence in politics**. A significant rise in **criminalization, corruption, insecurity** has driven women out of the political arena.

Government Efforts

- **The Women's Reservation Bill 2008:**
 - It proposes to amend the Constitution of India to **reserve 1/3rd of all seats** in the Lower house of Parliament of India, the Lok Sabha, and in all state legislative assemblies for women.
- **Reservation for Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions:**
 - **Article 243D of the Constitution** ensures participation of women in **Panchayati Raj Institutions** by mandating not less than **one-third reservation for women** out of total number of seats to be filled by direct election and number of offices of chairpersons of Panchayats.
- **Parliamentary Committee On Empowerment Of Women:**
 - The Committee on Empowerment of Women was constituted for the first time in 1997 during the 11th Lok Sabha of the Parliament for improving the status of women.
 - The Members of the Committee are expected to work together for the empowerment of women cutting across party affiliations.

Way Forward

It is the **need of the hour** in a country like India to have **equal participation of all** the sections of society in mainstream political activity therefore necessary steps should be taken to promote it.

- **Passage of Women's Reservation Bill:**
 - All political parties have to reach a consensus and ensure the passage of the Women's Reservation Bill, which calls for reserving 33 percent of seats in Parliament and all state legislative assemblies for women.
- **Promoting local bodies female lawmakers on State level:**
 - There is a pool of women out there who have been **sarpanches**, and members of local bodies, with experience of governance at the local level over a period of three decades.
 - They are waiting to play a larger role in state assemblies and in Parliament.
- **Women Quotas in political parties:**
 - **The Gill formula:** There is a need to implement the proposal of the **Election Commission of India (ECI)** to make it mandatory for the recognized

political parties to ensure putting of minimum agreed percentage for women in State Assembly and Parliamentary elections, so as to allow them to retain the **recognition with the Election Commission** as political parties.

- **Promoting Inner party democracy:**
 - A truly democratic political party in which the various positions like president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer etc are filled by the election process, will give a fair chance to all female members of the party.
- **Deconstructing stereotypes:**
 - Society needs to **deconstruct the stereotype of women** as limited to household activities only.
 - It is important **for all institutions (state, family and community)** to respond to women's specific needs such as bridging gaps in education, renegotiating gender roles, the gender division of labor and addressing biased attitudes.

Conclusion

Young Indian women represent **aspirational India** possibly more than any other grouping today. Given half a chance, they may bring a new energy into our stagnant politics, and move it towards delivery of basic needs- **health, nutrition, education and livelihoods.**



Democratising Political Parties

This article is based on "How to democratise the party" which was published in The Indian Express on 23/10/2021. It talks about the need to democratise the functioning of political parties in India.

Tags: Indian Polity, GS Paper - 2, Constitutional Bodies, Representation of People's Act, Transparency & Accountability

Democratic theory includes both **procedural** and **substantive democracy**. Procedural democracy can be said to refer to the practice of universal adult franchise, periodic elections, **secret ballot**, while substantive democracy can be said to refer to the internal democratic functioning of the parties, which purportedly represent the people.

The roots of the most pertinent challenges faced by Indian politics today can be traced to the **lack of intra-party democracy** in candidate selection and party elections.

Need for Democracy in Political Parties

- **Representation:** The absence of **intra-party democracy** has contributed to political parties becoming **closed**

autocratic structures. This adversely impacts the constitutional right of all citizens to **equal political opportunity** to participate in politics and contest elections.

- **Less factionalism:** A leader with **strong grassroots connection** would not be sidelined. This will allow less factionalism and division of parties. Eg. Sharad Pawar formed Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), Mamata Banerjee formed All India Trinamool Congress after leaving Indian National Congress (INC).
- **Transparency:** A **transparent party structure** with **transparent processes** will allow proper ticket distribution and candidate selection. The selection would not be based on the whims of a few powerful leaders in the party but will represent the choice of the larger party.
- **Accountability:** A democratic party will be **accountable to its party members**, for they will lose elections in the next cycle for their shortcomings.
- **Decentralising power:** Every political party has **State and local body units**, an election at each level will allow creation of power centres at different levels. This will allow **decentralisation of power** and the decision making will take place at the ground level.
- **Criminalization of Politics:** As there is **no well-defined process for the distribution of tickets** to candidates before elections, tickets are given to candidates on the vague concept of **winnability**. This has led to an additional problem of **candidates with criminal backgrounds** contesting elections.

Reasons for Democracy Deficit

- **Dynasty politics:** The **lack of intra-party democracy** has also contributed to the growing **nepotism in political parties**. With senior party leaders fielding their kins in elections, the succession plans for “family” constituencies are being put in place.
- **Centralised structure of Political Parties:** The **centralised mode of functioning** of the political parties and the **stringent anti-defection law of 1985** deters party legislators from voting in the national and state legislatures according to their individual preferences.
- **Lack of Law:** Currently, there is **no express provision** for internal democratic regulation of political parties in India and the only governing law is provided by Section 29A of the **Representation of the Peoples’ Act, 1951** which provides for registration of political parties with the ECI. However, the ECI’s power to require parties to hold regular internal elections for office bearers, and candidate selection is compromised in the **absence of any penal provisions**.

- **Personality cult:** There is a **tendency of hero worship** in people and many times a leader takes over the party and builds his own coterie, ending all forms of intra-party democracy. For example, **Mao Zedong** taking over the People’s Republic of China; **Donald Trump** hijacking the Republican Party of the USA.
- **Easy to subvert internal elections:** The ability of existing repositories of power to subvert internal institutional processes to **consolidate power and maintain the status quo** is unquestionable.

Recommendations

- **By Law Commission:** The **170th report of the Law Commission of India** on reform of electoral laws, dedicated an entire chapter on the necessity of providing laws relating to internal democracy within parties.
 - It observed that a political party which does not respect democratic principles in its internal working cannot be expected to respect those principles in the governance of the country.
- **NCRWC Report:** The **National Commission for Review of Working of Constitution** states that there should be a comprehensive legislation regulating the registration and functioning of political parties or alliances of parties in India.
- **2nd ARC Report:** The **Administrative Reforms Commission’s (ARC) 2008 Ethics and Governance Report** pointed out that **corruption is caused by over-centralisation** since the more remotely power is exercised from the people, the greater is the distance between authority and accountability.

Way forward

- **Law to Compulsify Elections:** It shall be the **duty of the political party** to take appropriate steps to ensure holding of **elections at all levels**. The political party shall hold elections of national and State levels in **the presence of the observers** to be nominated by the ECI.
- **Amending Anti Defection Law:** The **Anti-Defection Act of 1985** requires the party legislators to act according to the party whip which is decided by the diktats of the highest party leadership. One way to democratise political parties is to promote **intra-party dissent**.
 - The anti defection law can be limited to disqualification of Members only if they vote against their party whip during important events such as **no-confidence motions**.
- **Reservation:** Seats can be **reserved for women** and members of the **backward community including minorities**.

- **Financial transparency/ Audit:** It must be made mandatory for all political parties to submit their statements of expenditure to the ECI, **within the prescribed time limit.** Political parties not submitting on time or in the prescribed format should be heavily penalized.
- **Empowering ECI:**
 - The ECI shall be competent to **inquire into allegations of non-compliance** of any of the provisions requiring elections.
 - **Penalties for non compliance:** ECI should have the **penal power to deregister** a party until free and fair elections in the party are conducted.

Conclusion

Politics is inseparable from political parties as they are the prime instruments for the execution of democracy in the country. Introducing **internal democracy and transparency within political parties** is important to promote **financial and electoral accountability, reduce corruption, and improve democratic functioning** of the country as a whole.

It is imperative that political parties open their eyes to growing calls for electoral political reforms and take steps towards bringing in **intra-party democracy.**



A Mindful Development

This editorial is based on the article "Development that is mindful of nature" which was published in The Hindu on 25/10/2021. It talks about the issues of infrastructure development and the need for sustainable development.

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

Environmental disaster has struck Kerala once again. Unusually heavy rains have caused landslides in Kottayam and Idukki. A high loss of life was recorded in Kerala.

A major reason for the loss of lives is the land use pattern change in Kerala and the death toll has led to a serious review of the land-use pattern in Kerala. With a population density of 860 persons/sq. km against an all-India average of 368 persons/sq. km (Census 2011), Kerala experiences very high pressure on the land and thus there is a need to look into the issue of development vs environment not only with reference to Kerala but whole of India.

Land-use Pattern Change in Kerala

- Historically, most of the settlements were concentrated in the coastal plain, the adjoining lowlands and parts of the midlands.
- However, this scenario has altered now, with significant land-use change across topographic boundaries.
- Population growth, agricultural expansion, economic growth, infrastructure development — particularly road construction — and intra-State migration have all led to settlement of the highlands.
- Kerala is experiencing high growth of residential buildings. The Census records that during the decade between 2001 and 2011, the population grew by 5% whereas the number of houses grew by around 20%.

Issues With the Unsustainable Infrastructure

- **Implication for the Geo-environment:** Heavy construction has serious implications for the geo-environment. Not only the locations for siting settlements but also the demand for construction materials, with the attendant quarrying and excavations, is altering the landscape through terracing, slope modification, rock quarrying, and the construction of roads.
- **River Basin is Altered:** The basin characteristics of all rivers is altered due to heavy construction. This has resulted in gross disturbance of the character of the terrain evolved through weathering and formation of soil under natural vegetation cover.
 - Consequently, the water-absorbing capacity of the river catchment is lost, contributing to increasing surface run-off and reduction in ground water recharge.
 - Road construction in hilly areas, even when cutting across the toe of the slope, is destabilising and creates conditions conducive to landslides.
- **Impacts the Downslope Habitats:** Construction on hill slopes prone to disintegration during heavy rain is a threat not only to those who choose to live in the buildings but also to those who are in the path of the debris that gets dislodged in a landslide.

Development Vs Environment: Debate

- **Relation of Environment with Development:**
 - Rapid industrialisation and urbanisation are inevitable to bring in desired levels of economic development.
 - This is also believed to be essential to substantially increase the per capita income.
 - However, these income-generating activities are sure to have negative environmental consequences such as pollution.

- Noticeably, environmental quality is being compromised for the goals of mass employment generation and poverty reduction.
- It is believed that with gradual increase in income levels along with growth in financial and technological capabilities, environmental quality could be restored.
- But the reality is that the continued growth generating activities only increasingly deteriorates the environmental quality.
- **Developmental Factors Affecting Environmental Sustainability:**
 - **Lack of Environmental Compliance:**
 - Neglect of environmental principles is a key reason why natural hazards end up causing a significant number of avoidable casualties.
 - Any exercise to scientifically ascertain the risk from natural hazards to a region are barely implemented in the right spirit.
 - Unregulated quarrying and the unscientific cutting of slopes into hills aggravates the risk of soil erosion and subsequently increases the risk of landslides.
 - **Ill-effects of Subsidies:**
 - In pursuit of providing welfare to vulnerable sections of society, the government has provided a bulk of subsidies.
 - However, subsidised nature of services like energy and electricity leads to their overuse and undermines environmental sustainability.
 - Further, subsidies also undermine the revenue base and limit the government's capacity to invest in new, cleaner technologies.
 - **No Cost to Environmental Resources:**
 - Access to natural resources is entirely open and no individual user bears the full cost of environmental degradation and resources are consequently overused.
 - **Complexity of Population Dynamics:**
 - Increasing population tends to exacerbate the linkages between underdevelopment and environmental degradation.
 - Further, poverty generates significant incentives to raise large families and stimulate migrations, which makes urban areas environmentally unsustainable.
 - Both outcomes increase pressure on resources and consequently worsen environmental quality, diminish productivity and reinforce poverty.

Way Forward

- **Ecological Sensitive Development:** Development interventions should be cautious and ecologically sensitive to avoid unwarranted consequences and to be sustainable.
 - Governments concerned have conducted anything like a **cost-benefit analysis**.
- **Technical Expertise:** Technical expertise is needed when re-engineering the earth, with the teams including earth scientists, independent public policy experts, elected representatives and citizens from the affected areas.
- **Incorporating Indigenous Knowledge:** Regions and countries can benefit from the knowledge of indigenous people and their understanding of large ecosystems.
 - Thus, Governance, including customary institutions and management systems should involve indigenous peoples and local communities to safeguard nature and understand climate change.
- **Conserving Biodiversity:** The linkage of biodiversity and environmental sustainability highlights the critical need to integrate biodiversity considerations in any decision-making.
 - Thus, before adopting any infrastructure project **Environment Impact Assessment (EIA)** must be carried out.

Conclusion

Even the **United Nations Development Programme**, which had pioneered the human development approach, has proposed a **Planetary-Pressures Adjusted Human Development Index** that weighs a country's human development for its ecological footprint.

Living in the Anthropocene, we need to guard against any further damage to the natural world.



Regulation of Crypto Assets

*This editorial is based on the article **We need smart regulation to unlock the true potential of crypto assets** which was published in *The Livemint* on 26/10/2021. It talks about the issues of cryptocurrency assets and issues of regulation of the crypto.*

Tags: Indian Economy, GS Paper - 3, IT & Computers, Mobilization of Resources

Often touted benefit of crypto assets is that the crypto makes finance more inclusive and decentralized. But India already has the world's largest **financial inclusion**

programme in **Jan Dhan**. In the past seven years, 430 million bank accounts have been created for the under-banked. A majority, 55%, of them are women. Crypto can't match the scale of Jan Dhan Yojana in India.

Moreover, Regulation of crypto assets such as bitcoin and ethereum is a hot topic globally. Countries are in various stages of banning, un-banning, re-banning and regulating crypto assets. We may take some cues from other countries, but what we need is smart regulation that's made in India.

Reasons For Adoption of Crypto in India

- Financial inclusion is not the main reason to embrace crypto assets in India. But there are three compelling **India-specific reasons to embrace crypto assets**.
- **Establish India as an Integral Part of the New Financial Ecosystem:** Large global financial institutions and investors are adding crypto assets to their portfolios.
 - Finance firms, banks, fintech and crypto startups can tap into the huge growth of the industry. **Software technology parks (STPs)** and **special economic zones (SEZs)** enabled the IT services boom.
 - Creative '**crypto export zone**' schemes can incubate clusters of excellence and create world-class financial services firms and unicorns.
- **Capitalize on New Technology and Services Opportunities:** Blockchain application development, its scalability, security and analytics are their next growth opportunities. To cater to this demand, there is a need for a large talent pool with expertise in the crypto tech stacks.
- **Scope of Financial Innovation:** There is a burst of technology innovation and business models around blockchains. There are several interesting applications, but new killer apps will emerge. The impact of new technologies is overestimated in the short term, but underestimated in the long term.

Key Regulatory Concerns

- **Investor protections:** Investor protection has been a top priority for Indian regulators. Crypto assets are seen as high-risk, speculative assets. Investor education, guidelines against mis-selling and other safeguards are needed.
 - Crypto assets are now better understood as digital assets, instead of as digital currencies.
 - Regulating them like commodities and clarifying their tax treatment is a win-win. The government's tax revenues can go up.
 - It can also increase the number of tax filers (only 64 million in FY20) and the number of taxpayers (14 million).

- **Sidestepping current regulations:** Some crypto assets may allow individuals to bypass securities issuance laws. That's a potential risk to economic stability.
 - If crypto holders have to declare their holdings above a particular level in their tax forms, such concerns can be mitigated.
- **Illicit transfers:** Anonymous transfers of crypto assets may weaken **anti-money laundering laws** or combating the financing of terrorism rules. That's a potential national security issue.

Issues Associated with Banning Decentralised Cryptocurrencies

- **Blanket Ban:** The intended ban is the essence of the Cryptocurrency and Regulation of Official Digital Currency Bill, 2021. It seeks to prohibit all private cryptocurrencies in India.
 - However, categorising the cryptocurrencies as public (government-backed) or private (owned by an individual) is inaccurate as the cryptocurrencies are decentralised but not private.
 - Decentralised cryptocurrencies such as bitcoin aren't or rather, can't be controlled by any entity, private or public.
- **Brain-Drain:** Ban of cryptocurrencies is most likely to result in an exodus of both talent and business from India, similar to what happened after the RBI's 2018 ban.
 - Back then, blockchain experts moved to countries where crypto was regulated, such as Switzerland, Singapore, Estonia and the US.
 - With a blanket ban, blockchain innovation, which has uses in governance, data economy and energy, will come to a halt in India.
- **Deprivation of Transformative Technology:** A ban will deprive India, its entrepreneurs and citizens of a transformative technology that is being rapidly adopted across the world, including by some of the largest enterprises such as Tesla and MasterCard.
- **An Unproductive Effort:** Banning as opposed to regulating will only create a parallel economy, encouraging illegitimate use, defeating the very purpose of the ban.
 - A ban is infeasible as any person can purchase cryptocurrency over the internet.
- **Contradictory Policies:** Banning cryptocurrency is inconsistent with the Draft National Strategy on Blockchain, 2021 of the Ministry of Electronics and IT (MeitY), which hailed blockchain technology as transparent, secure and efficient technology that puts a layer of trust over the internet.

Way Forward

- **Regulation is the Solution:** Regulation is needed to prevent serious problems, to ensure that cryptocurrencies are not misused, and to protect unsuspecting investors from excessive market volatility and possible scams.
 - The regulation needs to be clear, transparent, coherent and animated by a vision of what it seeks to achieve.
- **Clarity on Crypto-currency definition:** A legal and regulatory framework must first define cryptocurrencies as securities or other financial instruments under the relevant national laws and identify the regulatory authority in charge.
- **Strong KYC Norms:** Instead of a complete prohibition on cryptocurrencies, the government shall rather regulate the trading of cryptocurrencies by including stringent KYC norms, reporting and taxability.
- **Ensuring Transparency:** Record keeping, inspections, independent audits, investor grievance redressal and dispute resolution may also be considered to address concerns around transparency, information availability and consumer protection.
- **Igniting the Entrepreneurial Wave:** Cryptocurrencies and Blockchain technology can reignite the entrepreneurial wave in India's startup ecosystem and create job opportunities across different levels, from blockchain developers to designers, project managers, business analysts, promoters and marketers.

Conclusion

In summary, a smart regulatory approach should consider both the potential upside and downside. It fosters financial innovation, safeguards investors and unshackles the Indian crypto ecosystem.



Dump Protectionism

This article is based on "*International trade is not a zero-sum game*" which was published in *The Indian Express* on 23/10/2021. It talks about the need for India to promote free trade and shun protectionism in international trade.

Tags: Indian Economy, GS paper 3, Inclusive Growth, Government Policies & Interventions

U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) in its 2021 report "**National Trade Estimate Report on Foreign Trade Barriers**" has pointed out that India's average **tariff rate of 17.6%** is the highest of any major world economy.

With the **aim to protect domestic industries** from dumping and other trade distorting practices by China and others, India has increased its tariff rates and stricken its other **non-tariff measures**.

Trade protectionism might have immediate benefits to the economy, however, all economists agree that, **in the long term**, it hurts economic interests of the country.

Tools of Protectionism

India, inter alia, other countries use various tools to protect its economy from unfair trade practices. Some of them being-

- **Tariffs:** A tariff is a **tax** imposed by a government of a country **on imports or exports** of goods. High tariffs will raise the cost for foreign producers to sell their goods in a domestic system, providing strategic advantages for local producers.
 - India has one of the highest tariff rates in the world.
- **Import Quotas:** This is the act of **limiting the number of a certain good** that can be purchased from a given country, ensuring that domestic producers maintain a portion of the market share.
- **Local Content Requirement:** Instead of placing a quota on the number of goods that can be imported, the government can require that a **certain percentage of a good be made domestically**. **India uses it** for defence contracts and technology sectors issued in India.
- **Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) Measures and Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) Measures:** These two types of measures are **allowed under the WTO** to protect **health and environment** of other countries. They also bind other countries to follow a country's **standard in technical products**.
- **Anti-dumping duty:** Dumping is the process of **selling goods far below market value** to drive out competition. **India is the highest initiator of anti-dumping measures** aimed at shielding domestic industry from import competition.
 - **According to the WTO**, from 2015 to 2019, India initiated 233 anti-dumping investigations, which is a sharp increase from 82 initiations between 2011 and 2014.
- **Rules of Origin:** India amended the **Rules of Origin requirement** under the Customs Act. India has **imposed onerous burdens on importers** to ensure compliance with the rules of origin requirement.
 - The intent appears to be to **dissuade importers from importing goods** from India's **Free Trade Agreement (FTA)** partners.

Arguments for Protectionism

- **National security:** The argument pertains to the risk of dependency upon other nations **for economic sustainability**. It is argued that **in case of war**, economic dependency can restrict one's options. Also, the other country can affect other country's economy in a negative way.
- **Infant industry:** It is argued that protectionist policies are required to **protect industries in their initial stages**. As if the market is kept open, global established companies can capture the market. This **can lead to the end of domestic players** in the new industry.
- **Dumping:** Many countries dump their goods (sell them at lower price than their cost of production or their cost in the local market) in other countries.
 - The objective of dumping is **to increase market share** in a foreign market by **driving out competition** and thereby **create a monopoly**.
- **Saving jobs:** It is argued that buying more domestically will **drive up national production**, and that this increased production will **in turn** result in a healthier domestic job market.
- **Outsourcing:** it is common practice for companies to identify countries having **cheaper labor and easier systems of governance** and outsource their job work. This leads to loss of jobs in domestic industries.
- **Intellectual Property Protection: Patents**, in a domestic system, protect the innovators. On a global scale, however, it is quite common for developing nations to copy new technologies via **reverse engineering**.

Arguments against Protectionism

- **Trade Agreements:** India has **benefited immensely** from international trade agreements. **As per the Commerce Ministry** data, India has entered into Free Trade Agreements (FTA) with about **54 individual countries**.
 - They provide tariff concessions thereby giving opportunities for exports of products including those related to **small and medium enterprises (SMEs)**.
- **Against WTO Regulations:** India has been a **member of WTO since its inception**. WTO's regulations **prohibit imposing restrictions on imports** from other countries.
 - They can be imposed **only for certain purposes** like **balance of payment** difficulties, national security etc. Such barriers cannot be imposed to protect domestic industry from healthy competition.
- **Inflationary in Nature:** Protectionist policies by restricting imports, can lead to **rising prices** in the domestic market. Thus, hurting the **interest of the consumers** directly.

- **Uncompetitive Domestic Industries:** By protecting the local industries, they have **no incentive to innovate** or spend resources on **research and development (R&D)** of new products.

Way Forward

- **Improving Ease of Doing Business:** Though progress has been made, **India still lags behind** many larger nations in critical metrics such as **starting a business, enforcing contracts and registering property**.
 - Improving on these metrics can help Indian firms to compete globally and get a bigger market.
- **Make In India:** The focus should be on encouraging **innovation, research and development and entrepreneurship** in the country. This will prepare Indian companies to compete in the sectors of the future.
 - **Boosting Private investment:** It will, in turn, boost up **Growth, Jobs, Exports and Demand**.
- **Predictable and transparent Trade Policy:** It will allow Indian firms to plan their capacity and finances in advance. They will be able to **allocate their resources for expansion and R&D**. This will allow them to be competitive in the international market
- **Free Trade Agreements (FTAs):** India needs to **effectively utilise FTAs**, especially with East Asian nations (**ASEAN**), Japan, South Korea to its advantage to boost **investments, exports and technology transfers** to and from these nations.
- **Resolving Trade Issues:** Trade issues with **US and other countries** should be resolved at the earliest to eliminate investors' doubts in the Indian trade regime.

Conclusion

What India needs is to **draw a fine balance** between the interests of domestic industry and giving trade concessions to multinationals to **attract foreign investment** in the form of FDI.

The **goal of a \$5 trillion economy by 2025** needs comprehensive, multidimensional and multi-sectoral efforts to achieve it.



Policy Solution for Radicalisation

*This editorial is based on the article **India needs a policy solution for the problem of radicalisation** which was published in The Indian Express on 28/10/2021. It talks about the issues of radicalisation and the way forward.*

Tags: Governance, Paper - 2, Government Policies & Interventions

The recent arrest of multiple suspects in the ISI terror module case shows that the threat of radicalisation in India is pervasive and increasing exponentially. Recently, a ISIS module was busted by the **National Investigation Agency**. The module was found to have a pan-India presence, stretching across Jammu & Kashmir, Karnataka, Maharashtra and Kerala. The investigations have gone on to reveal that online radicalisation played an important role in the recruitment of members as well as the preparation and/or execution of extremist activities by the members.

In a speech before the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO)**, the Indian Prime Minister identified radicalisation as the greatest threat to the security and safety of all member countries. It was asked from the member countries to heed the challenges and build effective responses. Such responses can broadly be classified under the following heads—deradicalisation, counter-radicalisation, anti-radicalisation and disengagement. In line with this vision, India must lead by example and develop responses systematically with due regard to constitutional values.

Factors Behind Radicalisation

- **Individual socio-psychological factors**, which include grievances and emotions such as alienation and exclusion, anger and frustration and a strong sense of injustice.
- **Socio-economic factors**, which include social exclusion, marginalisation and discrimination (real or perceived), limited education or employment etc.
- **Political factors**, which include weak and non-participatory political systems lacking good governance and regard for civil society.
- **Social media**, which provides connectivity, virtual participation and an echo-chamber for like-minded extremist views, accelerates the process of radicalisation.
- **Religious factors** like the use of religion by **Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (IS)** to spread its influence all over the world is an example.

Some Steps Taken in India

- **Institutional:** The Ministry of Home Affairs had set up the **Counter-Terrorism and Counter Radicalisation division** in November 2017.
 - The focus of the division is largely on the implementation and administration of counter-terror laws and monitoring of fundamentalist organisations such as the Students Islamic Movement of India, Popular Front of India, Jamaat-e-Islami and Sanatan Sanstha.

Forms of Radicalism in India

- **Politico-Religious Radicalism:** It is associated with a political interpretation of religion and the defence, by violent means, of a religious identity perceived to be under attack.
 - Use of Religion by ISIS to spread its influence all over the world is an example.
- **Right-Wing Radicalism:** It is a form of radicalization associated with fascism, racialism/racism, supremacism and ultranationalism.
- **Left Wing Radicalism:** This form of radicalization focuses primarily on anti-capitalist demands and calls for the transformation of political systems considered responsible for producing social inequalities, and that may ultimately employ violent means to further its cause.

- **Legislative Actions:** Some acts such as **Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 (UAPA), NIA Act, 2008** deals with the associated issues.
 - Moreover, strengthening the provisions in the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 to combat terror financing (for radicalisation purpose also) by criminalizing the production or smuggling or circulation of high quality counterfeit Indian currency as a terrorist act and enlarge the scope of proceeds of terrorism to include any property intended to be used for terrorism.

Way Forward

- **Definition of Radicalisation:** Definition will allow the state to develop programmes and strategies to effectively combat such radical ideas, thereby addressing the problem of radically motivated violence.
 - The definition of radicalisation would also help provide clarity as regards the purpose of implementation of the Action Plan.
- **Deradicalisation Strategies at War-footing:** The Indian state should develop and enforce de-radicalisation, counter-radicalisation and anti-radicalisation strategies at a pan-India and pan-ideology level on a war footing.
 - Such attempts must be informed by the fact that the battle against radicalisation begins in the minds and hearts much before it manifests in terms of violence.
 - Any programme aimed at deterring or reversing radicalisation must focus on the ideological commitment that enables the violence, rather than the violence or the justification of violence itself.
- **Checking Cross-Border Flow of Propaganda:** Efforts must be made to first stem the flow of propaganda from across the Indian borders.

- **A uniform statutory or policy framework** to deal with radicalisation, de-radicalisation and its associated strategies should be developed.
- **Rehabilitation Measures:** Arrested and convicted individuals must not only be prosecuted and punished as a measure of deterrence or retribution but their reformation and rehabilitation must also be prioritised.
- The **promotion of the syncretic nature of religions** in India should be promoted through the development of counter-narratives, promotion of constitutional values and virtues, promotion of sports and other activities in schools and other educational institutions aimed at mainstreaming the youth.

Conclusion

At the same time, it must be understood that radicalisation by itself is not bad and gains a positive or negative characteristic based upon its context. A mere deviation from conventional thinking must not be penalised.

Radicalisation becomes problematic only where it has the propensity to lead to violence. The challenge lies in preventing such radicalisation. Developing a nuanced understanding of the process of radicalisation as well as its characteristics can help guide the Action Plan in effectively meeting such challenges.



Policy Action Against Drug Abuse

*This editorial is based on the article **Should the NDPS Act be amended?** which was published in The Hindu on 29/10/2021. It talks about the issues related to drug abuse in India and suggests a way forward.*

Tags: Social Justice, GS Paper - 2, Health, Human Resource, Government Policies & Interventions

The Union Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment has proposed certain changes to some provisions of the **Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act of 1985**. The recommendations have assumed importance in the backdrop of some high-profile drug cases including the recent arrest of Bollywood actor Shah Rukh Khan's son Aryan Khan.

One of the recommendations of the Ministry is to **decriminalise the possession of narcotic drugs in smaller quantities** for personal purposes. Another suggestion is that persons using drugs in smaller quantities be treated as victims.

However, there is a need to understand the underlying

reasons for widespread drug abuse in India and then take comprehensive actions.

Causes of Drug Addiction in India

- **Socioeconomic Status:** Low income, unemployment, income inequality, lower educational levels, limited opportunities for advancement and lack of health services.
- **Social Capital:** Low social support and reduced community involvement.
- **Environmental Events:** Natural disasters, war, conflict, climate change, environmental degradation and migration.
- **Social change which are** associated with changes in income, urbanization and environmental degradation.
- **Stress Buster:** Sometimes students tend to get into drugs because of their studies or work pressure. Also, students coming from other states find it difficult to cope up in metropolitan cities like Mumbai, Delhi.
 - It is generally seen that an unemployed youth, out of frustration, ends up in taking drugs.
- **Peer pressure** and other psychological factors can cause teens to engage in risky behaviours, leading to substance abuse.
 - Youth can get attracted to the glamour attached to drug taking.
 - Sometimes also, out of fun or in order to experiment, a youth ends up in taking drugs.
- **Suffering and deprivation:** People in the lower income group who cannot have an adequate amount of food, take drugs to sleep or relax.
- **Flaws in the legal system:**
 - The cause behind drug menace is the drug cartels, crime syndicates and ultimately the ISI which is the biggest supplier of drugs.
 - Rave parties have been reported in the country where intake of narcotic substances is observed.
 - These parties are orchestrated by the drug syndicates who have their own vested interests.
 - Social media plays an important role in organising these parties.
 - The police have not been able to control such parties.
 - **Smuggling of drugs** through the states like Punjab, Assam and Uttar Pradesh which share the border with neighbouring countries.
 - Normal food products like noodles, pan masala and gutka laced with drugs are sold to school and college students.
 - The African as well as the Southasian route being misused to bring drugs into the country.

Impacts of Drug Addiction

- Higher risk of unintentional injuries, accidents, **domestic violence incidents**, medical problems, and death.
- Economic potential gets wasted as the youth is indulged in drug abuse and **demographic dividend** suffers.
- Affects relationships with family, friends creating emotional and social problems
- Increases financial burden due to diversion of funding and resources to other areas such as police patrolling and rehabilitation centres.
- Drug abuse seriously affects our health, security, peace and development.
 - Increase in diseases like **Hepatitis B and C, Tuberculosis**
- Drug dependence, low self esteem, hopelessness can lead to criminal action and even suicidal tendencies.

Challenges to Curb the Drug Menace

- **Legally Available Drugs:** Such as **tobacco** is a huge problem which is usually seen as a gateway drug which children take just to experiment with.
- **Lack of Availability of Rehabilitation Centres:** There is a lack of rehabilitation centres. Also, NGOs operating de-addiction centres in the country, have failed to provide the required kind of treatment and therapy.
- **Smuggling of Drugs:** Smuggling of drugs through the states like Punjab, Assam and Uttar Pradesh which share the border with neighbouring countries.
- **Lack of availability of rehabilitation centres** in the country is a big issue. Also, NGOs operating de-addiction centres in the country, have failed to provide the required kind of treatment and therapy.

Way Forward

- **Scientific evidence-based treatment** needs to be made available for people with Substance use disorders – at an adequate scale.
- **Evidence-based substance use prevention programmes** are needed to protect the young people.
 - Prevention programmes must address the risk and protective factors aimed at not just preventing substance use but ensuring that young people grow and stay healthy into adulthood, enabling them to realize their potential and become productive members of their community and society.
- A **conducive legal and policy environment** is needed to help control drug problems.
 - It is important that laws and policies are aimed at providing health and welfare services to people

affected by substance use rather than subjecting them to the criminal justice system.

The Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act

- India is a **signatory to the UN Single Convention on Narcotics Drugs 1961**, the Convention on Psychotropic Substances, 1971 and the Convention on Illicit Traffic in Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances, 1988 which prescribe various forms of control aimed to achieve the dual objective of limiting the use of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances for medical and scientific purposes as well as preventing the abuse of the same.
- The administrative and legislative setup in the field of Narcotics has been put in place in the country in accordance with the spirit of the UN Conventions. The basic legislative instrument of the Government of India in this regard is the Narcotics Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act, 1985.
- The Act provides stringent provisions for the control and regulation of operations relating to narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.
- It also provides for forfeiture of property derived from, or used in, illicit traffic in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances.
- It also provides for death penalty in some cases where a person is a repeat offender.
 - There needs to be efficient coordination between the drug supply control sector as well as the entities involved in drug demand reduction and harm reduction.
- The approach of **generating and utilizing scientific evidence** must continue.
 - Every piece of the data would serve to incrementally inform evidence-based policies and programmes to protect and promote the health and welfare of Indian society

Conclusion

The action plan aims at addiction-free India by countering the growing menace especially across colleges and universities. However, there is a need to design a more targeted campaign against drugs and substance abuse.

Addiction should not be seen as a character flaw, but as an ailment that any other person could be struggling with. Therefore, the stigma associated with drug taking needs to be reduced through social awareness and voluntary processes like medical help by psychologists, as well as strong support from family.



Drishti Mains Questions

1. Recognition under Geographical Indications (GIs) results in higher economic gains, fostering quality production and better distribution of profits. Comment.
2. India's long journey from chronic food shortage to surplus food producer offers several interesting lessons for other developing countries in the world. Discuss.
3. Outer space is emerging as a potential fourth arm of any country's defence setup. Discuss.
4. The government should make the public debt sustainable by carefully crafting its strategy on contours of growth with financial stability in mind. Comment.
5. India's foreign policy envisages to widen its sphere of influence, enhance its role across nations, and make its presence felt like an emerging power in the present global order. Discuss.
6. Panchayati Raj Institutions are apparently the backbone of Indian democracy. However, in reality, the institutions do not enjoy the autonomy and powers that the Constitution of India envisages them to do so. Comment.
7. Digital technologies are transforming all the sectors of the economy and the society in innumerable ways. Discuss how it can bring transformation in the current state of the Indian agriculture system.
8. Discuss the obstacles that the agriculture sector poses in India's path to fulfilling its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).
9. Engagement of the European Union (EU) in the Indo-Pacific will strengthen the military balance and contribute to regional security in multiple ways. Discuss.
10. 'Indian Constitution is both unitary as well as federal according to the requirements of time and circumstances.' In the light of the statement critically examine the quasi-federal nature of Indian polity.
11. Inducting ex-bureaucrats as Cabinet ministers can help policy making and implementation become effective and efficient in India. Evaluate.
12. 'Social media is a double-edged sword in the present times.' Discuss the need to regulate social media platforms to protect youth from its ill-effects.
13. With growing cases of tax evasion and rising inequality world over, the demand for a global taxation regime has grown louder. Comment.
14. "The global energy crisis should spur a rational relook at an energy source as clear as nuclear which needlessly seen as a hot potato". Comment.
15. India has a long road ahead to end hunger and malnutrition. Discuss. Also, suggest some measures for India to improve its Global Hunger Index ranking in 2022 and beyond.
16. "Cyber is often touted as the fifth dimension of warfare — in addition to land, sea, air and space. However, if cyber warfares become a norm, each nation will have to prepare more for bilateral conflicts that are based on cyber warfare". Comment.
17. "It is high time that India sheds its image of a delivery-deficit Nation." Comment on India's poor record in timely completion of projects in foreign countries.
18. "In the last 75 years of independence, women's representation in Lok Sabha has not even increased by 10%." Comment. Also, suggest measures to increase women representation in Parliament as well as the State legislature.
19. "Democratising the political parties in India will democratise Indian Polity." Comment.

20. 'Rapid infrastructural development is inevitable to bring in desired levels of economic development.' In the light of the statement discuss the need of mindful construction for the sustainability of the environment.
21. India needs proper regulation to unlock the true potential of crypto assets. Discuss.
22. "Protectionism may be beneficial in the short term, but in the long term, it hurts the economy." Comment.
23. 'Increasing radicalisation is a major threat to internal security of India.' In the light of the statement discuss the measures that can be taken with regard to constitutional values.
24. Problem of drug abuse can be solved with holistic reform action. Suggest some measures to tackle the issue of drug abuse.

