



## News Analysis (06 Nov, 2020)



[drishtias.com/current-affairs-news-analysis-editorials/news-analysis/06-11-2020/print](https://drishtias.com/current-affairs-news-analysis-editorials/news-analysis/06-11-2020/print)

### Academic Freedom in India

#### Why in News

India has scored considerably low in the international **Academic Freedom Index (AFI)** with a score of 0.352.

**Academic freedom**, in general, refers to a scholar's freedom to express ideas without risk of official interference or professional disadvantage.

#### Key Points

- **About the Academic Freedom Index:**
  - It has been **published by Global Public Policy Institute** as a part of a global time-series dataset (1900-2019) in close cooperation with **Friedrich-Alexander University Erlangen-Nürnberg, Scholars at Risk and the V-Dem Institute**.
  - It **compares** levels of academic freedom worldwide and enhances the understanding of its curtailments.
  - The AFI used **eight components** to evaluate the scores: freedom to research and teach, freedom of academic exchange and dissemination, institutional autonomy, campus integrity, freedom of academic and cultural expression, constitutional protection of academic freedom, international legal commitment to academic freedom under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and existence of universities.
  - The scores are **scaled 0-1**.
  - The index **did not report data for 35 countries** - including the United States and Australia.
- **Top Performers:** Uruguay and Portugal top the AFI, with scores of 0.971 each, followed closely by Latvia (0.964) and Germany (0.960).

- **India's performance on the index:**

- India with a **score of 0.352**, is closely **followed by** Saudi Arabia (0.278) and Libya (0.238).

In the last five years, the AFI of India **has dipped by 0.1 points**.

- Countries like Malaysia (0.582), Pakistan (0.554), Brazil (0.466), Somalia (0.436) and Ukraine (0.422) have **scored better than India**.
- India has **not fared well** in components like **institutional autonomy, campus integrity, freedom of academic and cultural expression and constitutional protection of academic freedom**.
- The AFI has cited the '**Free to Think: Report of the Scholars at Risk Academic Freedom Monitoring Project**', to suggest that the **political tensions in India may have something to do with declining 'academic freedom'**.

According to the Report, **political tensions** in India have led to **violent altercations between students, security forces, and off-campus groups**, and have driven legal actions and **disciplinary measures against scholars** critical of those in power.

## Challenges for India

---

- **Freedom to Scholars:** India fails to provide desired freedom to scholars to discuss politically and culturally controversial topics, without fearing for their life, studies or profession.
- **Political Interference:** Most universities in the country are subjected to unsolicited interference from governments in both academic and non-academic issues. It is common knowledge by now that a majority of appointments, especially to top-ranking posts like that of vice-chancellors, pro vice-chancellors and registrars, have been highly politicized.
- **Corrupt Practices:** Political appointments not only choke academic and creative freedom, but also lead to corrupt practices, including those in licensing and accreditation.
- **Bureaucratisation of Universities:** At present, many educational institutions and regulatory bodies, both at the Central and State levels, are headed by bureaucrats.
- **Nepotism:** Favouritism and nepotism in staff appointments and student admissions. This reflects a '**rent-seeking culture**' within the academic community.

Rent-seeking is an economic concept that occurs when an entity seeks to gain added wealth without any reciprocal contribution of productivity. Typically, it revolves around government-funded social services and social service programs.

## Solutions

---

- **Implementing New Education Policy (NEP) 2020:**
  - The NEP 2020 claims that it is based on **principles of creativity** and **critical thinking** and envisions an education system that is **free from political or external interference**.
  - The policy states that faculty will be given the “**freedom to design their own curricular and pedagogical approaches within the approved framework**, including textbook and reading material selections, assignments and assessments”.
  - It also suggests constituting a **National Research Foundation (NRF)**, a merit-based and peer-reviewed research funding, which “will be governed, independently of the government, by a rotating Board of Governors consisting of the very best researchers and innovators across fields”.
  - Further, it aims to **de-bureaucratise the education system** by giving **governance powers to academicians**. It talks about giving autonomy to higher education institutions by handing over their administration to a board comprising academicians.
- **Regulatory and Governance Reforms:**
  - **Restructure or merge different higher education regulators** (UGC, AICTE, NCTE etc.) to ensure effective coordination. Amend **UGC Act, 1956** to **give legislative backing to regulatory structure**.
  - **Select Vice-Chancellors** of universities through a transparent & objective process.
  - Link **University grants** to performance.

## Way Forward

---

- Every government laments the absence of world-class universities, without realizing that it is attributable in part to their interventions and the growing intrusion of political processes. Where politics is largely kept out—as in IIT, IIM or the IISc—institutions thrive.
- Higher education policy-makers must respond to declining Afi scores. This will also help in making “India a global knowledge superpower”, aligned with the **United Nations Sustainable Development Goal-4 (SDG 4 -Quality Education)**.
- Academic freedom is primary because universities are **places for raising doubts** and asking questions about everything. Exploring ideas, **debating issues** and **thinking independently** are essential in the quest for excellence.

Source:TH

---

## Growing Trend of Jobs for Locals

---

## Why in News

---

Recently, **Haryana** Assembly has passed the **Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Bill, 2020** to reserve 75% of private-sector jobs in the state for local residents.

It has led to a new **debate on the growing trend of jobs for locals** and the **associated concerns**.

## Key Points

---

- **Provisions of the Bill:**
  - Every employer shall **employ 75% of the local candidates** with respect to such posts where the **gross monthly salary or wages are not more than Rs. 50,000 or as notified by the government**, from time to time.
  - Provided that the local candidates **may be from any district of the State**, but the **employer may, at his option, restrict the employment of local candidates from any district to 10%** of the total number of local candidates.
  - A designated portal shall be made on which local candidates and the employer will have to register and local candidates shall not be eligible to avail the benefit unless they register themselves on the designated portal.
- Once it becomes law, it will **apply to companies, societies, trusts, limited liability partnership firms, partnership firms, etc. located across the state**.
- It has been criticised for **not being in the best interest of the industries** as it will affect the competitiveness of the industries and will lead to **loss of investments in Haryana**.

## Jobs For Locals

---

- **Job Reservation for Locals:**
  - **Nativism**, the **cry for job protection of locals**, has been **on a rise recently in India**.
  - Various states have taken similar steps with respect to **job reservation for locals (JRFL)** with the **promised reservations ranging from 30% to the more common range of 70-80%**.
  - The move is applicable to both the government and/or the private sector.

- **Earlier Attempts:**
  - It has been mooted by several parties (ruling or opposition leaders) in States such as Maharashtra (1968 onwards and 2008), Himachal Pradesh (2004), Odisha (2008), Karnataka (2014, 2016, 2019), Andhra Pradesh (2019), Madhya Pradesh (2019).
  - **However, none of these has been implemented** and has remained only on paper **due to lack of implementation mechanism** and **reluctant attitudes of industries bodies.**
- The Constitution of India **guarantees freedom of movement and consequently employment within India** through several provisions.
  - **Article 14** provides for equality before law irrespective of place of birth.
  - **Article 15** guards against discrimination based on place of birth.
  - **Article 16** guarantees no birthplace-based discrimination in public employment.
  - **Article 19** ensures that citizens can move freely throughout the territory of India.
- **Reasons Behind Such Legislations:**
  - **Vote Bank Politics: Inter-state migrant workers (ISMW)** constitute a sizeable “under-used or un-used” electorate as they **often do not exercise voting rights**. If these workers and potential migrants could be retained through JRFL and provided with jobs, the **parties’ electoral causes will be served.**
  - **Economic Sluggishness:** The native unemployment issue assumes relevance as joblessness has intensified in the context of shrinking government employment.
  - **Increased Incomes and Talent:** JRFL will not only retain talent but also incomes which otherwise will go to “other regions”.
  - **Precondition for Land Acquisition:** Farmers and villagers, who lose their land in the process of land acquisition for industries, keep such preconditions in which industries have to provide jobs to local youth.

- **Impacts:**

- **Reduced job creation due to deterrence for industries** in a state with such restrictions. This would do **more harm to natives** than actually benefiting them.
- Such restrictions **may hamper the growth and development prospects** of the respective state as well as the country by **affecting ease of doing business**.
- Restrictions on labour mobility would **disregard this advantage of the diverse labour pool**, which is a strength of the Indian economy.
- May **promote aggressive regionalism** and thus a threat to the unity and integrity of India.
- **Increased risks of labour shortages, rise in unemployment, aggravate wage inflation and worsened regional inequalities** are few other possible impacts.

## Way Forward

---

- The idea of JRFL amounts to carving out 'countries' within a country and is based on a dubious assumption that skills in the local market are omnipresent.
- The best way to grow out of it is to ensure economic recovery and provide enough job opportunities for youths with skill training and proper education as key focus areas, enabling the masses to compete in the free market.
- States need to create a framework where safe interstate **migration** for work is facilitated and fiscal coordination is pursued to enable the portability of social security benefits. If this is done, interstate migration would rise and provide more opportunities to remedy regional disparities.

## Source: IE

---

## India's Annual Resolution on Counter-Terror

---

### Why in News

---

Recently, India's **annual resolution on the issue of counter-terrorism** was adopted by consensus in the First Committee of the **United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)**.

### Key Points

---

- India's resolution '**Measures to prevent terrorists from acquiring weapons of mass destruction**' was **co-sponsored by more than 75 countries** and adopted by **consensus without a vote**.  
India, a victim of state-sponsored cross-border terrorism, has been at the forefront in highlighting the serious threat to international peace and security emanating from acquisition of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) by terrorist groups.
- India's resolution predates the adoption of **resolution 1540** by the Security Council. In **resolution 1540 of the year 2004**, the Security Council decided that all States shall refrain from providing any form of support to non-State actors that attempt to develop, acquire, manufacture, possess, transport, transfer or use nuclear, chemical or biological weapons and their means of delivery, in particular for terrorist purposes.
- It needs to be noted that **the UN has not agreed on a Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism (CCIT)** yet.
  - In 1996, with the objective of providing a comprehensible legal framework to counter terrorism, India proposed to the UNGA the adoption of the "Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism" (CCIT).
  - CCIT seeks a universal definition of terrorism, prosecution of terrorists under special laws, making cross-border terrorism an extraditable offence worldwide, among others.
- **Weapon of Mass Destruction:**
  - WMD refers to a weapon with the capacity to inflict death and destruction on such a massive scale and so indiscriminately that its very presence in the hands of a hostile power can be considered a grievous threat.
  - Modern weapons of mass destruction are either nuclear, biological, or chemical weapons—frequently referred to collectively as **NBC weapons**.
  - Efforts to control the spread of WMD are enshrined in international agreements such as the **Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty of 1968**, the **Biological Weapons Convention of 1972**, and the **Chemical Weapons Convention of 1993**.  
**India is not a signatory to the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty of 1968.**
  - India has enacted an act to prohibit unlawful activities, in relation to weapons of mass destruction and their delivery systems which is known as **The Weapons of Mass Destruction and Their Delivery Systems (Prohibition of unlawful activities) Act, 2005**.

**United Nations General Assembly**

UNGA is **one of the six principal organs of the United Nations**, serving as the main deliberative, policy-making, and representative organ of the UN.

- UN is an international organization founded in 1945. It is currently made up of 193 Member States.
- The **other five organs** of the UN are: Security Council, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), the Trusteeship Council, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the UN Secretariat.

## First Committee of the UNGA

- The **First Committee (Disarmament and International security)** deals with disarmament, global challenges and threats to peace that affect the international community and seeks out solutions to the challenges in the international security regime.
- The Committee works in close cooperation with the **United Nations Disarmament Commission** and the **Geneva-based Conference on Disarmament**. It is the **only Main Committee** of the General Assembly entitled to **verbatim records coverage**.

Source:IE

---

## Height and BMI Trends of 2019

---

### Why in News

---

A recent study published in **The Lancet**, provides new estimates for **height and Body Mass Index (BMI) trends in 2019** across 200 countries after analysing data from 2,181 studies.

Height and BMI are **anthropometric measures of the quality of nutrition and healthiness** of the living environment during childhood and adolescence and are highly **predictive of health and developmental outcomes** throughout life.

**Anthropometry** is the science of measuring the size and proportions of the human body.

### Key Points

---

- Both height and BMI have **increased from 1985 to 2019** although **there is still a great deal of potential for height** while curbing any future rise in obesity.
- The height and BMI trajectories over age and time of school-aged children are **highly variable across countries**, which indicates **heterogeneous nutritional quality and lifelong health advantages and risks**.

- **Body Mass Index:**

- It is measured as the weight in kilograms divided by the square of the height in metres.

**World Health Organisation (WHO) guidelines define a normal BMI range as 18.5 to 24.9, overweight as 25 or higher, and obesity as 30 or higher.**

- **India ranks third and fifth from the bottom respectively** among countries where **19-year-old girls and boys have a low BMI.**
- The **mean BMI of 19-year-old boys** is **20.1** in India, compared to a high of 29.6 in the Cook Islands and a low of 19.2 in Ethiopia.
- The **mean BMI for 19-year-old Indian girls** is again **20.1**, compared to a high of 29.0 in Tonga and a low of 19.6 in Timor-Leste.

- **Height:**

- The **20 cm or higher difference between countries with the tallest and shortest mean height represents approximately 8 years of growth gap for girls** and approximately **6 years for boys.**

For example, 19-year-old girls in India have the same mean height as 12-year-old Dutch girls.

- The mean **height of Indian 19-year-olds** is **166.5 cm for boys** and **155.2 cm for girls**, well below the high of Netherlands boys (183.8 cm) and girls (170 cm).

- **Analysis of India's Situation:**

- In **developing countries like India**, there is a **dual burden of overnutrition as well as undernutrition.**
- The **prevalence of overweight and obesity** among adolescents of both **Indian girls and boys is lower** when compared to children of developed nations.
- There can be **several reasons** for this like variations in the epigenetic, dietary intakes, familial, psychosocial, parental education, occupations, income, etc.
  - **Epigenetics** literally means 'above' or 'on top of' genetics. It refers to **external modifications to the Deoxyribonucleic acid (DNA)** that turn genes 'on' or 'off'.
  - These modifications **do not change the DNA sequence**, but instead, they **affect how cells 'read' genes.**

- **Suggestions:**
  - There is a **need for regular diet and nutrition surveys in India** to avert the increase of overweight and obesity among children and adolescents.  
**Overweight and obesity are mostly carried over to adult age** and are **causes for many metabolic disorders** like insulin resistance, diabetes, hypertension, CVDs, stroke, etc.
  - **Programmes targeted towards the poor** from birth through school years are needed.

**Source: IE**

---

## **Virtual Global Investor Roundtable**

---

### **Why in News**

---

Recently, the **Prime Minister has chaired the Virtual Global Investor Roundtable** (VGIR), with an aim to attract investment into the country.

### **Key Points**

---

- **Virtual Global Investor Roundtable:** It is **an exclusive dialogue** between leading global institutional investors, Indian business leaders and the highest decision-makers from the Government of India and Financial Market Regulators.
- **Organised by:** Ministry of Finance and the **National Investment and Infrastructure Fund** (NIIF).
- **Focus for 2020:** Discussions around India's economic and investment outlook, structural reforms and the government's vision for the path to a USD 5 trillion economy by 2024-25.

- **Highlights:**
  - **Aatmanirbhar Vision**: It is a **well-planned economic strategy** that aims to **use the capabilities of India's businesses and skills of its workers** to make India into a global manufacturing powerhouse.
  - **ESG Score**: India has companies ranking high on **Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG)** scores.
  - **National Infrastructure Pipeline**: Under it, India has an ambitious plan to **invest USD 1.5 trillion** in various social and economic infrastructure projects, aimed for faster economic growth and alleviation of poverty in the country.
  - **Initiatives Taken to Improve Manufacturing Potential and Ease of Doing Business:**
    - One Nation, One Tax system in the form of **Goods and Services Tax (GST)**, one of the **Lowest Corporate Tax rates** and **Faceless regime for Income Tax (IT) assessment and appeal.**
    - A **new labour laws** regime balancing the welfare of workers and ease of doing business for the employers and **Production Linked Incentive schemes** in specific sectors.
  - **Initiative Taken for the Development of the Financial Sector:**
    - Unified authority for the **International Financial Services Centre**, liberal **Foreign Direct Investment** (FDI) regime, suitable policy regimes for investment vehicles like **Infrastructure Investment Trust** and **Real Estate Investment Trust.**
    - Implementation of **Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code** (IBC), financial empowerment through **Direct Benefit Transfer** and fin-tech based payment systems like **Ru-Pay cards and BHIM-UPI.**
  - The opportunity created by the **National Education Policy 2020** in setting up campuses of foreign universities in India was also highlighted.

## **National Investment and Infrastructure Fund**

- NIIF is a **government-backed entity** established to provide long-term capital to the country's infrastructure sector.
  - The **Indian government has a 49% stake** in NIIF with the rest held by foreign and domestic investors.
  - With the Centre's significant stake, NIIF is considered **India's quasi-sovereign wealth fund.**
- It was set up in **December 2015** as a **Category-II Alternate Investment Fund.**
- Across its **three funds viz. Master Fund, Fund of Funds, and Strategic Opportunities Fund**, it manages over USD 4.3 billion of capital.
- Its registered office is in **New Delhi.**

## **Metro Neo**

---

### **Why in News**

---

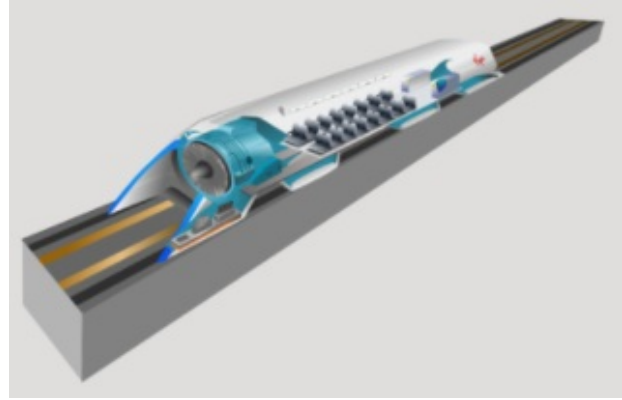
The Centre is planning to approve national standard specifications for **Metro Neo, a no-frills, low-cost urban rail transit system targeted at tier 2 and tier 3 cities.**

### **Key Points**

---

- Metro Neo is a **mass rapid transit system providing low-cost, energy-efficient and eco-friendly urban transport solutions** for tier 2 and tier 3 cities.
- Drawing traction power from overhead wires, Metro Neo will **not run on track but on road**. It is **suitable for places** where the traffic demand is around 8,000 passengers one way in peak time.
- Metro Neo systems are **lighter and smaller than conventional Metro trains**. They **cost about 25% of conventional systems** but with **similar facilities**, and are **cheaper than the other budget option Metrolite**, which costs about 40% of the normal Metro.
- The **Maharashtra government** has already given a green signal for this state-of-the-art Mass Rapid Transit System (MRTS) for **Nashik**.
- **Metro Trains and Metrolite:**
  - The **metro rail system** being developed at present is **of high capacity** which is required for bigger cities with very high ridership and Peak Hour Peak Direction Traffic (PHPDT).
  - Seeing the success of metro rail in the country, several other **cities with lower projection of ridership** are also **aspiring for a rail based mass rapid transit system**, which could be fulfilled by **Light Urban Rail Transit System** named "**Metrolite**" with lesser capacity at much less cost.  
'Metrolite' would also act as a **feeder system to high capacity Metro**.

## Other New Modes of Urban Mobility



- **Hyperloop Transportation System:**

- It is a transportation system where a **pod-like vehicle** is propelled through a near-vacuum tube connecting cities at **speeds matching that of an aircraft**.
- The hyperloop concept is a **brainchild of Tesla founder Elon Musk**. The hyperloop system is being designed to transport passengers and freight.
- The USA-based Hyperloop Transport Technology (HTT) has claimed that it **costs USD 40 million per kilometre to build a hyperloop system while building a high-speed train line would cost almost twice**.
- The **Maharashtra government** had signed an agreement with **Virgin group** to build a Hyperloop in 2018.



- **Pod Taxi:**

- In 2017, the **National Highway Authority of India (NHAI)** had called the expression of interest (EOI) for launching **India's first driverless pod taxi systems** on a 70 km stretch from Dhaula Kuan in Delhi to Manesar in Haryana. Pod Taxi Scheme is also called the **Personal Rapid Transit (PRT)**.
- PRT consists of **driverless vehicles** in the shape of pods, which **can hold two to six people each**, and run along a predetermined course at **80-130 km per hour**.

## Way Forward

- India grapples **with a host of mobility-related challenges** like pollution and traffic congestion, thus it is essential to ramp up and optimise mobility services.
- The **focus** has to be on promoting green, clean mobility. Electric vehicles are already on high priority on the government's agenda.

- Further, mobility services should be convenient to access by the public and secure, even for the fringes of the demographic, including women, children and the elderly.
  - Cities are **engines of economic growth**. Thus, for a fast urbanising country such as India, we need such a fuel efficient mass rapid transit system to achieve **Sustainable Development Goals** and ensure movement of people instead of moving vehicles.
- 

## Gandhian Young Technological Innovation Awards

---

### Why in News

---

Recently, the Union Minister of Science and Technology has given **Gandhian Young Technological Innovation (GYTI) Awards** to encourage technology students to move towards setting up biotechnology and other start-ups.

### Key Points

---

GYTI awards constitute **two categories** of awards:

- **Students Innovations for Advancement of Research Explorations-Gandhian Young Technological Innovation (SITARE-GYTI):**
  - **Given To:** Every year to the most promising technologies developed by the students in life sciences, biotechnology, agriculture, **medical devices**, etc.
  - **Given By:** The Biotechnology Industry Research Assistance Council (BIRAC), a public sector enterprise, set up by the Department of Biotechnology (DBT).
- **Society for Research and Initiatives for Sustainable Technological Innovations-Gandhian Young Technological Innovation (SRISTI-GYTI):**
  - **Given To:** Every year to students in other engineering disciplines except for the ones covered by SITARE-GYTI.
  - **Given By:** Society for Research and Initiatives for Sustainable Technological Innovations (SRISTI), a developmental voluntary organisation.

### Initiatives Aimed at Boosting Start-Ups

---

- **Scientific Social Responsibility Policy:**

Currently, the government is working on a **Scientific Social Responsibility Policy** with a focus on how efforts of scientists can benefit all sections of society.

- **Biotechnology Ignition Grant Scheme:**
  - It is the flagship programme of BIRAC, which provides **support to young startups and entrepreneurial individuals.**
  - It is the **largest early-stage biotech funding programme in India** with the funding **grant of up to Rs. 5 million** to best in class innovative ideas to build and refine the idea to proof-of-concept.
  - **Aims:**
    - Foster generation of ideas with commercialisation potential.
    - Upscale and validate proof of concept.
    - Encourage researchers to take technology closer to market through a start-up.
    - Stimulate enterprise formation.
- **Encouraging Youth for Undertaking Innovative Research through Vibrant Acceleration (E-YUVA) Scheme:**
  - It will engage a number of universities and technology institutes to serve as mentors, which will help to create a pan-India network to encourage a larger number of student entrepreneurs.
  - It aims to **promote a culture of applied research and need-oriented** (societal or industry) entrepreneurial innovation among young students and researchers.
  - It is implemented through E-YUVA Centres (EYCs) to inculcate entrepreneurial culture through fellowship, pre-incubation and mentoring support.
  - It provides **support for students under the following two categories:**
    - BIRAC's Innovation Fellows (for postgraduates and above).
    - BIRAC's E-Yuva Fellows (for undergraduate students).
- **Biologically-inspired Resilient Autonomic Cloud (BioRAC)** helps more and more students who try to set up start-ups and **help India become Atmanirbhar** (self-reliant).  
 BioRAC employs **biologically inspired techniques and multi-level tunable redundancy techniques to increase attack and exploitation resilience in cloud computing**, helping it tolerate and minimise the impact of novel **cyber-attacks**.

**Source: PIB**

---