

1. **India's resilient Economy**

The year 2023 was kinder in terms of economy as the worst fears in the initial days of economic slowdown have not materialised yet. Despite a fresh geopolitical flashpoint in West Asia and a few bank collapses in the West Indian stock markets ended the year at record highs. The economy has delivered positive surprises, with ₹1.6 lakh crore becoming the new normal for monthly GST collections and GDP growth hitting 7.7% between April and September on top of a 7.2% rise in 2022-23. As we stand on the threshold of the New Year, several key factors will influence India's economic trajectory and policy decisions:

**Growth Projections and Resilience:**

- **Past Data Trends:** Historical patterns indicate a consistent growth momentum throughout the fiscal year, suggesting a probable annual growth rate surpassing 7% for the current fiscal.
- **Agricultural Sector Resilience:** India has made significant strides in diversifying its crop patterns. This strategy mitigates risks associated with monsoon failures or erratic rainfall, as different crops respond differently to weather variations. Expanding irrigation facilities, including the implementation of water conservation methods like drip irrigation, has reduced dependency on rainfall for agriculture, enhancing productivity.
  - Improved forecasting capabilities and dissemination of weather information have empowered farmers to make informed decisions, minimizing losses due to adverse weather conditions.
- **Reduced Dependency on Oil:** India's shift towards renewable energy sources and less energy-intensive sectors, such as services and technology, has reduced its overall dependence on oil. The decreasing oil intensity of the GDP has allowed India to maintain a current account deficit below 2% of GDP, decoupling it from global oil price fluctuations.
- **Political Stability:** Recent elections in India have shown clear majority mandates, reducing political uncertainty and fostering a stable environment for policymaking and investments. This trend is indicative of stable governance and policies, attracting both domestic and foreign investments.

- **Macroeconomic Stability and Financial Sector Reforms:** Reforms led by the RBI and the government have addressed the banking sector's legacy issues, resulting in improved credit growth and stability. Measures to stabilize the non-banking financial sector post-2019 crisis have contributed to overall financial stability.

**Challenges Ahead:**

- **Demographic Changes:** India faces challenges associated with an ageing population that might impact labor force dynamics and healthcare requirements.
- **Climate-Related Concerns:** Managing climate change effects on agriculture and other sectors remains crucial.
- **Technology Disruption:** Adaptation to technological advancements affecting labor-intensive industries needs to be addressed.
- **Global Debt Dynamics:** The global economic landscape's heavily indebted nature poses challenges, necessitating prudent financial management.

**Key Things to Watch Out For:**

- **Future Trajectory:** A growth range of **6.5% to 7.5%, centered around 7%**, seems a reasonable baseline for the upcoming year barring unforeseen simultaneous adverse shocks.
- **GDP Growth:** With continued resilience in GDP growth India has showcased unexpected resilience despite global uncertainties and geopolitical tensions. The GDP growth rate at 7.7% between April and September 2023, alongside positive surprises in GST collections, indicates a robust economic performance.
- **Global Economic Conditions:** Geopolitical conflicts, like those in Ukraine and West Asia, have contributed to elevated oil prices and inflation concerns. Ongoing geopolitical disruptions and potential new flashpoints could influence trade relations and economic stability. Events such as attacks on shipping lines might pose challenges to trade.
- **Global Demand and Exports:** How global demand affects India's goods and IT-led services exports, especially considering the ongoing challenges faced by developed economies can be a concern. India's export sector, especially goods and IT-led services, faces challenges due to sluggish global demand. Recent incidents impacting shipping lines in Red Sea corridors raise concerns about disruptions in trade.

- **Interest Rates:** Anticipations surround the RBI's probable interest rate cuts in the latter half of the year, aligning with global cues, especially the U.S. Federal Reserve's stance on rate adjustments. Hence monitoring central bank policies and potential rate cuts, both by the RBI and other global central banks, which might influence demand for Indian goods and services will be key to watch.

**Expected Policy and Political Economy Front:**

- **Budgetary Announcements:** The interim Budget scheduled for February 1 might not include major announcements due to the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. However, the full Budget anticipated around July could introduce substantial reforms and policies.
- **Private Investment and Fiscal Consolidation:** The government aims to assess the widespread rebound in private investment to balance public spending and fiscal consolidation efforts. Key sectors like steel, cement, and auto might indicate this economic shift.
- **Global Political Landscape:** The impending elections in various countries, including India, the European Union, the U.S., and Russia, will potentially reshape global political landscapes, potentially impacting trade policies and economic engagements.
- **Potential Rate Cuts:** While the RBI might consider interest rate cuts in the latter half of the year, global cues, especially the U.S. Federal Reserve's stance on rate hikes, might influence other central banks, potentially leading to rate cuts worldwide.
- **Petrol and Diesel Prices, GST Rates:** Speculations are rife regarding changes in petrol and diesel prices, which have remained unchanged for an extended period which was evident as recently the government has announced a massive cut in petrol and diesel prices. Additionally, streamlining the complex GST rates might be a point of contention and a potential election promise.
- **Inflation Concerns:** While inflation seems relatively controlled, there are worries about food prices due to factors like El Niño affecting crop yields. This might impact household budgets and consumption patterns, particularly in the rural sector. Adverse weather conditions are the major factor impacting crop yields which further strain household budgets.
- **Consumption Trends:** Disparities are observed in consumption trends, with high-end goods and services witnessing demand while lower-priced

	<p>segments face challenges. Curbs on retail loans and weak hiring in certain sectors might also affect consumption patterns.</p> <p>The outlook for India's economy in the coming year is promising yet complex, with a mix of global uncertainties and domestic challenges. Monitoring global economic conditions, inflationary pressures, policy decisions, and their repercussions on various sectors will be crucial in sustaining and enhancing India's growth prospects amidst the evolving global landscape, and their implications on various sectors to sustain and enhance growth prospects.</p> <p><b>PYQ:</b> Do you agree with the view that steady GDP growth and low inflation have left the Indian economy in good shape? Give reasons in support of your arguments. <b>(UPSC 2019)</b></p>
2.	<p><b>Finance panel should curb populism</b></p> <p>The <b>16<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission (FC)</b> is about to be constituted for recommending the devolution of Central taxes and grants to States. The RBI's just published report: <b>"State Finances: A study of Budgets"</b> has red-flagged the issues the FC will certainly be asked to look into, like States reverting to the <b>Old Pension Scheme (OPS)</b>, and unsustainable subsidies flowing from the guarantees or freebies promised at the time of elections, regardless of the financial conditions of States.</p> <p>The Constitution of Finance Commission</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The Finance Commission is a <b>constitutional body</b> that is established by the <b>President of India</b> under <b>Article 280</b> of the Indian Constitution.</li><li>▪ It consists of a <b>Chairman and four other members</b> who are <b>appointed by the President</b>.</li><li>▪ The Commission is responsible for making recommendations to the President on various matters related to the distribution of tax revenues between the Centre and the states, as well as the grants-in-aid of the states.</li><li>▪ The Commission is <b>constituted every five years or earlier</b>, as deemed necessary by the President.</li></ul> <p><u>Need to Curb Populism in India</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Fiscal Imbalance:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Rising Debt:</b> Between 2014 and 2022, the average <b>debt-to-GDP ratio of Indian states increased from 22.2% to 34.5%</b>, with populist states like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu witnessing steeper rises.</li></ul></li></ul>

- **Higher Deficit:**The combined **fiscal deficit of states reached 4.1% of GDP** in 2021-22, fueled by populist spending on free electricity, loan waivers, and social welfare schemes.
- **Revenue Shortfalls:** Tax revenues haven't kept pace with populist spending, with many states relying heavily on central government bailouts or borrowing to bridge the gap.
- **Economic Distortions:**
  - **Investment Decline:**Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) inflow into India declined by 10% in 2022, attributed by some to uncertainty created by populist policies like price controls and protectionist measures.
  - **Job Growth Stagnation:**Despite increased government spending, India's unemployment rate remained above 7% in 2023, indicating that populist policies haven't yielded significant job creation.
  - **Market Inefficiency:**Price controls in sectors like agriculture discourage production and lead to shortages, disrupting supply chains and impacting consumer welfare.
- **Erosion of Governance:**
  - **Increase in Corruption:**India's ranking on **Transparency International's Corruption Perception Index** dropped from 80 in 2014 to 85 in 2022, coinciding with the rise of populist rhetoric undermining institutional checks and balances.
  - **Declining Transparency:** The Public Affairs Index, which measures transparency in government decision-making, showed a downward trend in several states with strong populist leaders.

Populist Policies taken by States

- **Reversion to Old Pension Scheme (OPS):**
  - Some states in India have reverted to the OPS, abandoning the **New Pension Scheme (NPS)** introduced in 2004.
    - The OPS incurs indefinite liabilities towards employees' pensions, unlike the NPS, where the liability is limited to the employees' serving life.
  - An internal RBI study suggests that **OPS results in 4.5 times more liability compared to NPS**, with an additional burden of 0.9% of GDP by 2060.

- This move is seen as retrogressive, restricting growth and compromising the interests of future generations.
- **Rising States' Fiscal Deficit:**
  - Many states have deficits due to subsidies for populist measures like free electricity.
  - States' average spending on subsidies is 0.87% of their **Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP)**, with some states spending much more (e.g., Punjab 2.35%, Rajasthan 1.92%).

Finance Commission can help Curb Populism

- **Performance-Based Incentives:** The 15<sup>th</sup> FC's proposal for **measurable performance-based incentives** is a step in the right direction. By linking financial transfers to States with specific outcomes, such as improved health, education, and agricultural indicators, the FC encourages responsible governance and discourages populist measures that may not contribute to long-term development.
  - Under **Article 280(3) of the Constitution**, apart from recommending the devolution of taxes and grants-in-aid to the States, the FC may be asked by the Centre to look into any other issue "in the interest of sound finance".
- **Objective Criteria for Populist Measures:** While the categorisation of schemes as populist and non-populist may be challenging, the FC can **work on developing objective criteria that take into account the diverse developmental needs of different States.**
  - This would require collaboration between the Centre and States to arrive at a consensus on what constitutes populist expenditure.
- **Fiscal Efficiency Parameters:** The FC can give **more weightage to fiscal efficiency** in its criteria for transfers. By emphasizing fiscal consolidation and measuring the tax effort of States, the FC can encourage responsible financial management. This can act as a deterrent to States resorting to populism without considering their fiscal capacity.
  - The 15<sup>th</sup> FC gave only 2.5% weightage to the fiscal efficiency as measured by tax effort (Own Tax to GSDP ratio). This could be reviewed by 16th FC.
- **Public Awareness:** The Finance Commission can play a role in creating public awareness about the consequences of populist measures. By highlighting the strains on finances that **freebies** create and the long-

term impact on economic growth, the FC can **contribute to informed public discourse, putting pressure on political parties to adopt responsible fiscal policies.**

- **Stress on Future Implications:** The FC can draw attention to the long-term consequences of populist measures, such as rising state debts and the burden passed on to future generations.
  - This could involve recommending measures that prevent States from borrowing beyond their capacity and ensuring that financial decisions align with sustainable development goals.
- **Consensus Building:** While consensus between the Centre and States on controlling populist expenditure may be challenging, the **FC can act as a mediator and facilitator in fostering dialogue.**
  - By promoting cooperative federalism and encouraging open discussions on fiscal matters, the FC can contribute to a more collaborative approach to financial governance.
- **Regular Review and Recommendations:** The FC can continually review the financial health of States and make periodic recommendations based on the evolving economic scenario. This allows for flexibility in addressing emerging challenges, including the impact of external factors such as the **Covid-19**

A state's populism should be funded by its own taxpayers, not others. The RBI suggests that fiscal transfers should be tied to reforms and fiscal responsibility. If a state chooses populism and borrows without funding, it should bear the consequences.

3. **Not zero-sum - Stability of India-Russia ties**

The recent Moscow visit by India's Foreign Minister is of considerable significance in the framework of India-Russia relations, extending beyond the established special and privileged partnership. In the evolving global geopolitical landscape a high level of political engagement on international issues and bilateral matters is expected.

India - Russia ties Strategically Significant

- **Time-Tested Partners :**
  - **Collaboration since Cold War:** During the **Cold War**, the Soviet Union, as a superpower, held a key position in the partnership, while India, part of the "developing" nations and a leader in the **Non-Aligned Movement**, collaborated closely.

- **The Indo-Soviet Friendship Treaty of 1971:** In the wake of the Indo-Pak war (1971) Russia supported India while the US and China supported Pakistan
- **Declaration on the India-Russia Strategic Partnership:** In October 2000, India-Russia ties acquired a qualitatively new character with enhanced levels of cooperation in almost all areas of the bilateral relationship
- **Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership:** During the visit of the Russian President to India in December 2010, the Strategic Partnership was elevated to the level of a “Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership”.
- **Energy Security :**
  - Russia possesses one of the globe's largest reserves of natural gas. And, India has initiated a transition towards increased reliance on natural gas.
    - India is actively engaged in importing hydrocarbons from the Russian Far East.
  - Russia is an important partner for India in the area of peaceful use of nuclear energy.
    - The **Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (KKNPP)** is being built in Tamil Nadu with the technical assistance of Russia.
- **Economic Convergence:**
  - Russia is India's seventh-biggest trading partner.
  - The **bilateral trade has reached USD 45 billion** already surpassing the target of bilateral trade of USD 30 billion by 2025
  - The two countries intend to increase **bilateral investment to USD 50 billion by 2025.**
- **Balancing Geopolitics :**
  - **Counterbalancing Chinese Aggression:** The Chinese aggression in the border areas of eastern Ladakh, brought **India-China relations** to an inflection point but also demonstrated that Russia can contribute to defusing tensions with China.
  - **Champions of multipolarism:** Both Russia and India support the concept of a multi-polar world. It suits a rising Russia which aspires to recover the 'great power status'



and a rising India which aspires to a **permanent seat at the UNSC** and enhanced status in the global arena.

- Moscow has long supported India's desire to expand the circle of permanent members of the Security Council and to enter into the **Nuclear Suppliers Group** - which Beijing is blocking.
- **Enduring Defence Ties :**
  - It is guided by the **Agreement on the Programme for Military Technical Cooperation** signed between the two countries. Russia currently commands around 47 percent of total arms imports by India.
    - However, historically it accounted for 65% of arms imported by India.
  - The overwhelming majority of India's armored force consists of **Russian tanks—the T-72 and T-90S**—and so does its fleet of ground-attack aircraft—variants of **MiG-21, Su-30, and MiG-29**.
  - The **BrahMos missile** of India has been developed jointly with Russia.
  - In October 2018, India signed a 5.43 billion USD deal with Russia for the **S-400 Triumph missile**.
  - Over half of India's conventional submarines are of Soviet design.

Key Issues in India-Russia Relationship

- **Strategic Crossroads for Russia:**
  - **Russia's Closer Ties with China:**
    - For **Russia**, with its long border with **China** and adversarial relations with the West, avoiding a two-front confrontation is a key imperative.
    - As **Russia** and **China** enhance their **military cooperation**, engage in **joint economic initiatives**, and align on various **diplomatic fronts**, it introduces a geopolitical dynamic that may impact India's traditional strategic considerations.
  - **Increasing Proximity with Pakistan :**

- In recent years, Russia has tried to improve its relationship with Pakistan. It might be a response to the **US-India relationship**.
- **Diplomatic Dilemma for India :**
  - **Security Engagement with the United States:**
    - India has now signed all four **foundational agreements** with the USA. India has bought USD 20 billion worth of arms over the last two decades
    - India's great power calculations create the dilemma to choose between **"comprehensive global strategic partnership"** with the US on one hand, and its **"special and privileged partnership"** with Russia on the other .
  - **Ukraine Crisis :**
    - The invasion of Ukraine by Russia has resulted in a global imposition of sanctions as Russia's actions are widely perceived as a violation of the territorial integrity of a sovereign nation and a breach of international law.
    - However, **India faced significant criticism** in the West **for refraining from condemning the Russian invasion** of Ukraine and for its continued expansion of energy and economic cooperation with Moscow.
  - **Declining Economic Engagement :**
    - **Declining Defense Imports:** There has been a **gradual decline** in the orders of India from Russia because of its desire to diversify its defense imports and therefore a heightened competition for Russia with other suppliers.
    - **Poor Post-Sale Services:** Dissatisfaction in India with post-sales services and maintenance being offered by Russia.

Looking forward

- **Balancing the Defense Dynamics :**

- **Enhance Defense Collaboration:** Continue the strategic defense partnership, with a focus on modernizing and diversifying the defense collaboration.
- **Joint Military Production:** The two countries have been discussing how they can cooperate in **using India as a production base** for exporting to third countries Russian-origin equipment and services.
  - For instance, India and Russia have formed a **joint venture** for production of **Brahmos missiles**.
- **Facilitating Economic Engagement :**
  - **Diversification of Economic Ties:** Both countries should focus on diversifying and expanding their economic relations. This includes exploring new sectors for collaboration, increasing trade volumes, and encouraging investments.
  - **Trade Facilitation:** Both countries should work towards **reducing trade barriers and simplifying trade processes**. Enhance economic collaboration by creating a conducive environment for businesses from both countries to operate smoothly.
  - **Rupee-Ruble Mechanism:** Both sides need to resort to the **Rupee-Ruble mechanism** to safeguard bilateral trade from the impact of Western sanctions.
- **Balancing the Global Dynamics :**
  - **Multilateral Engagement:** Coordinate closely in multilateral forums such as **BRICS** and the Collaborate on global issues, advocate for shared values and principles, and work together to address common challenges on the international stage.
  - **Institutional Mechanisms:** Strengthen institutional mechanisms for regular dialogue and collaboration. This includes **enhancing the effectiveness of existing agreements and creating new platforms for engagement** at various levels, from government officials to business leaders.
- **Forging Technological Cooperation**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Innovation and Technology Cooperation:</b> Foster collaboration in emerging technologies, including <b>artificial intelligence, space exploration, cybersecurity, and renewable energy</b>. Joint research and development initiatives can lead to technological advancements beneficial to both countries.</li><li>▪ <b>Energy Security:</b> Explore opportunities for <b>cooperation in the energy sector</b>, including joint ventures in oil and gas exploration, renewable energy projects, and the development of energy infrastructure. Addressing energy security concerns can be mutually beneficial.</li><li>▪ <b>Promoting Cultural Connectivity :</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Yoga and Cultural Diplomacy:</b> Leverage the popularity of Yoga in Russia to enhance cultural diplomacy. Promote cultural events, language education, and exchanges to deepen the understanding of each other's cultures.</li><li>▪ <b>Public Diplomacy:</b> Engage in public diplomacy efforts to create awareness and understanding of the bilateral relationship among the citizens of both countries. Utilize media, social platforms, and cultural events to promote positive narratives</li></ul></li></ul> <p>India-Russia relationship stands resilient amid global shifts, grounded in trust and common interests. Amidst these dynamics, fostering resilience, open communication, and a shared commitment to global peace will determine the success of India-Russia relations in the years ahead. The Indian Foreign Minister rightly held that “Geopolitics and strategic convergence will always keep India-Russia ties on a positive trajectory.”</p>
4.	<p><b>The hollowing out of the anti-defection law</b></p> <p>After long years of legislative meanderings, Parliament enacted the anti-defection law (10th Schedule) to curb political defection. The volume, intensity, recklessness and uncontrolled venality seen in defections in the 1960s and thereafter almost came to a stop after this. Defections not only caused the frequent fall of governments but also caused great instability in political parties with power-seeking politicians wreaking havoc on political parties.</p> <p><u>Anti Defection Law</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>The Law:</b></li></ul>

- The **anti-defection law**(found under the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution) was **enacted to curb frequent floor-crossing** by legislators.
  - It was added to the Constitution through 52<sup>nd</sup>Amendment Act in 1985.
- It provides for the disqualification of elected legislators from the legislature in instances where they voluntarily switch parties or vote against the party's direction.
- **Ground for Disqualification:**
  - If he or she **voluntarily gives up** his or her membership of a political party.
    - in **Ravi S. Naik versus Union of India (1994)**, the **Supreme Court** clarified that an **MP/MLA need not formally resign from their party to attract disqualification** under the anti-defection law.
      - The SC had said: "The expression 'voluntarily given up his membership' is **not synonymous with 'resignation'**...Even in the **absence of a formal resignation from membership an inference can be drawn from the conduct** of a member that he has voluntarily given up his membership of the political party to which he belongs."
    - In **Rajendra Singh Rana vs. Swami Prasad Maurya and Others (2007)**, the SC held that the act of giving a letter requesting the governor to call on the leader of the other side to form a government would amount to an act of voluntarily giving up membership of the previous party.
  - If he or she **votes or abstains from voting in the House**, contrary to any direction issued by his or her political party or anyone authorized to do so, without obtaining prior permission.
  - If any member who is **independently elected joins any political party**.
    - In **Balchandra L. Jarkiholi Vs. B.S. Yeddyurappa (2010)**, the Supreme Court made it clear that **independent MLAs joining the Ministry in a coalition govt., without joining the ruling party, will**

**not sacrifice their independent identity.** Hence joining Council of Ministers doesn't amount to disqualification.

▪ **Exceptions to the anti-defection law:**

- A member will not be disqualified if:
  - His or her original political party merges with another party, and he or she and at least two-thirds of the members of the original party agree to the merger.
    - Under the **91<sup>st</sup> Amendment to the Constitution in 2003**, the exemption from disqualification if one-third of the members form a separate group (the rule prior to the amendment) was removed.
  - He or she or any other member of his or her party has not accepted the merger and opts to function as a separate group.
  - He or she makes a split from his or her original party, but does not join any other party.

Issues with the Anti Defection Law

- **Undermines the Idea of Democracy:**It undermines the representative and parliamentary democracy by **restricting the legislators' freedom of speech and expression**, and making them accountable to their party leaders rather than the people who elected them.
- **Doesn't set any time frame:**It does not provide a clear and timely mechanism for deciding the cases of defection, and leaves the power to disqualify the members to the discretion of the presiding officers of the houses, who may be biased or influenced by political pressures.
  - However, the Supreme Court in **Keisham Meghachandra Singh vs The Hon'ble Speaker Manipur Legislative Assembly & Ors (2020)** ruled that Speakers of assemblies and the Parliament must decide disqualification pleas within a period of three months except in extraordinary circumstances.
- **Still Allows Defection:**It allows a group of members to **defect to another party without penalty, if they constitute at least two-thirds of their original party**. This creates a loophole for opportunistic and unethical mergers and splits of parties, and undermines the stability and integrity of the political system.

- This way it encourages the practice of “horse-trading” or buying and selling of legislators.

- **Doesn't address the Root Cause:** It does not address the root causes of defection, such as lack of intra-party democracy, corruption, and electoral malpractices. It also does not prevent the parties from enticing or accepting the defectors, and thus fails to deter the phenomenon of defection.

To Strengthen the Anti Defection Law

- **Addressing Procedural Issues:**
  - **Shifting Adjudication Power:** The current practice of Speakers of the House deciding on defection cases raises concerns about bias and political influence. Shifting adjudication power to an independent body like the **Election Commission** could enhance impartiality.
    - The **2<sup>nd</sup>ARC** recommended that the issue of disqualification of members on the grounds of **defection should be decided by the President/Governor** on the advice of the Election Commission.
  - **Time-bound Decisions:** Setting a strict timeframe for adjudicating defection cases would prevent prolonged uncertainty and political manipulation.
  - **Judicial Recourse:** Allowing direct appeals to the Supreme Court or High Courts in certain cases could provide additional safeguards against arbitrary decisions.
- **Strengthening Party Accountability:**
  - **Internal Democracy:** Introducing regulations to enforce internal party democracy and transparency could reduce disillusionment among legislators, potentially curbing defection motivated by discontent within parties.
  - **Party Funding Reforms:** Making party funding more transparent and accountable could diminish the influence of money power in politics, which can incentivize defections.
  - **Anti-Poaching Measures:** Prohibiting or penalizing attempts to induce defections through offers of positions or benefits could discourage such practices.
- **Balancing Stability and Accountability:**

- **Exempting Mergers:** Exempting defections due to bona fide mergers of parties could encourage political restructuring without undermining stability.
- **Public Interest Considerations:** Introducing a mechanism to assess the public interest in cases of defection, allowing for disqualification only when it demonstrably harms public good, could strike a balance between stability and accountability.
- **Right to Dissent:** Recognizing the right of legislators to dissent on specific issues without triggering disqualification could promote healthy debate and independent thought within legislatures.

Other Countries dealing with Defections

- **UK:** Political defections in the UK are not explicitly prohibited by law, but defectors may face repercussions from their party and constituents. Consequences may include losing party privileges, facing disciplinary action, and risking legal challenges such as recall petitions or by-elections.
- **USA:** Similarly, the USA lacks a specific law against political defections. While rare, defections may occur for ideological or strategic reasons. Backlash from the former party, constituents, and media is possible, but defectors may also gain new support. Running for re-election under the new party label presents both challenges and opportunities, depending on the political climate.

The Anti-Defection Law in the Indian Constitution aims for democratic stability by curbing political defections. Despite its importance, challenges such as restricting legislators' freedom and procedural issues underscore the necessity for reforms. Inspired by international experiences, proposed steps aim to balance stability and accountability. Recognizing exemptions for party mergers and public interest, the law must evolve to remain relevant in India's dynamic political landscape, ensuring a robust democracy.

5. **India's stubborn income poverty problem**

While the decline in multidimensional poverty is positive news, addressing the persistently high levels of income poverty over the past five years is imperative.

**Macroeconomic Optimism and Government Recognition**

- **Positive Indicators:** Optimism surrounds India's economic outlook with a projected GDP growth of 7.3%, booming Sensex, and foreign exchange reserves surpassing \$620 billion.



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Government's Effective Coordination: Credit is given to the RBI Governor, Shaktikanta Das, and the Ministry of Finance for their coordinated efforts, acknowledged with the Governor of the Year award.</li><li>▪ Political Landscape and Confidence: Despite challenges raised by opposition parties, the Modi government, with renewed confidence, steers forward toward the 2024 parliamentary elections, with potential influence from the Ram temple project.</li></ul> <p><b>Economic Performance Analysis</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>GDP Growth and Inflation Metrics:</b> Comparing the UPA and Modi governments over a decade, GDP growth averaged 6.8% under UPA, slightly higher than Modi's 5.8%. Inflation was higher under UPA, emphasizing economic variables.</li><li>▪ <b>Focus on Poverty Reduction:</b> Evaluating poverty reduction efforts, UPA's decline was faster during its second term, while the Modi government showed a puzzling and concerning slowdown in poverty reduction during its second term.</li><li>▪ <b>Multidimensional Poverty Measures:</b> While income poverty persists, UNDP's MPI and NITI Aayog's national MPI indicate a significant reduction in multidimensional poverty, emphasizing improvements in health, education, and living standards.</li></ul> <p><b>Policy Recommendations for Tackling Income Poverty</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Income Poverty Challenge:</b> Despite advancements in other poverty measures, income poverty remains stubbornly high, with a minimal decline during the Modi-II period, possibly exacerbated by the impact of COVID-19.</li><li>▪ <b>Need for Employment-Intensive Growth:</b> Addressing income poverty requires a focus on spurring employment-intensive growth, emphasizing skill formation in rural areas and facilitating transitions to higher productivity jobs in urban areas.</li><li>▪ <b>Holistic Approach:</b> A holistic approach involves skill development in rural areas, encouraging movement from agriculture to urban jobs, and direct income transfers to the most vulnerable, aiming at sustainable poverty reduction.</li></ul>
6.	<b>Significant Personalities of India associated with Indian Independence Movement</b>

- The **freedom fighters of India played a pivotal role in India's struggle for independence from British colonial rule.** Their unwavering determination, selfless sacrifices, and courage in the face of adversity paved the way for India's eventual liberation. Numerous freedom fighters dedicated their lives to the cause of India's independence.
- They faced imprisonment, exile, and even torture, yet they remained steadfast in their pursuit of freedom. Their unwavering determination and willingness to make personal sacrifices served as a beacon of hope for the Indian people.
- To free India from British rule, every one of India's freedom warriors fought, toiled, and frequently gave their lives. To end the rule of foreign imperialists and their Colonialism in India, a sizable group of revolutionaries and activists from various racial and ethnic backgrounds got together.
- Their achievements, which vary from armed revolution to nonviolent resistance, all contributed significantly to India's eventual conquest of freedom. Numerous additional patriots, both well-known and unknown, sacrificed their lives for the nation's liberty alongside these legendary personalities. Their combined efforts and sacrifices are still remembered today and serve as a symbol of the unyielding spirit that guided India towards independence.

Mahatma Gandhi

- **Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi** was born on **2nd October, 1869** in **Porbandar**, Gujarat, India and was **assassinated by Nathuram Godse** on **30th January 1948**.
- He studied law and advocated for the civil rights of Indians, **first in South Africa** and then in India.
- **Experience in South Africa**
  - Moved at the discrimination faced by Indians at the hands of the British in South Africa, he vowed to **fight discrimination**.
  - On **22nd August 1894**, he formed the **Natal Indian Congress** to fight this discrimination.
  - In **September 1906**, protested **Asiatic ordinance** against **Indian Immigrants**.
  - He organized the **first mass civil disobedience campaign (1913)**, which he called **Satyagraha**, in reaction to

the **government's restriction** on the rights of Indians to recognize **Hindu marriages**.

▪ **In India**

- Gandhi returned to India in **1915**, and founded an ashram in Ahmedabad which was **open to all castes**.
- Gandhi led the **Champaran (1917)** and **Kheda (1918)** agitations in **Bihar and Gujarat** respectively.
- **Champaran:** The agitation was against the **tinkathia system**, wherein the peasantry was forced by the British landlords to grow **indigo** on **3/20th parts of his land**.
- **In 1919**, Gandhi led the **Khilafat movement**, which was combined with the **non-cooperation movement**.
- Non-cooperation movement was initiated to **condemn the Jallianwalla Bagh incident**. Non-cooperation also included **swadeshi policy**.
- **Civil disobedience movement:**
  - Gandhi decided to start the Civil Disobedience movement (which aimed at achieving complete independence) through the **Dandi March** (or **Salt Satyagraha**).
  - It ended with the signing of the **Gandhi-Irwin pact**, and with the condition that Congress would attend the **2nd Round Table Conference in London**.
- **Individual Satyagraha:**
  - The Congress, led by Gandhi, wanted to send a signal to the British to affirm the right of speech.
- **Quit India movement** was initiated on **8 August 1942**.
- Gandhi was influenced by **Bhakti saints, Advaita Vedanta, Buddhism, Tolstoy** and **Thoreau**.

**Ideology**

1. **Satyagraha**

- Gandhian philosophy of satyagraha was an outcome of the **concept of truth**. It is an exceptional and novel way to fight and resist evil. The concept argues that if truth is the ultimate reality, then it is important to protect and safeguard the foundations of truth.
- The main function of a Satyagraha was **not to injure the enemy**; rather it is an appeal to the enemy by reason or by a

gentle rational argument. It is like **a sacrifice of the self for truth and justice.**

- Gandhi argued that Satyagraha was a **universal solvent** against **injustice and harm**, and that it was equally applicable to **one-on-one interpersonal conflict**, to large scale political struggle, and therefore should be taught to everyone.
- Gandhi asked Satyagrahis to follow the following **principles: non-violence, truth, not stealing, self-restrain, non-possession, fearlessness, equal respect for all religions, swadeshi.**
- Gandhi argued that there are **4 types** of Satyagrahas:
  - **Non-Cooperation** includes activities like **strike, resignation** from office, boycott etc.
  - **Civil Disobedience:** A very powerful and extreme form of Satyagraha. It included activities like non-payment of taxes, violation of laws of the state etc.
  - **Constructive Program** would help in proper implementation of civil disobedience.
  - **Fasting.**

**1. Village Led Development**

- Gandhi was a strong proponent of a village led development model.
  - He was a supporter of Panchayati Raj Institutions, and argued for devolution of power to the villages.
2. Gandhi was a very strong proponent and follower of non-violence. He argued that a violent struggle can be easily crushed by the British, as compared to nonviolent struggles.
3. **Equality:** Gandhi was a strong supporter of equality in terms of **gender, caste, religion** etc. He worked for the **upliftment of Dalits** and **women**. He strongly favored the **emancipation of women**, and opposed **purdah, child marriage, sati and dowry.**
4. **Gandhian Economics:** He believed in **sarvodaya economic model**, which means upliftment and welfare of all.
5. **Gandhism** refers to the ideas and principles that Gandhi promoted. **Non-violent** resistance is of **central importance to this ideology.**

**Contribution**

- Gandhi is known as the **Father of India**, and was the leader of the freedom struggle.
- Gandhi played a major role in taking the freedom struggle to the masses and **integrating them into the freedom struggle**.
- He introduced multiple methodologies like **satyagraha**, non-cooperation, civil disobedience etc. which were helpful during the Indian freedoms struggle, and have been used in other countries also.
- **Untouchables:**
  - **In 1932**, Gandhi began a campaign to improve the condition of untouchables, whom he termed as **Harijans** (children of god).
  - Gandhi opposed the annihilation of caste system, and argued that the Varnashrama system was not exploitative, therefore it should continue to exist.
  - Gandhi started the **newspaper Harijan** in Gujarati , English and Hindi.
- **Religion:**
  - Gandhi argued for equality of all religions and completely secular.
  - He opposed the partition of India, and even after independence he argued for treating Muslims in India as equals.

Jawaharlal Nehru

- Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru was born on **14th November, 1889 in Allahabad (UP)** and dead on 27th May **1964**.
- He joined the Indian National Congress in 1919, and was greatly influenced by Mahatma Gandhi.
- He was a qualified barrister.
- He was imprisoned 9 times by the British.
- Nehru was the **President** of the historic **1929** Congress session in **Lahore**, where in Congress proclaimed complete independence as **India's political goal**.
- Nehru travelled to several European countries, and **represented India in the League** against **Imperialism** in **1927**, which was created in **Brussels**.
- He was the first Prime Minister of independent India.
- **Political Ideology:** Nationalism, Socialism, Democracy, Communist influences

- **A Few of his Publications:** The Discovery of India, Glimpses of World History; Letters from a Father to his Daughter; **Toward Freedom** (his autobiography)

#### **Ideology**

- Nehru was leftist politically, and was a socialist.
- Nehrusim is the political ideology of Jawaharlal Nehru. It was a liberal, idealistic type of fabian socialism.
- He was a strong proponent of Purna Swaraj (complete independence), and considered demanding of dominion status as a step backward. He opposed the Nehru Report (prepared by his father Motilal Nehru) in 1928 as it demanded dominion status.
- Nehru was a very strong opponent of fascism.
- He was secular, and believed in equality of all religions, which was clearly reflected in the secular approach that India took post-independence.
- He was a democrat, and established a very strong democratic tradition in India.
- Nehru was a fabian socialist, seeking to use state intervention to redistribute resources throughout society.
- He was a liberal, and pursued policies which aimed to improve the welfare of the untouchable class and women.
- **Tribal Panchsheel:** It aimed to develop the tribal areas while protecting their rights.

#### **Contribution**

- Nehru was an **active member** of the Congress **since 1919**, and participated in the Non-Cooperation movement, the Civil Disobedience movement, Individual Satyagraha (was the second to be arrested during the Satyagraha, with Vinoba Bave being the first) and the Quit India movement.
- Nehru was the **President of the All India States People's Conferences**, and was a strong supporter of people of the princely states.
- He framed the **'Objective Resolution'** which later became a part of the Constitution of India as its **preamble**.
- **First Prime Minister of India**
  - Under Nehru's supervision, India launched **its first five year plan in 1951**.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ He was the <b>chief policy framer of domestic and international policies</b> during his term as PM between <b>1947 and 1964</b>.</li><li>▪ Nehru's stint as PM of India is characterised by is secular and liberalist approach.</li><li>▪ As a <b>great believer in pluralism</b>, socialism and democracy, Nehru developed India as a secular nation true to its thousand years old cultural heritage.</li><li>▪ He envisioned India's top tier institutions like <b>Indian Institution of Technology, (NIT's), AIIMS</b> and also <b>India's first space program</b>.</li><li>▪ <b>Non-Aligned Movement:</b> Nehru was the <b>founder of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM)</b> and sought to keep India out of the Cold War.</li><li>▪ He inspired a whole generation of freedom fighters.</li></ul>
7.	<p><b>How Red Sea attacks put India's trade at risk?</b></p> <p>The Houthi militia in Yemen has carried out a series of attacks on cargo ships in the Red Sea, making the usual route through the Suez Canal unsafe. As a result, ships have to take a longer route around the Cape of Good Hope, which is more expensive and time-consuming for deliveries. Since November, the Houthi rebels in Yemen have been attacking ships in the Red Sea as a way to demonstrate their solidarity with Hamas in the conflict with Israel.</p> <p><b>Significance of the Red Sea trade route</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The Red Sea has been a crucial route connecting civilizations and continents such as Asia, Africa, and Europe throughout history.</li><li>▪ The Suez Canal, established in 1869, has served as a major trade route, significantly reducing the distance between Europe and Asia by 7000km.</li><li>▪ Additionally, due to its economic importance and strategic location, particularly the narrow width of the Suez Canal, the Red Sea has also gained geopolitical significance.</li></ul> <div data-bbox="284 1697 1358 1771" style="border: 1px solid black; height: 30px; width: 100%;"></div>



### Why Red?

Red Sea doesn't appear red at all.

- A popular hypothesis about the origins of the Red Sea's name is that it contains a cyanobacteria called ***Trichodesmium erythraeum*** (a red-colored algae), which turns the normally blue-green water a reddish-brown.



- Some other scholars believe it is linked to the way Asiatic languages often use colors to refer to cardinal directions, with “red” referring to “south” just as the Black Sea may be referring to the north.
- If you’re diving in the Red Sea during a seasonal algal bloom, you may see a red tinge in the water

#### **Physical Features**

- The Red Sea lies in a fault depression that separates two great blocks of Earth’s crust—Arabia and North Africa.
- The land on either side, inland from the coastal plains, reaches heights of more than 6,560 feet above sea level, with the highest land in the south.
- At its northern end the Red Sea splits into two parts, the Gulf of Suez to the northwest and the Gulf of Aqaba to the northeast.
- The Gulf of Suez is shallow—approximately 180 to 210 feet deep—and it is bordered by a broad coastal plain. The Gulf of Aqaba, on the other hand, is bordered by a narrow plain, and it reaches a depth of 5,500 feet.

#### **Salinity**

The Red Sea is one of the saltiest bodies of *water* in the world, Here are the reasons

- High evaporation and low precipitation;
- No significant rivers or streams drain into the sea, and
- Its southern connection to the Gulf of Aden, an arm of the Indian Ocean, is narrow.
- Its salinity ranges from between ~36 ‰ in the southern part and 41 ‰ in the northern part around the Gulf of Suez, with an average of 40 ‰. (Average salinity for the world's seawater is ~35 ‰ on the Practical Salinity Scale, or PSU; that translates to 3.5% of actual dissolved salts).

#### **Biodiversity:**

- The unique habitats of the Red sea support a wide range of marine life, including **sea turtles, dugongs, dolphins** and many endemic fish species.
- **Coral reefs** mainly extend along the northern and central coasts, and decrease in abundance towards the southern region, as coastal waters become more turbid.

- The special biodiversity of the area is recognized by the Egyptian government, who set up the **Ras Mohammed National Park** in 1983. The rules and regulations governing this area protect local marine life, which has become a major draw for diving enthusiasts.

**Economic aspects**

- **Resources** - Five major types of mineral resources are found in the Red Sea region: petroleum deposits, evaporite deposits (sediments laid down as a result of evaporation, such as halite, sylvite, gypsum, and dolomite), sulfur, phosphates, and the heavy-metal deposits
- **Navigation**-Red Sea is a part of an important trade route connecting Europe to Asia (Through Suez Canal)
- **Tourism** - The sea is known for its recreational diving sites.

**Impact on India**

- Global shipping companies have started adding additional charges to their normal freight rates due to the recent attacks along the Bab-el-Mandeb Strait.
- Indian exporters are concerned that if the security threats in the Red Sea trade route continue, freight rates for shipments to Europe and Africa could increase by 25-30%.
- This is problematic for India as the European Union is one of its major export destinations, and the reduced demand from the region is impacting labour-intensive sectors like textiles and jewellery exports.

**India has implemented various actions to address the issue:**

- The Indian Navy has substantially increased force levels and greatly enhanced maritime surveillance operations in the central and northern Arabian Sea.
- To perform maritime security operations and support merchant vessels in case of an incident a task group composed of destroyers and frigates have been assigned to the mission.
- Long-range maritime patrol aircraft and RPAs have added complete marine domain awareness to aerial surveillance.
- The Indian Coast Guard and the Indian Navy are partnering closely to ensure efficient monitoring within its economic exclusive zone.
- The Indian navy together with various national marine authorities monitor the overall situation.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>It is not yet clear whether India will participate in Operation Prosperity Guardian, as announced by US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to protect trade routes in the Red Sea.</li></ul>
8.	<p><b>Cooperative and Competitive Federalism in India</b></p> <p>Federalism is derived from the Latin word foedus, which means agreement. In fact federation is an agreement between two types of governments sharing power and controlling their respective spheres. Thus a federation is a system of national and local governments, combined under a common sovereignty with both national as well as federating units having autonomous spheres assigned to them by the constitution.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>India opted for quasi-federal structure after independence. The term “federal” has not been mentioned in the constitution but the working of Indian democracy is essentially federal in structure. However, it is the practical working style of federalism, which brought the concept of cooperative federalism and competitive federalism in India.</li><li>The present government is stressing on the need to leverage the potential of cooperative and competitive federalism for achieving all round inclusive development in India. In this context there is a need to examine the concepts of cooperative and competitive federalism.</li></ul> <p><b>Cooperative vs Competitive Federalism</b></p> <p>Based on the relationship between the central and state government—the concept of federalism is divided into- Co-operative federalism and Competitive federalism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>In Cooperative federalism the Centre and states share a horizontal relationship, where they “cooperate” in the larger public interest.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>It is an important tool to enable states’ participation in the formulation and implementation of national policies.</li><li>Union and the states are constitutionally obliged to cooperate with each other on the matters specified in Schedule VII of the constitution.</li></ul></li><li>In Competitive federalism the relationship between the Central and state governments is vertical and between state governments is horizontal.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>This idea of Competitive federalism gained significance in India post 1990s economic reforms.</li></ul></li></ul>

- In a free-market economy, the endowments of states, available resource base and their comparative advantages all foster a spirit of competition. Increasing globalisation, however, increased the existing inequalities and imbalances between states.
- In Competitive federalism States need to compete among themselves and also with the Centre for benefits.
- States compete with each other to attract funds and investment, which facilitates efficiency in administration and enhances developmental activities.
- The investors prefer more developed states for investing their money. Union government devolves funds to the states on the basis of usage of previously allocated funds.
- Healthy competition strives to improve physical and social infrastructure within the state.
- Competitive federalism is not part of the basic structure of Indian constitution. It is the decision of executives.

**Constitutional Position**

- Article 1 of the Constitution states, “India, that is Bharat, shall be a Union of States”. While the Constitution doesn’t mention the term “federal”, it does provide for a governance structure primarily federal in nature.
- It provides for separate governments at the Union and in the states. Further, it specifies and demarcates the powers, functions and jurisdictions of the two governments. Lastly, it details the legislative, administrative and financial relations between the Union and the states.
- The distribution of legislative powers has been divided into three lists: the Union List, the State List and the Concurrent List. The Union List, comprising the “vital interests of the State”, is the longest."
- On the Union List, Parliament has exclusive powers to legislate. While the state has exclusive powers to legislate on the State List, in certain situations, Parliament can also do so.
- As per the Concurrent List, the issue is more complex.
  - In case of a conflict between a state and a Central legislation, the parliamentary legislation shall prevail.
  - This, coupled with the fact that residuary powers of legislation are vested in the Union, gives a “unitary” tilt to federalism in India.

- A disconcerting trend has been observed since 1950. While the Union and Concurrent Lists have expanded, the State List seems to have shrunk. This has led many to question the structure of Indian federalism and to propose its remodelling.

**Steps toward Competitive Federalism**

- The acceptance of the 14th Finance Commission's recommendations, apart from significantly enhanced devolution ( devolution of 42% of the divisible pool to states during 20015-16 to 2019-20, against 32% suggested by the previous commission), enables states to design and implement programmes better suited to their needs.
- Competitive federalism is not yet embraced by all the states. But a handful of states are clearly taking steps to strengthen their business environments, including initiating difficult reforms on land acquisition and labour flexibility.
- Federalism is no longer the fault line of Centre-State relations but the definition of a new partnership of team India.
- The Central government has promised decentralisation of power and minimum interference in the State affairs.
  - With the roll out of the GST, this federal structure is further cemented.
  - Government has abolished Planning Commission and replaced it with NITI Aayog. One of the mandates of the NITI Aayog is to develop competitive federalism. Under it;
  - State governments would not look towards centre for policy guidelines and fiscal resources.
  - Share of states in central tax revenue has been increased from 32% to 42% after the recommendation of the finance commission.
  - States have freedom to plan their expenditure based on their own priorities.
  - States would work with centre on a shared vision of national objectives.
  - Restructuring of centrally sponsored schemes.
  - Financial sector bailout programme under UDAY scheme.
  - Swachh Bharat Ranking system.
  - Most of the state now organizes investors meet to showcase facilities in their state to attract business and investment. This

has lead to improvement in business environment in various states.

- State wise Ease of Doing Business ranking to build a huge sense of competition.

**Role of NITI Aayog in Promoting Co-Operative, Competitive Federalism**

- In 2017, the Niti Aayog called out for competitive “cooperative federalism” stressing that this formula would redefine the relationship between the Centre and the States.
- Former vice chairman of Niti Aayog Arvind Panagariya put the onus on the States to reimagine brand India.
- Chief secretaries of States in one of the meetings even showcased the best practices being incorporated in their respective States, a move aimed at promoting cross fertilisation of ideas.
- There appears to be a silver lining in the functioning of the Aayog in enabling states competing with each other to promote governance initiatives in the spirit of “co-operative, competitive federalism”.
- An important objective of NITI Aayog is to establish a dynamic institutional mechanisms where ‘eminent individuals outside the government system’ could contribute to policy making.
- The priorities for the Aayog are evident with the suggestions for rationalisation of 66 central schemes on skill development and making Clean India a continuous program leading to the formation of three CM sub-committees.
- In a subtle manner, NITI Aayog not only puts the onus on Chief Ministers to hasten implementation of projects for the betterment of the state, but also make the state an attractive investment destination – a kind of competitive federalism.
- Given the greater scope for states to work together and learn from each other, it is obvious that for federalism to work well, these states must also fulfil their role in promoting the shared national objectives.
- It is true that India cannot advance without all its states advancing in tandem but it may so happen that by not granting the statutory status for the NITI Aayog, government has made it vulnerable to future ambush under a different political dispensation.

**Hindrances for Competitive federalism**

- Several issues such as trust deficit and shrinkage of divisible pools plague Centre-State relations. Together, they make total cooperation difficult
- Trust deficit between Centre and States is widening. Most state governments believe the thrust on federalism is limited to lofty ideas and big talks. Many States have shown their displeasure with the way the Centre has been dealing with the States.
- On one hand the Centre has increased the States' share of the divisible pool but in reality States are getting a lesser share. The allocation towards various social welfare schemes has also come down, affecting the States' health in turn.
- The present inter-state competition in attracting investment is too early to determine whether it will really encourage competitive patterns of investment on a continuous basis.
- The socio-economic parameters and development of each State in India is different and while a few have made substantial progress in terms of employment, literacy and creating a conducive environment for doing business and investments, there are a few which are lagging.
- There are varied economic patterns in different states. There are deficit states or the backward regions or the states under debt. Those states should not be treated on par with the well-off states.
- The states like West Bengal, Bihar, Orissa, and Assam have protested against the uniform approach in funding because of their special situations in which the central government has to provide special funds to these states. Without special funding these states cannot imagine their participation in competitive federalism.
- Though the states are provided with financial independence, it is a fallacy to assume that all the states would perform uniformly in the process of development because while some states have favourable factors like skilled labour, capital and infrastructure, innovative service industries other states lagging behind.
- The opposition of few well-off states with respect to revenue loss in implementation of GST system points that there is a lack of will in participating in the process of competitive federalism.

**Suggestions**

- Efforts at cooperative and competitive federalism have commenced but need to be strengthened.

- NITI Aayog concentrates on the broader policy framework instead of micro resource-allocated functions. So there is a need to take some further steps.
- Reactivation of the Centre-State Council: Under Article 263, this council is expected to inquire and advice on disputes, discuss subjects common to all states and make recommendations for better policy coordination.
- The NITI Aayog can't replace the council's functions as it is the only recognised constitutional entity for harmonising the actions of the Centre and states. Its effective utilisation would lend legitimacy to cooperative federalism.
- On contentious issues like land, labour and natural resources, the state should promote best practices.
- This will enable greater investment and economic activity in states with a favourable regulatory framework. Enactment by states must secure expeditious Central approval.
- The World Bank's Ease of Doing Business index reflected competition between states has generated interest, this must be a continuing exercise.
- But states not doing well on the index complain of infirmities of process and procedure. These needs to be made more acceptable and transparent.
- On issues like international treaties, WTO obligations, or the environment an institutional mechanism must be evolved where important decisions are appropriately discussed with states.
- As India becomes globally more interdependent, these potential contentious issues must be resolved.

India needs a mix of Competitive and Cooperative federalism

- There needs to be a mix of competitive and cooperative federalism for India to move ahead.
- The future for India is cooperative and competitive federalism. Competitive federalism provides the dynamism that needs to be unleashed.
- We need cooperative federalism to balance competitive federalism.
- Constitution needed to catch up with economics to "favour integration over granting sovereignty" to promote Indian internal integration.
- GST which seeks to introduce the concept of one nation-one tax, in order to economically unify the country for the first time, is described this as



“pooled sovereignty”, which would bring a big change in the working of federalism in the country.

**Looking Forward**

- Cooperative and competitive federalism are not mutually exclusive. They have the same basic principle underlying i.e. development of the nation as a whole.
- Cooperative and competitive federalism may be two sides of the same coin as the competition alone cannot give the best results, it is competition with cooperation that will drive the real change.
- Centre’s support would be required by some states to participate in competitive federalism. Strong states make strong nation and to realise this vision, it requires a “Team India” approach to work for India’s development.
- The passage of GST Bill does usher in a new era in cooperative fiscal federalism and a growing political consensus for economic reforms.
- Further, the government’s structural reforms particularly for land and labour, are now widely seen as necessary for realising the potential of the economy.
- While all policy-makers and economists believe that “true” cooperative federalism is the way forward, they underline the need for the Centre to include states more aggressively in the decision-making process.
- Most state finance ministers also feel that the Centre’s fund allocation to States must be done more judiciously.

9. **India’s Pursuit of Reserve Currency Status**

- India's aspiration to elevate the rupee into a global reserve currency is still in its early phases. While the US dollar is projected to retain its supremacy in the international monetary system in the foreseeable future, the rupee and other currencies are anticipated to gain significant international prominence in the coming decades. However, fully achieving the goal of elevating the INR as a global reserve currency will require substantial reforms.
- For decades, the US dollar has solidified its position as the world’s leading reserve currency due to its wide acceptance in almost all international trade transactions. However, due to sanctions and the rise of alternate reserve currencies, the US dollar’s importance in world affairs is increasingly under threat. Fast-growing economies like China,

India and others are proactively tapping the benefits of trading in national currencies.

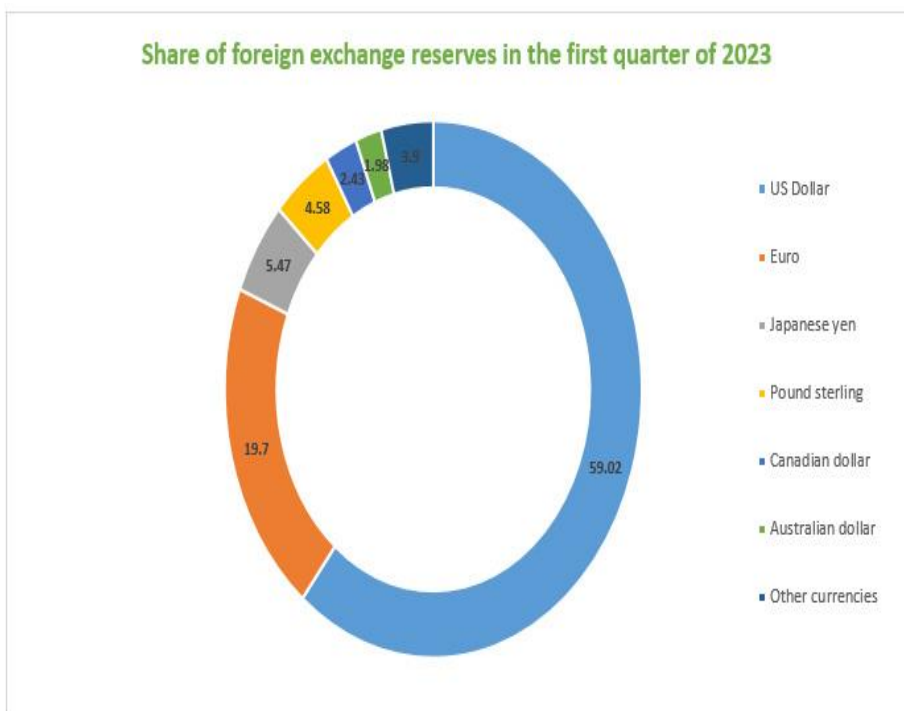
- Many countries have periodically considered the use of their national currencies through a range of accords, such as currency swap agreements and bilateral trade settlement agreements. China's renminbi share in the global reserve currency rose when the Chinese leadership institutionalised multinational financial infrastructure to settle transactions in renminbi. China initiated a Cross-Border Interbank Payment System (CIPS) in 2015, similar to the US Clearing House Interbank Payments System (CHIPS).
- India, with its burgeoning economic power, will be a pivotal actor in determining the future of the global monetary system. China and Russia inking a bilateral agreement in 2019 to promote their respective currencies is reflective of like-minded countries coming together to determine economic linkages. On the other hand, multilateral organisations such as BRICS are also questioning their reliance on the dollar. For instance, one of the key issues being discussed at the 15th BRICS Summit at Johannesburg is the need to trade in domestic currencies and exploring a common currency for BRICS nations.

#### The Growing Trend

- In the 19th century, Britain dominated international trade and investment, which led to the creation of the pound sterling as the first global currency. After the Second World War, the Bretton Woods agreement established a system of payments based on the US dollar. This advancement was rendered feasible due to the robustness of the US economy and its pivotal position in the realm of global trade. Ever since, it has remained the widely used currency because of the highly developed and liquid markets for USD-denominated financial instruments.
- The rise of the Euro as a world reserve currency was exceptional, and it is the most used reserve after the dollar. The Australian dollar's internationalisation was a protracted evolutionary process. After many years of currency pegging, capital controls were removed in 1983, and the currency was then allowed to float. Since 1983, the Australian dollar has been a recognised world currency.
- In Asia too, several attempts have been made to internationalise local currencies. The Chinese yuan, Indian rupee, and Japanese yen are also used in international trade. In response to the Global Financial Crisis,

China launched the ambitious 'Renminbi internationalisation' project, which had the twin objectives of internationalising its currency and implementing monetary reform on a larger scale. For many years, China has worked hard to establish the yuan as a primary world currency. According to the Bank for International Settlements (BIS) Triennial Survey, the yuan represented over 7 per cent of worldwide transactions in 2022, making it the fifth-most traded currency that year.

- Indian Rupee payments have long been accepted and exchanged in trade among many foreign countries. For instance, the INR was widely used in Kuwait, Bahrain, Iran, Qatar and the UAE in the 1960s. Within South Asia, Bangladesh, Nepal and Bhutan have endorsed the Indian rupee as a means of financial settlement.
- According to Currency Composition of Official Foreign Exchange Reserves (COFER) data from the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the dollar held a 59.02 per cent share of the world's foreign exchange reserves in the first quarter of 2023, followed by the Euro (19.7), Yen (5.47), Pound Sterling (4.85), Renminbi (2.58), Canadian dollar (2.43) and Australian dollar (1.98). India's share is trivial.



- It should be noted that China is the only rising economy that has consistently been able to internationalise its currency while keeping

controls on its capital account, primarily through two mechanisms. One is by finalising currency swap agreements between the People's Bank of China and the central banks of 43 countries. These agreements between two central banks to exchange currencies assure the markets that there would not be an oversupply of the renminbi. In place of the dollar in international trade, reports claim that Russia has accepted to trade in yuan. Reports claim that Saudi Arabia is also considering selling its oil in yuan rather than dollars. Two, China creates an offshore market for its domestic currency that allows foreign entities to sell renminbi for dollars. More importantly, despite continuing to hold capital control, China's limited success in internationalising renminbi can be attributed to its massive trade surplus in overseas trade.

Why ?

- India has enjoyed relatively strong economic growth since it embarked on major structural reforms and economic liberalisation in 1991. The average real GDP growth during 1991–2019 was 6.6 per cent. India is the third-largest economy after the US and China, accounting for around 7 per cent of global economic production (measured in terms of purchasing power parity). Despite recent shocks caused by COVID-19, the Russian–Ukrainian conflict and the worldwide increase in interest rates leading to an appreciation of the US dollar and widening of Current Account Deficits (CAD) in developing economies, financial institutions around the world continue to project India as the fastest-growing economy.
- Economic Survey 2022–23 has a positive projection for FY24, with a growth potential in the 6.0 to 6.8 per cent range. The Survey notes that “India recovered from the pandemic quite quickly, and growth will be boosted in the upcoming year by strong domestic demand and an increase in capital expenditure”. Likewise, Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of IMF stated that India will alone account for 15 per cent of the global growth in 2023, maintaining its status as a relative “bright spot” in the global economy. Hence, this depicts India's fundamental economic resilience and its capacity to re-energise the economy's growth sooner.
- The survey importantly highlights how inflation and monetary tightening caused bond yields to rise across nations and caused capital to move out of the majority of global economies and into the historically safe-haven

US market. As a result of this sudden capital flight, the US dollar index rose 16.1 per cent against other currencies.

- There are two reasons why India has taken the step to internationalise its currency seriously. The strength of the US currency in the past year has posed a challenge for many developing nations, including India. According to experts, this action might improve India's trade with South Asian nations like Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, which are also struggling with dollar shortages. Two, trading in INR may boost India's trade with countries under global sanctions. In the aftermath of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Western nations implemented substantial trade sanctions against Russia. In contrast, India proactively explored avenues to augment its acquisition of crude oil from Russia. As a result, Russia has now ascended to the position of India's principal oil supplier, supplanting traditional stakeholders such as Iraq, Saudi Arabia and the UAE.
- With the implementation of the mechanism for rupee settlements in international trade by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in July 2022, Indian importers can make payments in rupee that will be transferred to a Special Rupee Vostro Accounts (SRVA) of the respective bank of the destination country, and Indian exporters will be paid from the balances in the designated Vostro accounts. The excess rupee balance in the Vostro accounts can be used to manage export-import transactions and payments for projects and investments.
- Currently, Vostro accounts have been opened in Russia, Sri Lanka and Mauritius. A rupee-dirham payment system with Saudi Arabia and the UAE is expected to be started in August 2023. According to reports, more than 18 nations have expressed interest in having their trade settlements in rupees, and talks are currently being held with the central banks of Tajikistan, Cuba, Luxembourg and Sudan.

Boon or Bane?

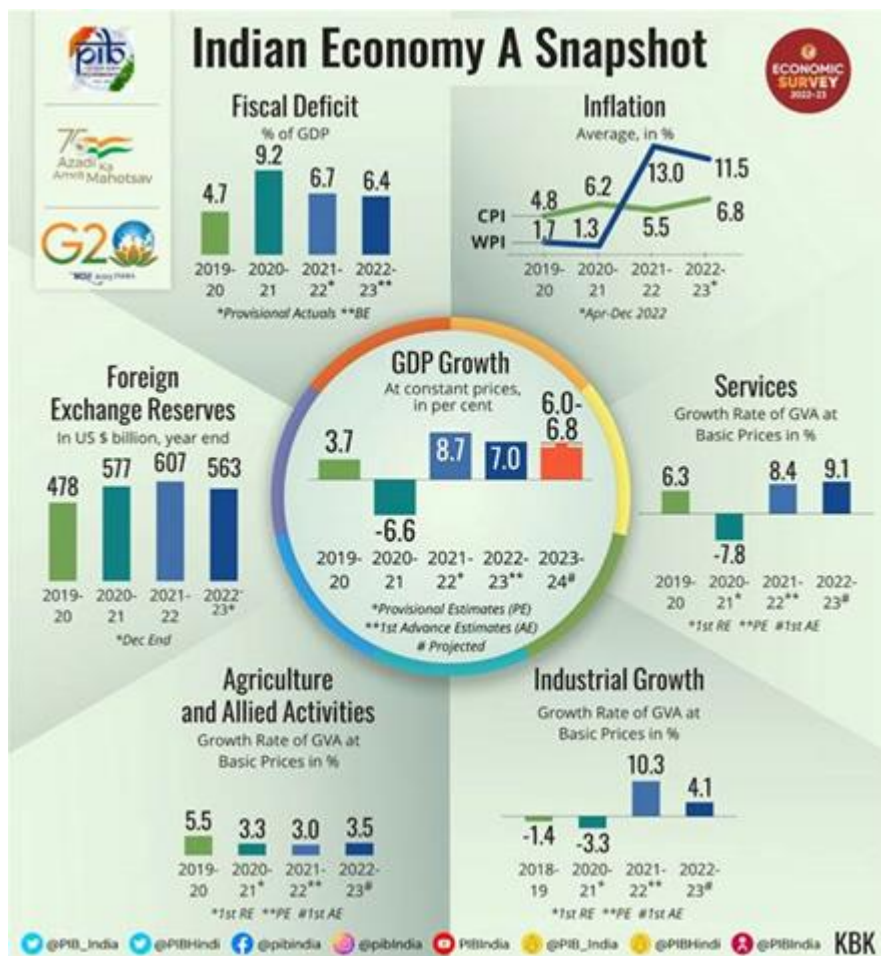
- Adding momentum to the ongoing debate, in March 2023, the Indian government launched the Foreign Trade Policy (FTP). The FTP promises to increase the country's share in the global supply chain in exports by promoting Cross Border Trade in Digital Economy and creating E-Commerce Export Hubs (ECEHs) across the country. Most importantly, the policy enables rupee-based invoices for imports and exports, and trade settlement using SRVA. The RBI made regulations permitting

banking arrangements for invoicing, payment and settlement of exports and imports in INR.

- The benefit of using the Indian rupee more frequently in overseas transactions would be significant for the Indian economy, which is among the top five economies in the world today. The Economic Survey of 2023 asserted that international trade in INR would help in protecting it from volatility and reduce the cost of doing business. Perhaps the greatest advantage would be that transactions made in INR would reduce the risk of exchange rate fluctuations for Indian exporters and importers while reducing the demand for the US dollar. Internationalising the INR may also assist in lowering domestic currency volatility and promote exports from India to nations that are experiencing a forex shortage, as India's Current Account Deficit has widened.
- Additionally, it would lessen the requirement to have foreign exchange reserves. It would consequently reduce the economy's susceptibility to abrupt downturns and changes in capital flow. There will be more opportunities to use the rupee in foreign transactions as the Indian economy expands and its economic ties with other nations strengthen. Finally, the bargaining power of Indian firms would increase as the rupee's utilisation grows in importance, supporting the Indian economy and raising India's standing and esteem abroad.
- While the above-mentioned are some of the conscious efforts made by the Indian government, it is equally important to examine the other side of the coin too.
- One, the scale of the economy is crucial for internationalising the INR. Although the Indian economy meets this requirement partially, it is still a trade deficit country. In other words, India imports more goods than it exports. India's share of global commercial services exports was a mere 4.4 per cent in 2022. The low export market share decreases the need for other nations to keep their currency. For the same reason, Russia has been reluctant to conduct INR trade with India.
- Two, elimination of all capital account restrictions is a sine qua non for the rupee to become an international currency. The proposal for a roadmap for full convertibility was initiated in 1997 with the formation of Committee on Capital Account Convertibility (CAC) or Tarapore Committee by the RBI. The 1997 and 2006 Tarapore Committee findings outlined a route with a few requirements to accomplish convertibility.

These include having a gross fiscal deficit of less than 3.5 per cent of GDP, an inflation rate of 3 per cent to 5 per cent over three years, an equivalent per capita income of developed nations, among others. These suggestions are relevant even today. India has made economic progress but still needs to comply with these requirements fully.

- Three, compared to major economic blocs like the Euro Zone and China, which are currently working to internationalise their currencies for decades, Subhash Chandra Garg, former Finance and Economic Affairs Secretary, notes that India has a considerably smaller economy. He argues that "Indian exports would end up getting lesser US Dollars for the same amount of goods exported than the US Dollars the exporter would have got if it was denominated in the US Dollars." Therefore, he emphasises that any effort to make the INR a global trade and settlement currency at this juncture would be nothing short of a wild goose chase.



- For the rupee to become a significant global reserve currency, India must offer the rest of the world sizable amounts of safe, readily available, and convertible assets that could be used as collateral in financial markets. This would necessitate a significant change in India's policy direction. Promoting rupee invoices with different nations will be challenging in the current global environment of trade restrictions and geopolitical rivalry. T. Rabi Sankar, the RBI Deputy Governor, has rightly pointed out that if India wishes to become a significant economic power, these risks associated with the internationalisation of INR are inevitable.
- Regardless, the move by the Indian government and the RBI to encourage the use of the INR for transactions in foreign trade is a significant milestone for India. It might increase the value of the INR, improve the competitiveness of Indian exports, and lessen India's reliance on the US currency. The truth is that the US dollar will continue to be the dominant currency for the foreseeable future, but in a few decades, it's possible that the US might gradually begin to share power with other currencies too, including the INR.

10. **India's Turn to Mini-lateralism in West Asian Context**

Over the last two years, India's participation in mini-lateral frameworks together with the US and its West Asian allies has been a transformative development in its West Asia policy.

US mini-lateral turn in West Asia

- Mini-laterals, where small number of states with better understanding of each other's needs and strengths, collaborate to find practical solutions to their shared challenges first and foremost emerge from strong bilateral partnerships and convergences between states. I2U2 therefore, culminated from India's deepening strategic partnerships with the UAE, the US, and Israel.
- Secondly, the US-brokered 2020 Abraham Accords, which normalised ties between Israel and the UAE and Bahrain and several other Arab countries, opened the space for US-led regional initiatives with participation from Israel. To allay fears among its regional allies about the US disengagement from the region, the Biden administration has prioritised fostering greater regional cooperation, and integration of its "unrivaled network of allies and partners" from Middle East and Indo-Pacific. The US National Security Strategy 2022 noted that it was time



for the United States “to eschew grand designs in favor of more practical steps that can advance U.S. interests and help regional partners lay the foundation for greater stability, prosperity for the people of the Middle East and for the American people”.

- In doing so, the US has sought to recalibrate its traditional role as the external security guarantor through bilateral alliances to that of an ‘integrator’ of regional mechanism that will act as bulwark against domination of the region by rival powers like China and Russia. This strategy is visible in the post-Accords US-backed regional mini-lateral/multilateral initiatives involving Israel such as the Negev Summit (March 2022), the East Mediterranean Gas Forum, and the I2U2.

I2U2: A trade and technology cooperation initiative

- Over the last two years, the I2U2 has emerged as a Trade and technology cooperation initiative leveraging relative strengths and trade synergies between the four countries, namely the UAE’s capital, Israel’s technological prowess, India’s market-size and production capacity. At the first I2U2 virtual summit during US President Joe Biden’s visit to Israel in July 2022, consensus was reached on advancing joint investments and initiatives encompassing the six areas of energy, food security, health, space, transportation and water. Three of these areas, namely energy, food security, and water, can be bracketed under technology-energy-climate change nexus, where India has been cooperating with the UAE and Israel on a bilateral basis.
- In 2020, as the COVID-19 pandemic further drove home the importance of resilient supply-chains for food security, under the India–UAE Food Corridor, major companies such as Dubai-based Emaar group, DP World and other private sector players committed investments up to US\$ 7 billion over next three years in integrated mega food parks, related warehousing and logistics infrastructure, in various Indian cities.
- Israel, which has established itself as a leader in climate tech, has been cooperating with India in tackling climate-change related challenges to food security and agriculture. The Indo-Israel Agricultural Cooperation Project, which was started in 2008, has been a success story, with 30 ‘Centres of Excellence’ jointly established across India disseminating best agricultural practices, and capacity building through professional training programmes.

- To build on these synergies, following the I2U2 Summit, the UAE pledged to invest US\$ 2 billion to develop a series of integrated food parks across India, with the involvement of US and Israeli private sector to lend their expertise and innovative solutions to contribute to the overall sustainability of the project. The second joint project announced at the I2U2 summit was a US\$ 300 million hybrid renewable energy project (300 MW of wind and solar capacity) in Gujarat. Subsequently, a joint business coalition of the I2U2 was established in April 2023, to mobilise private sector capital and expertise for joint projects in sustainable and renewable energy, areas where the UAE is focussing in the run-up to hosting of the COP-28.

#### India-US Convergence in West Asia

- What is noteworthy about these 'mini-laterals' is that they are issue-specific in nature. They are not to be confused with alliances, which entail enduring security commitment between allies, and usually have a broader remit including economic, technological, and diplomatic components. Delhi's participation in these quadrilaterals underscores India-US regional convergence in West Asia based on their shared vision of an 'interconnected' or networked region.
- Given that small regional states like the UAE and Israel, who are determined to simultaneously deepen ties with constellation of powers such as the US, China, India, and Russia, mini-laterals are flexible and informal mechanisms and do not entail significant political costs, while at the same time strengthening their ability to manoeuvre great power competition. Mini-laterals such as I2U2 serve to strengthen the capabilities of regional states in dealing with shared challenges. At the same time, as a regional mechanism, they can limit the potential hegemonic designs of great powers making inroads into the region.
- Further, India's participation in I2U2 framework alongside Israel indicates that New Delhi has not only de-hyphenated its bilateral ties with Israel and Palestine, but is playing a crucial role in integrating Israel with the region on mutually beneficial terms. From Israel's point of view, to make this de-hyphenation permanent, it seeks to deepen and broaden the ties across the board so that the relationship with Israel will become so widely accepted and beneficial that it remains unaffected through the change of government in New Delhi, just as is the case in Washington.

- The issue-specific, and flexible nature of 'mini-laterals' also implies that countries can align with different sets of countries on different issues. Therefore, for India, participation in these frameworks is unlikely to impinge on its traditionally balanced approach towards the region. In Riyadh, Doval discussed with Saudi Arabia and the UAE about a railway network among Gulf States which will be linked to an Indian port in the Arabian Sea and Israeli port on the Mediterranean, namely the India-Arab- Mediterranean corridor.
- A week before that, Doval had visited Tehran to hold consultations with top Iranian officials, including President Ebrahim Raisi. Their talks focussed on the situation in Afghanistan, the possibilities for reviving trade ties by activating the rial-rupee mechanism, and cooperation in Chabahar port, which is being jointly developed by India and Iran as a key transit hub between the Persian Gulf and Central Asia.

As India finds common ground with the US in advancing a regional approach for addressing shared development challenges, it will continue to maintain its independent strategic vision of its extended neighbourhood in West Asia.

11. **Navigating the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism**

The European Union (EU) plans to introduce a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) tax from January 1, 2026. This move is raising concerns among experts about potential increased costs for Indian exports. Since October 2023, Indian exporters have been required to regularly submit documentation (approximately every two months) on their processes.

The EU is set to employ verifiers to inspect submissions from Indian exporters. Initially, this scrutiny will focus on specific sectors, but it's expected that the verification process will gradually expand to include all imports into the EU. This development could have significant implications for trade and environmental policy. The Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) is part of the EU's "Fit for 55 in 2030" package, aiming to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 55% by 2030 from 1990 levels. CBAM imposes a price on carbon emissions linked to the production of specific imported goods, ensuring fair carbon pricing.

*CBAM's Environmental Goals:*

- **Reducing Carbon Leakage:** Aims to curb carbon leakage by discouraging relocation of carbon-intensive industries to areas with weaker environmental regulations.

- Global Climate Policy Compliance: Encourages worldwide adherence to stringent climate policies and reduces the environmental impact of production outside EU borders.

*CBAM and the European Green Deal:*

- Part of European Green Deal: The CBAM, integral to the European Green Deal, aims to prevent carbon leakage and maintain competitiveness through import duties on carbon-intensive goods from non-EU countries.

*Target Sectors and Coverage:*

- Focused Industries: Targets imports like cement, iron and steel, aluminium, fertilisers, electricity, and hydrogen.
- Carbon Pricing for Specific Goods: Goods from countries with less stringent climate policies than the EU will face carbon pricing measures.
- Carbon Certificate Requirement: Importers must buy carbon certificates matching the embedded carbon emissions in their products.

*Market Mechanism and Carbon Certificates:*

- Alignment with EU ETS: Carbon certificates" pricing under CBAM will be in line with the EU Emissions Trading System (ETS) rates.
- EU Industrial Emission Regulation: The market-based system manages industrial emissions within the EU.
- Incentive for Cleaner Production: Importers must acquire certificates at prices reflecting the carbon cost, promoting cleaner global production practices.

**Challenges**

- Opposition from BASIC Countries: Brazil, South Africa, India, and China (BASIC countries) collectively oppose the EU's CBAM, labeling it "discriminatory" and inconsistent with the "Common but Differentiated Responsibilities and Respective Capabilities" (CBDR-RC) principle.
- Lack of Global Consensus: The EU's push for a uniform global environmental standard is criticized, especially in light of the global consensus outlined in Article 12 of the Rio Declaration, which argues against imposing developed countries" standards on developing nations.
- Greenhouse Gas Inventory Issues: Adjusting greenhouse gas content of imports in the inventories of importing countries challenges traditional greenhouse gas accounting methods.
- Perceived as Protectionism: The EU's carbon border tax is seen by some as a form of protectionism, potentially leading to "green protectionism,"

where local industries are unfairly protected from foreign competition under environmental pretexts.

**Implications for India**

- Impact on India-EU Trade Relations: India, significantly impacted by CBAM, exports 27% of its iron, steel, and aluminium products to the EU. The tax could reduce the competitiveness of Indian products, leading to a potential decrease in demand.
- Effects on Manufacturing: India's Commerce and Industry Ministry has criticized CBAM as harmful to the manufacturing sector, potentially acting as a significant deterrent.
- India's Carbon Credit Trading System (CCTS): Introduced in 2022, CCTS aims to incentivize emission reductions and foster clean energy investments. It's complemented by the Green Credit Programme Rules.
- Limited Options for India: India's strategies include challenging CBAM as violating the Paris Agreement's principles or negotiating with the EU for reinvestment of collected funds into green technologies.
- Need for India's Carbon Taxation Measures: With the UK planning its own CBAM by 2027, India faces a pressing need to develop carbon taxation measures aligned with the Paris Agreement.
- Contradiction with FTA Norms: CBAM is criticized as a non-tariff barrier conflicting with Free Trade Agreements (FTAs), where India faces levies while allowing duty-free entry for "green" products from EU countries.

**Strategies for India to Counter CBAM**

- Vocal Opposition in International Forums: India should actively oppose CBAM on international platforms, arguing that it contravenes the principle of "common but differentiated responsibility" and impedes the developing world's industrialization in line with international climate agreement equity.
- Consideration of Export Tax: India could consider imposing a similar tax on exports to the EU. This would generate funds for investment in eco-friendly production processes, potentially offsetting the impact of current taxes and preparing for future tax reductions. However, the acceptability of such a tax by the EU and its domestic and international legal feasibility remain uncertain.
- Market Diversification Strategy: To mitigate CBAM's impact, India should reduce its reliance on the EU market by exploring new markets

	<p>in Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Diversifying markets can protect India from the vulnerabilities of CBAM and other economic shifts.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Seizing Green Opportunities:</b> India can use the challenge of CBAM as a catalyst to green its production processes, aligning with global environmental goals and staying competitive in a carbon-conscious world. This aligns with India's 2070 Net Zero Targets and contributes to long-term economic and environmental sustainability.</li></ul> <p>The EU's CBAM, aimed at reducing greenhouse gas emissions and preventing carbon leakage, has led India to explore its own carbon trading mechanism, the CCTS. With CBAM's transitional phase ending in December 2025, India needs to swiftly develop and implement carbon taxation measures in line with the Paris Agreement. The outcome of ongoing negotiations with the EU and challenges before the World Trade Organization will be pivotal in shaping India's response to this evolving global environmental policy scenario.</p>
12.	<p><b>Centre-state relations</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The constitution of India divides all powers- legislative, executive and financial between the centre and the states</li><li>▪ Maximum harmony and coordination centre and state is essential for the effective operation of the federal system. Thereby, the constitution incorporates several provisions to ensure this.</li><li>▪ Centre-state relations can be better understood under the following three heads:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Legislative relations</li><li>▪ Administrative relations</li><li>▪ Financial relations</li></ul></li></ul> <p><b><u>1. Legislative Relations</u></b></p> <p><b>There are four aspects in the Centre-state legislative relations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Territorial extent of central and state legislation</li><li>▪ Distribution of legislative subjects</li><li>▪ Parliamentary legislation in the state field</li><li>▪ Centre's control over state legislation</li></ul> <p><i>Territorial extent of central and state legislation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Parliament can make law for the whole or any part of the territory of India (territory includes union, state, UT)</li></ul>

- State legislature can make laws for the whole or any part of the state. Laws made by the state are not applicable outside the state, except when there is sufficient relation between the state and object
- Parliament can alone make 'extra-territorial' legislation
- Instances when laws made by the Parliament are not applicable:
- President can make regulations which has a same effect as that of the law made by parliament for- Andaman and Nicobar islands, Daman and Diu, Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Lakshadweep
- Governor is empowered to direct that an act of parliament does not apply to a scheduled area in the state or apply with specified modifications and exceptions
- Governor of Assam can likewise direct that an ac of Parliament does not apply or apply with some modification. The same power is vested in President in relation to Meghalaya, Tripura and Mizoram

*Distribution of Legislative subjects*

- Constitution provides for three-fold classification- union list, state list and concurrent list
- Parliament has exclusive powers vis-à-vis the union list
- State legislature in normal circumstances has exclusive powers to make laws with matters enumerated in the state list
- Both state and centre can make laws on matters enumerated in the concurrent list

*42<sup>nd</sup> amendment act of 1976 transferred five subjects to constitution*

- Education
- Forests
- Weights and measures
- Protection of wild animals and birds
- Administration of justice; constitution and organization of all courts except the supreme court and the high courts
- Power to make laws with residuary subject is vested in the Parliament
- Union list has precedence over state list and concurrent list has precedence over state list
- In case of conflict between central law and state law on a subject enumerated in the concurrent list, the central law prevails over the state law. However, if the state law has been reserved for the consideration of the president and has received his assent, then the state law prevails in

the state. Still, parliament can override the state law by subsequently making a law on that matter

In USA, only powers concerning the federal government are mentioned in the constitution and the other powers are left to the states. In Canada, however, two lists are enumerated- centre and the state and the residuary powers is vested with the centre

This scheme of enumeration of legislative subjects was borrowed from Government of India act, 1935, except for the provision which vested the residuary powers in the governor-general

*Parliamentary legislation in state field*

- Constitution empowers the Parliament to make laws on any matter enumerated in the state list under the following five extraordinary circumstances:
- If Rajya Sabha passes a resolution supported by a 2/3<sup>rd</sup> members present and voting empowering parliament to make a law on a matter enumerated in the state list in the best interest of the country. Such a resolution stays in effect for a year. Such a resolution can be renewed any number of times but not for more than a year at a time. The laws made under this cease to have an effect after expiration of six months of the resolution. However, state can make a law on the same subject, but if there is an inconsistency between state and union law, the latter prevails
- When a proclamation of National emergency is in vogue then the Parliament can legislative on a matter enumerated in state list. The laws made under this cease to have an effect after expiration of six months of national emergency. Here also, a state law can make a law on the subject, however, the union law would prevail if there is any inconsistency
- When states make a request for Parliament by passing a resolution to that effect than Parliament becomes empowered to legislate on matters enumerated in the resolution. Once this resolution is passed, the state forfeits every right with regards to that subject
- Parliament can enacts laws on matters enumerated in the state list so as to enforce international agreements
- Parliament becomes empowered to enact a law on the state matter during the time of operation of President's rule. The law made during this time would continue even after the expiration of the president's rule.



	<p>However, the state can later pass an act to either modify, or nullify the act as it sees fit</p> <p><i>Centre's control over state legislation</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Constitution has empowered the centre to exercise control over the state's legislative matters in the following ways:</li><li>▪ Governor can reserve certain types of bills passed by state legislature for the consideration of the president. The president enjoys absolute veto over them</li><li>▪ Bills on certain matters enumerated in the state list can be introduced in the state legislature only with prior recommendation of the President. Ex: Inter-state trade and commerce</li></ul> <p>During a financial emergency, president can call upon a state to reserve money bills and other financial bills for his consideration</p>
13.	<p><b>Mulya Pravah 2.0: UGC's New Directive for Ethical Education</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The University Grants Commission (UGC) has introduced Mulya Pravah 2.0 to improve the ethical standards in higher education institutions.</li><li>▪ This updated guideline, building on its 2019 version, aims to foster human values and professional ethics in education, addressing unethical practices in institutions.</li><li>▪ It emphasizes creating value-based institutions aligned with fundamental duties and constitutional values, promoting integrity and ethical conduct.</li></ul> <p><b>Key Features of Mulya Pravah 2.0:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Addressing Unethical Practices:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Mulya Pravah 2.0 targets unethical practices in higher education, identified through a human resource managers' survey.</li><li>▪ Issues include favoritism, sexual harassment, gender discrimination, inconsistent discipline, confidentiality breaches, and corrupt vendor arrangements.</li><li>▪ The guideline is a significant step in promoting ethical behavior in higher education, though these issues are not unique to this sector.</li></ul></li><li>▪ <b>Focus on Transparency:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The guideline emphasizes complete transparency in the administration of higher education institutions.</li></ul></li></ul>

- Decision-making should prioritize institutional and public interest, free from personal biases.
- It calls for eliminating discriminatory privileges and stresses punishing corrupt practices.
- The creation of a positive culture and work environment that aligns with institutional interests is encouraged.
- **Upholding Values:**
  - Institutions are mandated to adhere to values like integrity, trusteeship, harmony, accountability, inclusiveness, commitment, respectfulness, belongingness, sustainability, constitutional values, and global citizenship.
  - University officers are responsible for ensuring these values are followed thoroughly.
  - This is crucial given the diminishing presence of these values in current times.
- **Institutional Best Interest:**
  - Mulya Pravah 2.0 advises stakeholders to prioritize the best interests of their institutions.
  - It promotes a supportive culture for teaching, learning, and research, and the development of institutional potential.
  - Officers and staff are advised against misusing financial and other resources.
  - The guideline prohibits accepting gifts, favors, services, or other items that could compromise impartial duty performance.

### **Challenges in Implementing Mulya Pravah 2.0**

1. **Sincerity of Higher Education Regulators:**
  - Effective enforcement of Mulya Pravah 2.0 hinges on the genuine commitment of regulators like the UGC.
  - There's a need for a strong stance against corruption and ethical breaches, with zero tolerance policies.
2. **Institutional Resistance:**
  - Higher education institutions may resist new ethical guidelines due to entrenched norms and practices.
  - Overcoming this requires proactive leadership and willingness to adapt from university administrators and stakeholders.
3. **Lack of Monitoring Mechanisms:**

- The absence of robust mechanisms to monitor adherence can lead to non-compliance and continuation of unethical practices.
- Establishing comprehensive monitoring frameworks is crucial for effective implementation.

**4. Internal Stakeholder Resistance:**

- Faculty, staff, and student bodies might view these guidelines as an infringement on their autonomy.
- Addressing this challenge requires effective communication and consensus-building.

**5. Balancing Transparency and Confidentiality:**

- The guidelines must navigate the fine line between maintaining confidentiality and ensuring transparency.
- This balance is essential to avoid conflicts and uphold the right to information.

**6. Ambiguities in Guidelines:**

- Certain aspects of Mulya Pravah 2.0 lack clear definitions, leading to potential misinterpretations and misuse.
- Clarifying these ambiguities is important for uniform understanding and application.

**7. Legal and Regulatory Compliance:**

- Aligning the implementation of Mulya Pravah 2.0 with existing legal and regulatory frameworks is essential.
- Non-compliance or legal oversights could undermine the effectiveness of the guidelines.

**8. Cultural and Regional Differences:**

- The diverse cultural and regional backgrounds of institutions can affect how these guidelines are received and implemented.
- Customizing the approach to suit different contexts is necessary for broader acceptance.

**9. Inadequate Training and Awareness:**

- The success of Mulya Pravah 2.0 depends on thorough understanding and participation from all involved parties.
- Lack of sufficient training and awareness initiatives can lead to unclear interpretations and reduced impact.

**Suggestions for Implementing Mulya Pravah 2.0**

**1. Enhancing Confidentiality and Transparency:**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Institutions should be encouraged to publicly disclose agendas, proceedings, and minutes of meetings of key decision-making bodies.</li><li>▪ Publishing annual reports and audited accounts can deter malpractices and boost public confidence in institutional operations.</li></ul> <p><b>2. Role of Teachers and Teachers' Associations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Mulya Pravah 2.0 emphasizes teachers as role models, highlighting the need for exemplary conduct, dress, speech, and behavior.</li><li>▪ The guideline, however, does not specifically address the role and concerns of teachers' associations, an area that requires attention.</li></ul> <p><b>3. Defining "Dignified Manner" for Unions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The guideline expects staff and student unions to support administration and raise issues respectfully.</li><li>▪ The lack of a clear definition of "dignified manner" could lead to misinterpretation, potentially suppressing legitimate collective voices.</li></ul> <p>Mulya Pravah 2.0 is a significant step by the UGC towards ethical reform in higher education. Effective implementation requires: genuine commitment and enforcement of its provisions, balancing the need for transparency with confidentiality, and involving all stakeholders in a collaborative approach to promote ethics, accountability, and transparency. Clarifying ambiguities, especially regarding the role of unions and the definition of "dignified manner", is crucial. Continuous monitoring and adaptation of the guidelines based on feedback and evolving educational landscapes. In conclusion, while Mulya Pravah 2.0 is a progressive initiative, its success hinges on clear definitions, inclusive participation, and a balanced approach to confidentiality and transparency.</p>
14.	<p><b>Revival of the Tiger: A Joint Effort, A Cultural Renaissance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ India boasts a rich history of forest and wildlife conservation, with a significant milestone achieved at the Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR), Uttarakhand.</li><li>▪ There have been comprehensive efforts and strategies implemented at CTR, which have not only witnessed an impressive increase in tiger</li></ul>

population but has also become a global example in wildlife management.

#### An Overview of Successful Tiger Conservation Plan and Biodiversity at CTR

- Formulation and Implementation of a Comprehensive Strategy
  - The success of the CTR can be traced back to the meticulous implementation of the Tiger Conservation Plan, a comprehensive strategy.
  - The strategy was aimed at ensuring the well-being of the tiger population and the broader biodiversity within the reserve.
  - CTR, spanning an expansive 1288.31 sq km across three districts of Uttarakhand, exemplifies the effectiveness of this plan in fostering a thriving ecosystem.
- A Clear Division of Core and Buffer Zones
  - The foundation of the Tiger Conservation Plan lies in the demarcation of core and buffer zones within the reserve.
  - These zones, covering an extensive land area, play a pivotal role in providing a sanctuary for wildlife.
  - The core zones serve as undisturbed habitats crucial for breeding and sustenance, while buffer zones act as a transitional area between human settlements and the core, minimising potential conflicts.
- Increase in Tiger Population
  - Recent statistics reveal a remarkable increase in the tiger population at CTR. Just four years ago, the reserve recorded 231 tigers, and according to the 2022 report, this number has surged to 260.
  - Such a significant rise underscores the success of the conservation plan, signalling not only the protection of tigers but also the overall health and balance of the forest ecosystem.
- Maintaining Rich Biodiversity
  - CTR's success goes beyond just tiger numbers; it extends to the richly-forested, highly-biodiverse landscape within its boundaries.
  - The reserve is a haven for a variety of birds and wildlife, attracting not only tourists but also researchers, conservation biologists, and environmentalists.

- The diverse range of flora and fauna contributes to the ecological balance, creating an environment where both predator and prey coexist harmoniously.
- Promoting Ecotourism and Conservation Hand in Hand
  - The presence of a vibrant ecosystem has turned CTR into a hotspot for ecotourism, generating economic opportunities for local communities.
  - The influx of tourists, including bird-specialists and wildlife enthusiasts, not only fosters a greater appreciation for nature but also contributes to the local economy.
- Effective Grassland and Water Management
  - With 27 different types of grasslands at CTR, a nuanced approach to grassland management is imperative.
  - Maintaining the delicate balance of grassland and water management is crucial for the breeding of prey species, ensuring a sustainable prey-base for tigers.
  - This involves developing and restoring palatable grasses for wildlife consumption while eradicating invasive weed species.
  - Water management practices, such as strategically placed solar-pump fed interlinked water-holes, ensure the availability of water during critical periods, supporting the diverse needs of the wildlife.
- Forest Staff: Unsung Heroes of Conservation
  - Integral to CTR's success are the unsung heroes—the forest staff, the staff comprises of foot-soldiers, mahouts, and forest guards and their tireless efforts form the backbone of the reserve's protection.
  - Facing dangers from stalking tigers to aggressive elephants, these dedicated individuals are crucial for maintaining a delicate ecological balance.
  - Recent initiatives, such as timely wages, regular rations, and enhanced safety measures, underscore the importance placed on the well-being of the forest staff.
- Focus on Wildlife Corridors and Habitat Protection
  - Wildlife corridors are crucial for gene pool exchange, especially for long-ranging species like tigers and elephants.

- CTR meticulously follows the Tiger Conservation Plan's recommendations for strategic corridors.

#### Cultural and Economic Significance of Tiger in India

- Beyond ecological considerations, the tiger holds immense cultural and historical importance in India.
- The revival of tiger populations, especially at CTR, symbolises a cultural renaissance and the resurgence of conservation ethics.
- The economic ties between local communities and the tiger, as evident in the thriving eco-tourism industry, further emphasise the connection between the wildlife and people at CTR.

#### The Issue of Human-Wildlife Conflict at CTR

- Rising Incidents and Challenges
  - The surge in human-elephant and tiger-human conflicts arises from various factors, including habitat encroachment, limited animal movement corridors, and behavioural conditioning of predators.
  - Milch and domestic animals from villages often stray into forest areas, becoming easy prey for tigers.
  - As a result, it leads to predatory behaviour conditioned towards humans, resulting in unforeseen attacks, especially on villagers venturing deep into buffer forest areas for their daily needs.
- The Complexity of 'Wicked Problems'
  - Human-wildlife conflict is often described as a 'wicked problem' due to its complexity. Each conflict scenario is unique, requiring a nuanced and context-specific approach.
  - Recognising this, CTR emphasises that every attempt at a solution, no matter how small, holds significance.
  - There is no one-size-fits-all solution, and continuous adaptation and innovation are essential to address evolving conflict scenarios.

#### Strategies Undertaken to Minimise Human-Wildlife Conflict and Foster Co-Existence

- Forest Department Initiatives
  - The forest department at CTR has undertaken proactive measures to mitigate human-wildlife conflicts.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ One notable success is the complete obliteration of poaching activities, particularly along the highly sensitive southern boundary of the reserve.</li><li>▪ Intensive patrolling by dedicated foot soldiers, coupled with digital surveillance through the electronic-eye project, has played a crucial role in minimising threats to wildlife.</li><li>▪ <b>Community Engagement Strategies</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Community engagement forms a cornerstone of CTR's approach to human-wildlife conflict resolution.</li><li>▪ The forest department actively involves local stakeholders in the conservation process and initiatives such as the Living with Tigers program engage villagers and school children in behavioural and response awareness.</li><li>▪ This educational initiative aims to cultivate a deeper understanding of the patterns of wildlife behaviour and instil practices that enhance safety for both humans and animals.</li></ul></li><li>▪ <b>Provision of Economic Incentives for Conservation</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The forest department has initiated projects that provide economic incentives for conservation.</li><li>▪ For instance, the beehive-fencing project strategically places beehives along the village-forest border areas.</li><li>▪ The resulting Corbee Honey brand is managed by local Eco Development Committees (EDCs), creating an economic hook based on cooperation and coexistence with local stakeholders.</li></ul></li></ul> <p>Corbett Tiger Reserve stands as a beacon of success in wildlife conservation, epitomising a holistic and integrated approach. From meticulous habitat management to community engagement initiatives, CTR showcases the potential for sustainable coexistence between humans and wildlife. As the reserve continues to be a crucial part of India's conservation narrative, its future success hinges on the collective efforts of the forest department, local communities, and conservation enthusiasts.</p>
15.	<p><b>India's Deep Ocean Mission</b></p> <p>India is gearing up for a historic Deep Ocean Mission to explore and harness the depths of the ocean, a frontier that remains largely uncharted and holds immense potential for scientific and economic benefits. Countries such as</p>



the U.S.A., Russia, China, France, and Japan have already achieved successful deep-ocean crewed missions.

### **Deep Ocean Mission**

DOM is one of nine missions under the Prime Minister's Science, Technology, and Innovation Advisory Council (PMSTIAC). Deep Ocean Mission (DOM) is an ambitious initiative of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) which aims to develop technologies and capabilities for deep sea exploration.

- Key Pillars of the Mission:
  - Technological Advancements for Deep-Sea Mining and Crewed Submersibles
  - Ocean Climate Change Advisory Services
  - Innovations for Deep-Sea Biodiversity Exploration and Conservation
  - Survey and Exploration of Deep-Ocean Minerals
  - Harvesting Energy and Freshwater from the Ocean
  - Establishment of an Advanced Marine Station for Ocean Biology
- Major Advancement in DOM Objectives:
  - With Samudrayaan, India is embarking on a groundbreaking crewed expedition to reach a depth of 6,000 m to the ocean bed in the Central Indian Ocean.
  - This historic journey will be accomplished by Matsya6000, a deep-ocean submersible designed to accommodate a crew of three members.
    - It is constructed from a titanium alloy, the sphere is engineered to withstand pressures of up to 6,000 bar.
  - Samudryaan and Matsya6000: As a part of DOM, India's flagship deep ocean mission, Samudrayaan, was initiated in 2021 by the Minister of Earth Sciences.

The decision to target a depth of 6,000 meters holds strategic importance due to the presence of valuable resources like polymetallic nodules and sulphides. These resources, containing essential metals, are found between depths of 3,000 to 5,500 meters. Varaha- India's Deep-Ocean Mining System: The National Institute of Ocean Technology, an autonomous institute under MoES has conducted successful deep-sea locomotion trials using "Varaha," an underwater mining system, at a

depth of 5,270 meters in the central Indian Ocean. These trials signified a pivotal moment in deep-sea resource exploration.

### **Major Challenges in Deep Ocean Exploration**

- **Oceanic Pressure Challenges:** The high-pressure conditions in the deep ocean present a formidable challenge, exerting immense pressure on objects comparable to carrying a weight of about 10,000kg per square meter.
- **Equipment Design and Functionality:** The harsh conditions necessitate meticulously designed equipment made from robust materials. Electronics and instruments operate more efficiently in space or vacuum conditions, while poorly designed objects tend to collapse or explode underwater.
- **Challenges of Landing:** The soft and muddy surface of the ocean bed makes it exceptionally challenging for heavy vehicles to land or maneuver.
- **Material Extraction and Power Demands:** Extracting materials from the ocean floor requires significant power and energy to pump them to the surface.
  - Remotely operated vehicles are ineffective in the deep oceans due to the absence of electromagnetic wave propagation.
  - Visibility is limited, with natural light penetrating only a few tens of meters underwater, unlike space observations facilitated by telescopes.
- **Other Compounded Challenges:** Varied factors such as temperature variations, corrosion, salinity, and others further complicate deep-sea exploration, demanding comprehensive solutions.

2021-2030 has been designated by the United Nations as the 'Decade of Ocean Science'.

### **Looking ahead**

- **Biologically-Inspired Designs:** Draw inspiration from nature, such as marine organisms, for innovative engineering solutions.
  - Biomimicry could lead to the development of structures and materials that are naturally suited to deep-sea conditions, offering increased resilience and adaptability.
- **Energy Innovation:** Develop sustainable power sources to support long-duration missions.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ This could include advancements in energy harvesting technologies like ocean thermal energy conversion, utilizing temperature gradients in the ocean for power, or exploring the potential of tidal and wave energy.</li><li>▪ Multi-Sensor Integration: Integrate diverse sensor technologies to compensate for limited visibility.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ This could involve combining sonar, lidar, and other imaging technologies to create a comprehensive picture of the deep-sea environment, allowing for better navigation and exploration.</li></ul></li><li>▪ Environmental Impact Consideration: Ensuring that exploration initiatives are conducted with minimal impact on deep-sea ecosystems.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Establishing international regulations and policies that govern deep-sea exploration to ensure responsible and ethical practices, balancing scientific advancement with environmental conservation.</li></ul></li></ul>
16.	<p><b>ICJ: Doing Justice without power</b> <b>“Justice is the insurance we have on our lives, and obedience is the premium we pay for it.” – William Penn.</b></p> <p>Although the decisions of the <i>International Court of Justice</i>, which is currently hearing a case instituted by <i>South Africa</i> accusing <i>Israel</i>, are legally binding and cannot be appealed against, they are often defied in the absence of an enforcement mechanism.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The <i>International Court of Justice (ICJ)</i>, the UN’s highest judicial body, is once again in news after it held hearings in a case instituted by South Africa, accusing Israel of <b>committing genocide</b> in Gaza.</li><li>▪ Over 23,000 Palestinians have been killed and 90% of Gaza’s population displaced in Israel’s offensive that started after the October 7 attack by Hamas in which at least 1,200 Israelis were killed.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Israel has rejected the genocide allegations</b> as proceedings at the World Court is set to continue in the coming months.</li></ul></li></ul> <p><b>ICJ (International Court of Justice):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The ICJ was established in <b>June 1945</b> by the Charter of the UN, following decades of international conflicts.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ It was established after the <b>Permanent Court of International Justice</b> fell into desuetude due to its inability to enforce its</li></ul></li></ul>

mandate during the intervening years between the two World Wars.

- **Location:** Hague (Netherland).
- ICJ has a total strength of **15 judges** who are appointed for a term of **9 years** through separate, simultaneous elections at the **UN General Assembly** and the **UN Security Council**.
  - However, '**ad-hoc judges**' are sometimes appointed in cases that require specialized knowledge about the concerned dispute.
- **The multilateral forum has dual jurisdictional powers:**
  - **Advisory Jurisdiction:** This relates to the jurisdiction of the court in providing legal opinions on matters referred to it by the organs and specialized agencies of the UN,
  - **Contentious Jurisdiction:** It involves settling disputes between countries and determining "state responsibility" for crimes committed in violation of international law.
- ICJ judges ought to be impartial and cannot act as extensions of their countries. However, in the past, judges have often voted in line with the politics of their respective nations.

#### **Relevance of the ICJ**

Over the last few decades, states have approached the court to rule on areas of International Law that were not previously common in its docket such as **Human Rights** and **Environmental violations**.

- **States Participation:** The ICJ has also been successful in furthering the participation of states that have not accepted its compulsory jurisdiction by invoking its authority through dispute settlement clauses or special agreements.
  - *For Example*, Romania recently advanced a declaration in support of the court's jurisdiction in which over 30 states have joined so far.
- **Its Reparations Rulings:** Major rulings on reparations have also been **adhered to by the concerned parties**.
  - *For Example*, in the 2022 judgment in the case of the *Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) v. Uganda*, the court ordered Uganda to pay a total of \$325 million to the DRC in five annual installments for damages to persons and natural resources.
  - Subsequently, Uganda complied with the ruling and made the first payment to the DRC on time.

- **Its Advisory Role:** ICJ has played an enormous role in advancing peaceful solutions to conflicts and supporting diplomatic efforts.
  - *For Example*, in the past, it has rendered opinions such as the 'Legality of the Threat or Use of Nuclear Weapons' in 1996, and 'Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory' in 2004, among others.
  - In relation to the Israel-Palestine conflict, the UN General Assembly in 2022 passed a resolution calling on the ICJ to give its advisory opinion on the legal consequences of Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian territories.

### **Two Major Challenges**

#### **1) Challenges to the Court's Efficacy:**

- **No Enforcement Powers:** Although the court's decisions are legally binding and cannot be appealed against, they are often defied in the absence of an enforcement mechanism of its own.
  - The UN Charter authorizes the UNSC to enforce the court's decisions — however, its compliance is often at the mercy of the power politics of the permanent members of the Security Council. The enforcement of any adverse ruling against Israel is likely to be vetoed by its strongest ally, the U.S.
- **Power Politics of the Permanent Members:** The UN Charter authorizes the UNSC to enforce the court's decisions — however, its compliance is often at the mercy of the power politics of the permanent members of the Security Council
- **Non-participation of Powerful Members:** Another challenge to the court's efficacy is the non-participation of powerful member states in its proceedings.
  - Example: In the proceedings instituted by **Ukraine against Russia in 2022**, the latter refused to advance submissions "in light of the apparent absurdity of the lawsuit".
  - Similarly, in the famous **Nicaragua vs the U.S. case** (over the latter's support for Contras), the U.S. refused to submit to the court's jurisdiction and enforce its subsequent ruling.
- **Slow Procedures:** The ICJ's slow and bureaucratic procedure resulting in rulings taking years to be pronounced has been a subject of criticism. A final ruling from the court determining whether Israel has committed genocide in Gaza will likely take years to emerge.

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- Two prior cases involving the Genocide Convention that have proceeded to a final adjudication on the merits also took over a decade to resolve — Croatia v. Serbia and Bosnia and Herzegovina v. Serbia and Montenegro.
- **Question on Redressal Mechanism:** The delay in delivering its judgment, prompts the question of whether any possible redressal of injustice by the court eventually becomes infructuous.

**2) Challenges to the Niche Position of ICJ:**

Despite the emergence of new courts and tribunals, the ICJ has been able to carve out a niche position in international judicial adjudication.

- **Fragmentation of International laws:** The ICJ exists alongside the Permanent Court of Arbitration, the International Criminal Court, and the International Tribunal for the Law of the Sea, and panels established under the World Trade Organisation. However, this has also raised concerns about the potential fragmentation of international law where various judicial bodies impart contradictory rulings.
- **Affected due to Political Biases:** Despite several historic strides in the development of international law, the ICJ's impact is adversely affected due to political biases. Putting one body at the helm of the world order risks subjecting the entire judicial framework to its political and institutional limitations.

**Way Forward:**

A **Decentralized Judiciary** can foster more judicial independence. Time and again when diplomacy has failed, international law has been the last resort — the heart of which lies in safeguarding the interests of the World Court. The ongoing proceedings instituted by South Africa will play a vital role in documenting evidence for the opinion.

17. **National Coal Index**

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- It is a price index which **reflects the change of price level of coal in a particular month relative to the fixed base year.**
  - The base year for the NCI is **Financial Year 2017-18.**
- **Compilation:**

- **Prices of coal from all the sales channels of coal**, including import, as existing today are taken into account for compiling the NCI.
- The **amount of revenue share** per tonne of coal produced from auctioned blocks would be arrived at using the NCI by means of defined formula.
- **Sub-Indices:** NCI is composed of a set of **five** sub-indices:
  - Three for **Non Coking Coal** and two for **Coking Coal**.
  - The three sub-indices for Non Coking Coal are combined to arrive at the Index for Non Coking Coal and the two sub-indices for Coking Coal are combined to arrive at the Index for Coking Coal.
  - Thus, **indices are separate for Non Coking and Coking Coal**.
    - As per the grade of coal pertaining to a mine, the appropriate sub-index is used to arrive at the revenue share.

**Coal**

<p><b>Peat</b> (not a coal)</p> <p>Partially decayed plant matter in swamps and bogs; low heat content</p>	<p><b>Lignite</b> (brown coal)</p> <p>Low heat content; low sulfur content; limited supplies in most areas</p>	<p><b>Bituminous</b> (soft coal)</p> <p>Extensively used as a fuel because of its high heat content and large supplies; normally has a high sulfur content</p>	<p><b>Anthracite</b> (hard coal)</p> <p>Highly desirable fuel because of its high heat content and low sulfur content; supplies are limited in most areas</p>
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- Coal is the most abundant fossil fuel which **holds 55% of India's energy need.**
- Based on the **uses**, coal is divided into **two types**:
  - **Coking** **Coal:**
    - This type of coal when subjected to high temperature carbonisation i.e. heating in the absence of air to a temperature above 600 degree Celsius, **forms a solid porous residue called coke.**
    - **Coke** is fed into a blast furnace along with iron ore and limestone to produce steel in steel plants.
    - Coking coal is desired to be of **low ash percentage.**
    - **Use:**



	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Mainly used in steel making and metallurgical industries.</li><li>▪ Also used for hard coke manufacturing.</li><li>▪ <b>Non Coking Coal:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ These are coals without coking properties.</li><li>▪ <b>Use:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ This is the coal used in thermal power plants to generate electricity, so it is also known as <b>steam coal or thermal coal.</b></li><li>▪ Also used for cement, fertilizer, glass, ceramic, paper, chemical and brick manufacturing, and for other heating purposes.</li></ul></li><li>▪ Coal is <b>also classified into four ranks: anthracite, bituminous, subbituminous, and lignite.</b>The ranking <b>depends on the types and amounts of carbon the coal contains</b> and <b>on the amount of heat energy</b> the coal can produce.</li></ul></li></ul>	
18.	<p><b>Red Sea crisis</b></p> <p>The <b>Ministry of Commerce and Industry (MoCI)</b> reports that Indian exports to Europe, especially low-value products such as agriculture and textiles, are facing disruptions due to escalating tensions in the <b>Red Sea</b> and ongoing drought issues at the <b>Panama Canal</b>. In response, an inter-ministerial meeting chaired by the Union Commerce Secretary, involving key ministries like External Affairs, Defence, Shipping, and the <b>Department of Financial Services (DFS)</b> under the Ministry of Finance, addressed the concerns about potential impacts on global trade.</p> <p>The rerouting of shipments through the <b>Cape of Good Hope</b>, in response to heightened security concerns in the Red Sea and Panama Canal, has led to delayed sailings and a significant increase in freight rates to Europe.</p> <p><b>Red Sea</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The Red Sea is a semi-enclosed tropical basin, bounded by <b>northeastern Africa, to the west, and the Arabian peninsula, to the east.</b></li></ul>	

- The elongated and narrow-shaped basin extends between the **Mediterranean Sea**, to the northwest, and the Indian Ocean, to the southeast.
- At the northern end, it separates into the **Gulf of Aqaba and the Gulf of Suez**, which is connected to the Mediterranean Sea via the Suez Canal.
- At the southern end, it is connected to the Gulf of Aden, and the outer Indian Ocean, via the **Strait of Bab-el-Mandeb**.
- It is surrounded by desert or semi-desert areas, with no major freshwater inflow.



Issues in the Red Sea and Panama Canal Presently

- **Red Sea:**
  - **Issue:**Chemical tanker **MV Chem Pluto** was struck by a drone attack, approximately 200 nautical miles off Gujarat's coast.

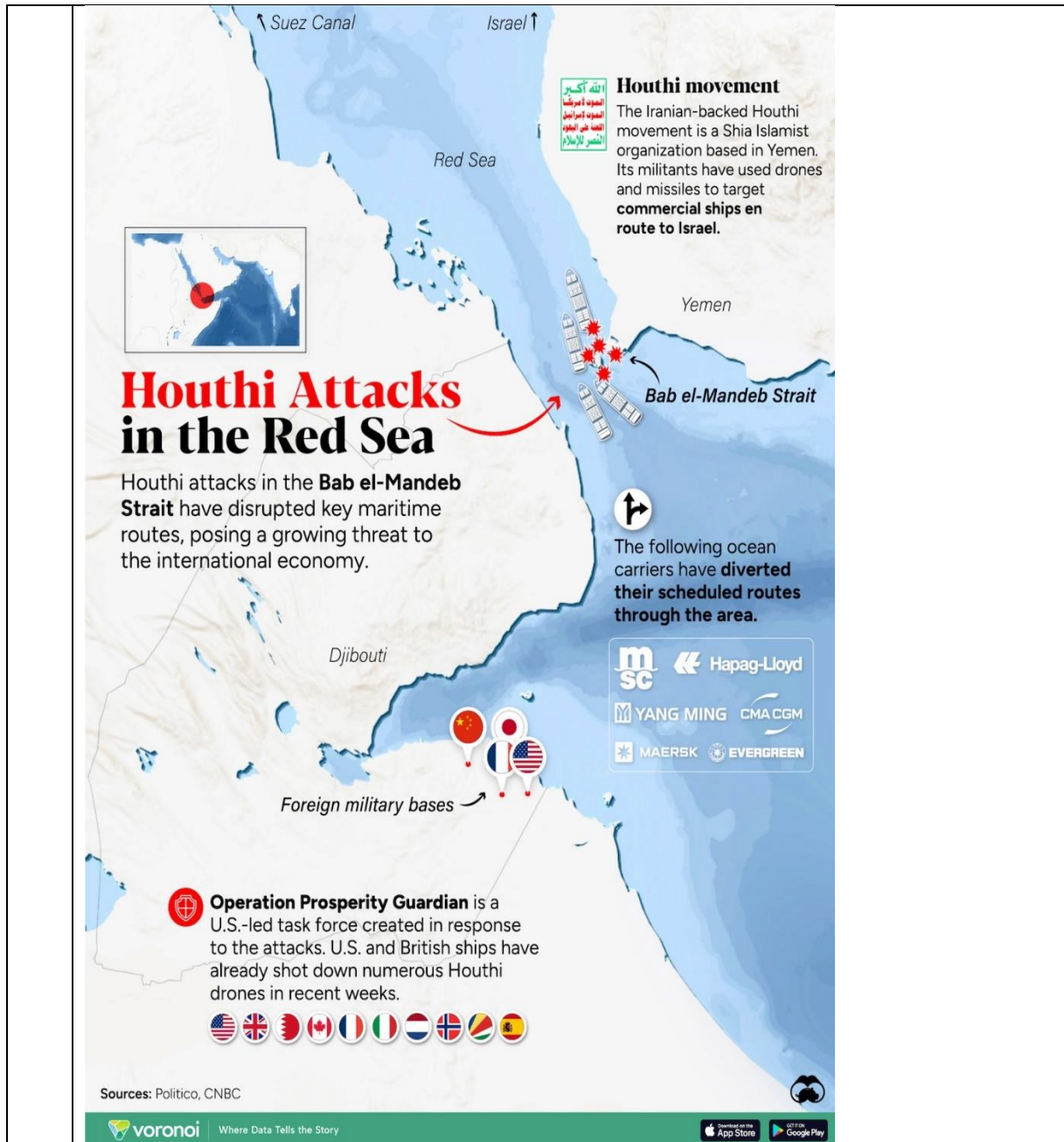
- MV Chem Pluto is a Liberia-flagged, Japanese-owned, and Netherlands-operated chemical tanker. It had started its journey carrying crude from Al Jubail, Saudi Arabia and was expected to arrive in New Mangalore, India.
- **Allegedly Involved Entity:** It is believed to have been carried out by **Houthi rebels** based in Yemen, citing protest against Israel's actions in Gaza.
  - Houthi rebels are also engaged in a decade-long civil conflict with Yemen's government.
- **Panama Canal:**
  - **Issue:** Due to drought conditions, shipping through the 51-mile stretch of the Panama Canal has decreased by over 50%.
    - A naturally occurring **El Nino climate pattern** associated with warmer-than-usual water in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean is contributing to Panama's drought.
  - **Infrastructural Lacunae:** The Panama Canal's operational challenges and the shift in trade focus to alternative routes like the Red Sea have raised various concerns that require prompt attention.
    - Issues such as the need for dredging and reducing depth have emerged, posing obstacles for the navigation of large vessels. Immediate measures are essential to address these challenges.
  - **Both these routes are among the busiest in the world.**

Impact on India Due to the Above Issues

- **Impact on Agricultural Commodities:**
  - Concerns arise for **exporters of key commodities like basmati and teadue** to disruptions in this critical trade route.
  - Disruption in the Red Sea route could increase Indian agricultural product prices by 10-20% as shipments reroute through the Cape of Good Hope.
- **Impact on Oil and Petroleum Trade:**
  - Global oil and petroleum flows have declined due to major shipping companies avoiding the Red Sea. However, India's oil imports from Russia remain unaffected.

- **India's reliance on Russian oil**, perceived as Iran's ally, has remained stable amid the conflict in the Red Sea.
- **Costlier Export to US:**
  - The water scarcity issue in the Panama Canal and the ensuing drought are forcing ships voyaging from Asia to the US to choose the Suez Canal, resulting in an additional six days of travel compared to the Panama Canal route.
- **Panama Canal as not a Feasible Option:**
  - While the **Bab-el-Mandeb Strait** that leads to the Suez Canal in the Red Sea region connects Asia to Europe, the 100-year-old Panama Canal connects the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans and is not a very viable option for India.

Factors Contributing to the Present Crisis



▪ **Modern Weaponry Concerns:**

- The Red Sea situation is becoming complex, impacting both stability and trade.
- The use of advanced weaponry raises questions about the effectiveness of joint defence efforts among nations, leading to concerns about trade disruption and claims of high interoperability.

▪ **Adaptation of Piracy Techniques:**

- Similar to past piracy challenges, delayed international responses have allowed rebels to adapt to modern technologies.
- This has led to tactics such as hijacking ships and using them as mother ships, expanding the "**High-Risk Area**" and **affecting maritime trade** through rerouting and increased insurance costs.
- **State Support and Missile Proliferation:**
  - The involvement of Houthi rebels using drones and **Anti-Ship Ballistic Missiles (ASBMS)**, along with potential state support from Iran and China, raises concerns about missile technology proliferation.
  - The supply of ASBMS, directly or indirectly, is linked to China, adding complexity to the situation.
- **Lacklustre Response to Operation Prosperity Guardian:**
  - The U.S.-launched **Operation Prosperity Guardian**, intended to operate under the Combined Maritime Force, has seen a tepid response from allies and partners.
  - **NATO** allies like France, Italy, and Spain operate independently, indicating doubts about the U.S.'s ability to drive international cooperative mechanisms.
- **Saudi Arabia and UAE's Non-Participation:**
  - Saudi Arabia's absence from the operation, **likely to avoid negative impacts on Yemen negotiations** and relations with Iran, reveals complexities.
  - The UAE's reluctance may stem from avoiding perceived support for Israel.
  - India, despite being a full member, operates independently, possibly due to its relations with Iran.
- **Global Division on Maritime Security:**
  - Operation Prosperity Guardian's inability to function as a coalition highlights divisions among like-minded nations supporting **freedom of navigation as mandated by United Nations Convention on the Law of Sea (UNCLOS)**.
  - Even U.S. allies such as Japan and Australia are yet to join, emphasizing the lack of convergence on maritime security and rule-based world order.

Measures that India Adopt to Reduce Vulnerability to These Issues

- **Joint Maritime Security Initiative:** Propose a collaborative security framework with key Red Sea stakeholders (Egypt, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Yemen) involving intelligence sharing, coordinated patrols, and joint exercises.
- **Deploy Advanced Surveillance Systems:** Install integrated radar and drone surveillance systems along India's western coastline to enhance early threat detection and response capabilities.
- **Negotiate Preferential Access: Engage with Panama Canal authorities** to explore preferential passage for Indian vessels or potential toll discounts for specific routes.
- **Alternate Trade Routes Under Consideration:** Recently, there has been renewed interest in the **Ben Gurion Canal Project**, a proposed 160-mile-long sea-level canal that would connect the **Mediterranean Sea** with the **Gulf of Aqaba**, bypassing the Suez Canal.
- **Designation of Houthis as Global Terrorists:** Starting mid-February, the **S. will label the Houthis as a specially designated global terrorist group**, potentially blocking their access to the global financial system.
  - This move comes despite previous removal from the U.S. terror listing, with Saudi Arabia warning of the Houthi threat. **India can join hands with like-minded countries to ward off such threats.**
- **Calibrated and Cooperative Approach:** Houthi rebels exploit the division among nations and question the U.S.'s global dominance. Similar to piracy solutions, addressing the supply of weaponry becomes crucial.
  - The situation in Yemen differs, and actions need to be calibrated to prevent a state-on-state confrontation and maintain stability.
- **Avoiding Yemen as a Battleground:** There is a need for an achievable end state by preventing the legitimization of the Houthis as a state actor, emphasizing the importance of avoiding turning Yemen into a battleground like Lebanon.
- **Facilitating Export Credit:** The **MoCI**, concerned about the hold on consignments due to high freight costs and surcharges, has instructed DFS to ensure a continuous credit flow to exporters.
- **Maintaining Buffer Stocks:** The **Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers** assured that tensions in the Red Sea region **would not result in a fertilizer shortage in India.**



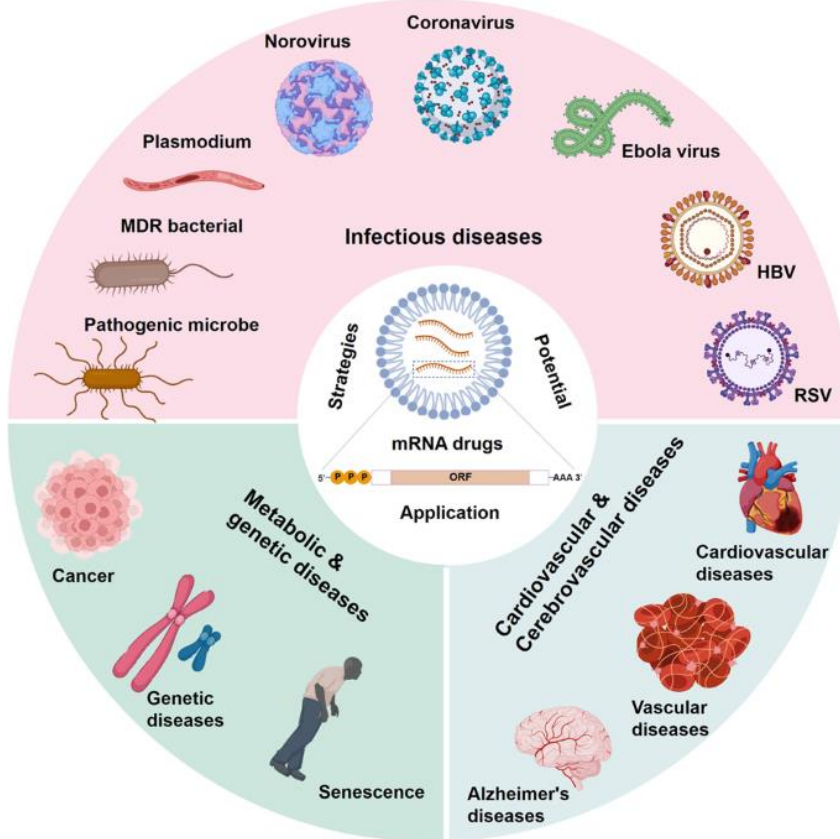
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ It stated that the country possesses abundant stocks to meet the upcoming kharif season's requirements.</li></ul> <p>The escalating conflict involving Houthi rebels in Yemen and their attacks on merchant shipping in the Red Sea presents a multifaceted challenge. The use of advanced weaponry, including drones and anti-ship ballistic missiles, underscores the rebels' capabilities and raises concerns about state support, particularly from Iran and possibly China. As the situation unfolds, a careful and calibrated approach is crucial to prevent further deterioration, emphasizing the urgency for a viable and achievable end state that avoids turning Yemen into a prolonged battleground.</p>
19.	<p><b>Therapeutic use of messenger RNA (mRNA)</b></p> <p>The cells in our body <b>create mRNAs that serve as instructions</b> to make specific proteins we need to function. Researchers can create new mRNAs to correct those instructions when they aren't working.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ While most scientists <b>studying mRNAs are not creating new drugs</b>, this fundamental understanding of how mRNA works <b>laid the foundation for other scientists to create effective mRNA medicines</b> like <b>Covid-19 vaccines</b>.</li></ul> <p><u>mRNA</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>mRNA (Messenger RNA)</b> carries important messages from our <b>DNA (Deoxyribonucleic acid)</b>, to the cell's machinery, telling it how to make specific proteins.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Imagine DNA as a library of <b>cookbooks filled with recipes (genes) to create different proteins</b>.</li></ul></li><li>▪ Our bodies need around <b>100,000 proteins to work properly</b>, helping with tasks like breaking down food and performing vital chemical reactions.</li><li>▪ When a cell needs a specific protein, it doesn't directly read the recipe from DNA. Instead, <b>it makes a copy called mRNA</b>.</li><li>▪ This mRNA serves as a messenger, carrying the protein-making instructions. It's made up of <b>four building blocks (A, U, C, G)</b>, forming words of only three letters.</li><li>▪ By reading this mRNA recipe, <b>cells easily know how to create the required protein</b>.</li><li>▪ Cells are quite good at recognizing, using, and then getting rid of mRNA once it's done its job.</li></ul>

- However, changes or mistakes in the DNA's recipe book (mutations) can mess **up the mRNA instructions, leading to errors in making essential proteins**, which can cause diseases.

Significance of mRNAs in Making Medicine

- **Precision and Customization:**
  - Scientists comprehend how mRNAs instruct cells to create proteins. This knowledge allows them to **easily craft codes for various proteins**, modifying these codes to suit individual patient needs.
  - Whether it's designing entirely new mRNA codes or adjusting existing ones, the **flexibility allows for tailored treatments**.
- **Scalability and Uniformity:**
  - Manufacturing mRNA treatments is scalable and consistent. The process to create one **mRNA is uniform across different mRNA types**.
  - Unlike traditional drugs, each having unique **chemistry and manufacturing methods**, mRNA production follows a standardized process. This uniformity streamlines production, akin to knowing a basic recipe and being able to create countless variations.
- **Easy Adaptability:**
  - Cells naturally eliminate **mRNA once its task is complete**. This characteristic ensures that mRNA treatments **are not permanent**.
  - Adjusting doses to accommodate changing patient requirements becomes effortless due to this innate ability of cells to degrade unnecessary mRNA.
- **Production Capacity:**
  - Scientists can generate substantial quantities of mRNA in laboratory settings. This ability to produce large amounts facilitates the development and distribution of mRNA-based medicines on a broader scale.
- **Expanded Vaccine Development:**
  - Clinical trials for mRNA-based vaccines extend to diseases like seasonal flu, herpes, respiratory syncytial virus, norovirus, Lyme disease, Zika, and shingles, promising a wider array of preventive treatments.

- mRNA therapies show **promise in cancer treatment by leveraging the body's immune response**. Cancer vaccines, tailored to target specific mutations in tumors, enhance antibody production to mark and attack cancer cells. This personalized approach seeks to minimize harm to healthy cells.



Future of mRNA Based Medicines

- The future of mRNA-based medicine appears promising, offering highly personalized, effective therapies with fewer side effects.
- This revolutionary approach holds the potential to address diverse diseases by precisely altering cellular processes and correcting protein deficiencies.
- The **ease of customization and production** positions mRNA as a versatile tool in modern medicine, poised to redefine treatment strategies and improve patient outcomes across various medical conditions.

- Guru Nanak Dev (1469-1539) was born in a village, Talwandi Rai Bhoie, near Lahore (it was renamed later as Nankana Sahib).
- Guru Nanak Dev initiated inter-faith dialogue way back in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and had conversations with most of the religious denominations of his times.
- His written compositions were included in the Adi Granth compiled by Guru Arjan (1563-1606), the fifth Sikh guru.
  - This came to be known as Guru Granth Sahib after the additions made by the 10th guru Guru Gobind Singh (1666-1708).
  - In compiling the Adi Granth, Guru Arjan showed a remarkable commitment to pluralism while retaining the unity of thought initiated by Guru Nanak Dev.

### **Relevance of Guru Nanak Dev for modern India**

#### **Building an Egalitarian Society**

- **Even though India is an aspiring superpower, it's caste hierarchy is still engraved in the societal order.**
  - Guru Nanak Dev's vision of a casteless society in which there is no caste hierarchy can help to establish an egalitarian society.
  - His idea of equality can be deduced by the following innovative social institutions, as given by him:
    - **Langar:** Collective cooking and sharing of food.
    - **Pangat:** Partaking food without distinctions of high and low caste.
    - **Sangat:** Collective decision making.
  - These egalitarian practices had directly challenged the untouchability and the caste system and continue to do so.

#### **Social Harmony**

- **Increased cases of intolerance, mob lynching and right-wing vigilantism, affects the secular nature and social harmony of the Indian society.**
  - Guru Nanak Dev's concept of "Jeeye kaa ik daata" can address these issues.
    - According to him, the whole world is God's creation (Jeeye kaa ik daata) and all are born equal. There is only one universal creator i.e. **"Ik Omkaar Satnaam."**

- This spirit of equality began with Guru Nanak Dev's clear recognition that there is no distinction between a Hindu and Muslim. For him, no country was foreign and no people were alien.
- This philosophy is similar to the Sanskrit saying "**Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam**" that describes the whole world as one family.
- Apart from it, **forgiveness, patience, forbearance, and kindness** are the core of Guru Nanak Dev's teachings.

#### Creating a Just Society

- **Inequality is the root cause of all social evils.**
  - Guru Nanak Dev placed the motto of "**kirat karo, naam japo and vand chhako**" (work, worship and share) before his disciples.
  - He stood for **karma as the basis of dharma**, and he transformed the idea of spiritualism into the **ideology of social responsibility and social change**.
  - He suggested that we earn by honest labour and share the earnings with the needy.
  - He advocated the concept of "**dasvandh**" or donating one-tenth of one's earning among needy persons.
  - The selfless service to mankind known as "**Seva**" is central to the teaching of Sikhism.
  - These ideals can help us in establishing a just society today.

#### Gender Equality

- **Women have been the most oppressed sections of the society.**
  - Guru Nanak Dev argued that "**How can women be inferior when they give birth to men?**"
  - According to him, "Women as well as men share the grace of God and are equally responsible for their actions to him."
  - Respect for women and gender equality is perhaps the most important lesson to be learnt from Guru Nanak Dev's life.

#### Bringing Peace

- **Relations between India and Pakistan are grim due to tensions over Kashmir and cross border terrorism.**
  - However, both the countries, keeping their political issues aside had inaugurated the **Kartapur corridor**.

- Kartarpur corridor can become a starting point in the normalization of India-Pakistan relations, which will have an impact on the whole South-Asian region.

### **Core Teachings of Guru Nanak and Their Relevance**

- **Vaand Chhako (Sharing):** Its basic meaning is to share what we have, and consume it together. One should not be greedy and share its wealth with others in the community by charity.
  - **Relevance:** His emphasis on selfless service through Sangat and Pangat calls for universal brotherhood and community services.
  - It aims to promote tolerance, mutual respect and peaceful co-existence in society.
  - It is relevant not merely for individuals, but also for making an egalitarian society and even peaceful world through promoting ideal international relations.
- **Kirat Karo (Honest living):** The term means to earn an honest, pure, and dedicated living by exercising one's God-given skills, abilities, talents, and hard labour for the benefit and improvement of the individual, their family and society at large.
  - **Relevance:** It is very important to create a just society. These teachings are important in promoting integrity and morality in government service with the absence of corruption and dishonesty.
- **Naam Japo (Recite God's name):** It means one should recite and repeat God's name by doing Kirtan (singing hymns), chanting, or Simran (meditating with mantra).
  - **Relevance:** It focuses on leading a spiritual life with temperance, which would provide a solace in case of stress and anxiety.
- **Sarbat daa bhalaa (Goodwill for all):** It means to ask God for everyone's happiness. He emphasised the concept of universal brotherhood. With this prayer, one requests the Lord for the welfare of the whole of humanity and not just of our own community or family alone.

- **Relevance:** The core of this teaching is to be kind and tolerant to others. Its emphasis on thinking about the goodwill of others rhymes with the Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam of Hinduism.
- **No Discrimination:** He opposed all artificially created divisions and all discrimination, both in word and deed.
  - **Relevance:** The uniqueness of his deep philosophical insights emphasises 'secularism'. He was among the first who said, there is no Hindu and Muslim and all are the creation of the Almighty. He was also against gender discrimination.
  - Thus, his teachings are very effective to create an egalitarian and just society.
- **Salvation through internal purification:** According to him, salvation occurs from the heart, spirit, and soul and not from the pilgrimage and the Guru is the true source of knowledge and salvation, who shows the path of truth and enlightenment.
  - **Relevance:** In this way, he supported spiritualism in place of ritual practices which is relevant today in the backdrop of commercialisation of religions and religious intolerance.

In present time, Guru Nanak's teachings are important for living a virtuous life. In today's intolerant world, his philosophy, based on equality and fraternity, are more relevant than ever.

According to Indian Philosophy, a Guru is the one who provides illumination, dispels doubt and shows the right path. In this context, the ideas of Guru Nanak Dev can help promote peace, equality and prosperity across the globe.

Every person can learn a lot from the teachings of Guru Nanak Dev. Leaders of the world can also learn from his life and teachings so that meaningful dialogues between various communities can be initiated (especially in the conflict-ridden parts of the world). This will certainly propagate the ideas of peace, stability and cooperation, and make the world a better place to live in.

21. **Cervical Cancer in India**

Cervical cancer, a major health concern among Indian women, stands as the second most common type of cancer in this demographic. The Indian government's recent initiative to include the cervical cancer vaccine in the universal immunisation program for girls aged 9 to 14 is a significant step towards public health advancement.

**Current Situation of Cervical Cancer Burden in India**

- *A Formidable Challenge:* 2022 witnessed 1,23,907 new cases, indicating a significant global health concern. The severity is underscored by 77,348 deaths in the same period.
- *Prevalence in Middle-Aged Women:* The disease's long pre-invasive phase necessitates targeted early detection and intervention strategies.

**Contributing Factors of Cervical Cancer in India**

- *High-Risk HPV Infection:* The prevalence is primarily due to persistent high-risk Human Papilloma Virus (HPV) infections. HPV, combined with other co-factors, increases the risk of developing cervical cancer.
- *Co-Factors and Socio-demographic Influences:* Low socioeconomic status, compromised immunity, other genital infections, and tobacco use exacerbate the risk. These factors are especially relevant for the middle-aged female demographic.


**Opportunities for Early Detection and Cure**

- *Extended Pre-Invasive Phase: A Crucial Window:* The 10–15 year pre-invasive phase offers a significant opportunity for early detection. Effective early intervention can prevent progression to advanced stages.
- *Targeting the Reproductive Age Group:* Focused screening and preventive measures in the reproductive age group can yield substantial benefits. Educational and screening initiatives should be tailored to this demographic.
- *High Cure Rates with Early Detection:* Early stage management boasts over a 93% success rate. Timely screening and diagnosis are key to improving outcomes.
- *Screening Tools and Outpatient Treatment:* Availability of visual screening tests and HPV tests enhances early diagnosis. Outpatient treatments for precancerous conditions are simple, painless, and widely accessible.



### THE DISEASE AND THE ROAD TO CONTAINMENT

#### CERVICAL CANCER



**1.2 lakh** cervical cancer cases a year in India


**67,000 deaths** a year in India

**6 lakh** women diagnosed with cervical cancer in 2020

**3.4 lakh** women died of the disease worldwide


**90%** of cases and deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries

#### HPV




**Human papillomavirus** is the main cause for cervical cancer

HPV is a common family of viruses that are transmitted through sexual contact




**99%** of cervical cancer cases are caused by HPV (HPV16 and HPV18 are the most common types)


#### PREVENTION & TREATMENT



**Screening** can detect early signs of the disease, allowing time for early treatment



**Vaccines** available in India include GSK's Cervarix and Merck's Gardasil, both expensive



**Rollout of Cervavac** is expected to make vaccination affordable and ensure wider coverage

Source: WHO/IARC; Express News Service

### Government's Initiatives

*Inclusion of Cervical Cancer Vaccine into Universal Immunisation Programme*

- **A Proactive Step:** Integrating the cervical cancer vaccine for girls aged 9 to 14 into the universal immunisation program. Targets the prevention of high-risk HPV infections, a key factor in cervical cancer development.
- **Impact and Alignment with Global Practices:** Aims to reduce cervical cancer incidence in the targeted age group. Aligns with global health strategies to combat cervical cancer.

*Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*

- **Fulfilling Global Health Agendas:** Complements SDG 3.4: reducing premature non-communicable disease deaths, including cancer, by one third by 2030. Targets cervical cancer elimination, contributing to the SDGs.

*Implementation through National Health Programs*

- **Leveraging Existing Frameworks:** This cervical cancer prevention strategy is part of the larger National Programme for Prevention and Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardiovascular Diseases, and Stroke (NPCDCS).

### Way Forward

*Need for a Comprehensive Approach*

- **Integrated Strategies:** Emphasizing regular cervical cancer screening and integrating advanced technologies in healthcare can significantly aid in early detection and treatment.
- **Patient Care and Research Partnerships:** Collaboration with NGOs, health experts, and innovators is essential for improving patient care pathways and conducting impactful research.

*Focus on Innovations and Future Potential*

- **Advancing Indigenous Solutions** Development of local HPV test kits and vaccines, single-dose vaccinations, and self-sampling methods. Exploring AI technologies for resource-limited settings.

*Need for International Collaboration*

- **Global Learning and Sharing:** Engaging in international collaborations to adopt successful cervical cancer prevention and treatment models can greatly benefit India's healthcare strategies.

*Population Awareness and Education*

- **Raising Public Consciousness:** Implementing public health campaigns and community outreach programs to educate women about cervical cancer risks and the importance of early screening is vital for increasing public awareness and participation in preventive measures

While the government's initiative to include the cervical cancer vaccine in the immunisation program is commendable, a holistic approach that encompasses awareness, prevention, early detection, and comprehensive treatment is essential. By connecting patient care, leveraging innovative technologies, and fostering collaborations, India can make significant strides in eradicating cervical cancer.

22. **Dams In India - Facts and Fallacies**

- A dam is a structure built across a river or stream to hold back water. Over the centuries dams have been built using different materials.
- Ancient dam builders used natural materials such as rocks or clay while today most dams are built using concrete.

Dams in India

India has 4,407 large dams, the third highest number in the world after China (23,841) and the USA (9,263).

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- **Tehri Dam** in Uttarakhand is the **highest dam in India** built on Bhagirathi river.
- **Hirakud Dam** in Odisha built on river Mahanadi is the **longest dam of India**.
- Kallanai Dam in Tamil Nadu is the **oldest dam of India**. It is built on the Kaveri river and is about 2000 years old.

**Significance of Dams:**

- **Source of Clean Energy:** Dams are the sources of clean power. Many countries have embraced dams as a way to reduce reliance on expensive fossil fuels.
- **Irrigation:** Dams and waterways store and provide water for irrigation so farmers can use the water for growing crops. In areas where water and rain are not abundant (like the desert), irrigation canals from rivers and dams are used to carry water.
- **Prevent Flooding:** Dams, if planned well, help in preventing floods. They catch extra water so that it doesn't run wild downstream.
- **Source of Drinking Water:** Since the water stored in dams is freshwater, it can also be used as drinking water.

Dams and Destruction

While dams can benefit the society in many ways, they are also one of the biggest menaces to river ecology, wildlife, aquatic habitat of fish and ultimately humans.

- **Affect the Aquatic Life:** Dams prevent fish migration and limit their ability to access spawning habitat, seek out food resources, and escape predation.
  - Aquatic organisms depend on steady flows to guide them while stagnant reservoir pools disorient migrating fish and can significantly increase the duration of their migration.
- **Dams block Rivers:** Dams and reservoirs are physical barriers to the flow of water bodies as they fragment them and reservoirs, which impact their seasonal flow.
  - They also change the way rivers function and trap sediment, burying rock riverbeds where fish spawn.

- Gravel, logs, and other important food and habitat features can also become trapped behind dams. This negatively affects the creation and maintenance of more complex habitat downstream.
- **A Hazardous Infrastructure:** Large dams, even if structurally sound, are regarded as “high hazard” infrastructure because of the potential for a massive loss of human lives, livelihoods and destruction in the event of failure.
  - In the most recent **Uttarakhand flash floods**, experts say the incident was induced by the effect of global warming on melting glaciers but the effect was worsened by construction of infrastructure (Hydroelectric Power Projects, HEPs).
    - HEPs which use large-scale blasting, tree felling and tunneling, most certainly added to the proportion of the impact. They became a force multiplier in the destruction.
  - The construction was against the recommendation of the Chopra Committee which submitted a detailed report warning that a glacial retreat in the state of Uttarakhand, coupled with structures built for hydroelectricity generation and dams, could lead to large-scale disasters downstream.
- **Reservoir Induced Seismicity:** There is a strong relation between the earthquakes and loading and unloading of water from the dam. The Koyna and Warna region is possibly the best example of **reservoir-induced-seismicity (RIS)**.
  - The Koyna and Warna reservoirs are responsible for the earthquakes in the south Maharashtra region which has experienced many earthquakes in five decades.
    - This series of earthquakes have occurred post the construction of dams in the region.
  - **Displacement of People:** The land submergence and large scale displacement of people due to construction of large dams is one prevailing issue which is often overlooked by the authorities.

- Construction of dams such as Hirakud, Bhakra Nangal and Tehri had displaced a number of families many of which were not rehabilitated at all.
  - Even after rehabilitation, lack of livelihood opportunities and poor living conditions are still observed.
- **Sardar Sarovar dam**, the largest structure on Narmada river, has displaced over 3 lakh families.
- **Older Dams are Greater Hazard:Older dams** pose greater safety risks, cost higher in terms of maintenance and have declining functionality due to sedimentation, stated
  - Globally, over 1,115 large dams will be about 50 years old by 2025.
  - China, the US and India top the list of countries with a significant number of large dams.
    - China alone hosts 40% of the world's large dams (numbering 23,841), their average age being 45 years.
  - India has 4,407 large dams of which more than 1,000 would be 50 years or older by 2025, a new study has shown.
    - India has 209 dams that are over 100-year-old, built when design practices and safety were far below current norms.
- **GreenHouse Gas Emissions:**Particularly in tropical regions, hydropower reservoirs emit significant amounts of greenhouse gases.
  - The water gathers behind the dam, creates an unnatural, stagnant lake that often kills off a lot of the existing ecosystem. Bacteria in the water decompose these plants and generate carbon dioxide and methane (potent greenhouse gas).

- Methane from reservoirs accounts for more than 4% of all human-caused climate change comparable to the climate impact of the aviation sector.
- In some cases, hydropower projects are producing higher emissions than coal-fired power generating the same amount of electricity plants.

**The Chopra committee**

- The committee was appointed by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (now Ministry of Environment and Forests and Climate Change, MoEFCC) in October 2013, following the **Supreme Court's suo motto order** of August 13 2013.
  - The committee suggested that no hydroelectric power projects (HEPs) should be built in the paraglacial region as it has loose glacial debris which when carried downstream can be disastrous.
  - It also raised objections to the construction of HEPs in regions 2200-2500 metres above the sea level.

**List Of Major Dams in India**

	<b>State</b>	<b>River</b>
Bhavani Sagar dam	Tamil Nadu	Bhavani
Tungabhadra Dam	Karnataka	Tungabhadra
Rihand Dam	Uttar Pradesh	Rihand
Maithon Dam	Jharkhand	Barakar
Koyna Dam	Maharashtra	Koyna
Bisalpur Dam	Rajasthan	Banas
Mettur Dam	Tamil Nadu	Kaveri
Krishnarajasagar Dam	Karnataka	Kaveri

Indira Sagar Dam	Madhya Pradesh	Narmada
Cheruthoni Dam	Kerala	Cheruthoni
Sardar Sarovar Dam	Gujarat	Narmada
Nagarjuna Sagar Dam	Telangana	Krishna
Hirakud dam	Odisha	Mahanadi
Bhakra Nangal Dam	Punjab-Himachal Pradesh Border	Sutlej
Tehri Dam	Uttarakhand	Bhagirathi

**Tehri Dam**  
The Tehri Dam is located in the state of Uttarakhand. It is the highest Dam in India with a height of 260.5 metres. It is also listed in the top ten highest dams in the world. This Dam is situated on the river Bhagirathi.

- **Height of the Dam-** 260.5 m
- **Length of the Dam-** 575 m
- **Type of Dam-** Rock fill
- **The reservoir capacity-** 21,00,000 acre feet
- **Capacity that is installed-** 1000 Megawatt

**Bhakra Nangal Dam**  
The Bhakra Nangal Dam is located in the state of Himachal Pradesh and Punjab. It is the largest dam in India having a height of 225 metres and also in the second position in the largest dams in all over Asia. It is situated on the river Sutlej.

- **Height of the Dam-** 226 m
- **Length of the Dam-** 520m
- **Type of Dam-** Concrete Gravity
- **The reservoir capacity-** 75,01,775 acre feet
- **Capacity that is installed-** 1325 Megawatt

**Hirakud Dam**

The Hirakud Dam is located in the state of Orissa. It is the longest dam in India with a total length of 25.79 km. It is also in the list of the longest dams in the world. The Hirakud Dam is situated on the river Mahanadi.

- **Height of the Dam-** 61 m
- **Length of the Dam-** 4.8 km (Main Dam)
- **Type of Dam-** Composite Dam
- **The reservoir capacity-** 47,79,965 acre feet
- **Capacity that is installed-** 347.5 Megawatt

#### **Nagarjuna Sagar Dam**

The Nagarjuna Sagar Dam is located in the state of Telangana. It is India's largest Masonry Dams built till date. It is the largest manmade lake in the world. It has 26 gates and is 1.55 km in length. It is situated on the river Krishna.

- **Height of the Dam-** 124m
- **Length of the Dam-** 4863 m (Total Length)
- **Type of Dam-** Masonry Dam
- **The reservoir capacity-** 93,71,845 acre feet
- **Capacity that is installed-** 816 Megawatt

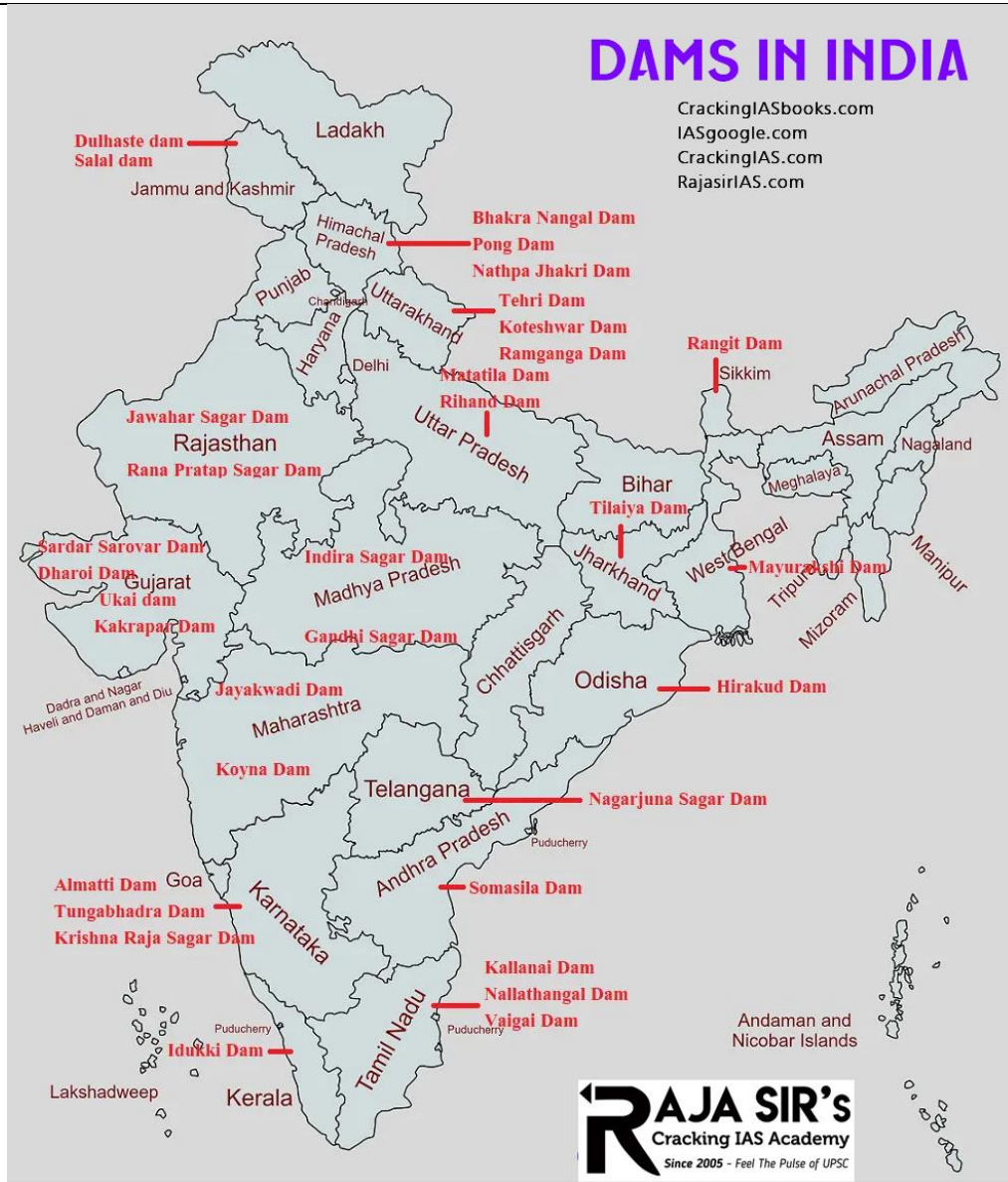
#### **Sardar Sarovar Dam**

The Sardar Sarovar Dam is located in the state of Gujarat. It is the largest dam in the Narmada Valley Project. This Dam is to benefit the other neighbouring states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra. It is situated on the river Narmada River.

- **Height of the Dam-** 163m
- **Length of the Dam-** 1210m
- **Type of Dam-** Gravity Dam
- **The reservoir capacity-** 77,00,000 acre-feet
- **Capacity that is installed-** 1450 Megawatt

These are some largest dams in India.





**Dams in India**

	Height: 260.5 meters
	Length: 575 meters
Highest Dam in India	Tehri Dam(Uttarakhand)
	River: Bhagirathi River
	Location: Uttarakhand
	Year of completion:2006 (1st phase)

	<p>Longest Dam in India      Hirakud Dam (Odisha)</p> <p>Oldest Dam in India      Kallanai Dam (Tamil Nadu)</p>	<p>Total Length: 25.79 km (16.03 mi) Length of Main Dam: 4.8 km (3.0 mi) River: Mahanadi Location: Odisha Year of completion: 1953</p> <p>River: Kaveri Location: Tamil Nadu Year of completion: 100 BC – 100 AD</p> <p><u>Way Forward</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Preferring Viable Alternatives:</b> Prioritizing <b>solar</b> and <b>wind</b> projects are viable and sustainable alternatives to hydroelectric power projects.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ However, improving dam operations and finding more suitable locations for such infrastructure should also be part of the solution.</li> <li>▪ India should instead focus on technologies such as pumped storage, batteries and hydrogen for balancing the grid, Mishra said. As these technologies become economically viable, it will further weaken the case for large dams.</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ <b>Timely Inspection of Dams:</b> It is evident that instead of focusing on building new dams, there is a need to look at the underperformance of existing projects.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ India must conduct a cost-benefit analysis of its ageing dams, and conduct timely safety reviews in order to ensure their operational and ecological safety, as well as the safety of those who inhabit the areas downstream.</li> <li>▪ Fifty years is not a defining age for all dams because the design life also depends on factors such as construction and maintenance.                 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ A well constructed and well-maintained dam can go up to 100 years.</li> <li>▪ However, 50 years is roughly the age when a dam may begin to show signs of ageing.</li> </ul> </li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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- In some cases, dam components such as gates and motors may need to be replaced after 30 years to 50 years.
- **Steps Recommended by WCD:**The World Commission on Dams (WCD) lists seven steps as a remedy to issues arising from dams. These include:
  - Gaining wide public acceptance for construction of any dam.
  - Exploration of alternatives to dams.
  - Optimal usage of existing structures.
  - Protection and restoration of ecosystems at river basin level.
  - Recognising entitlements of the affected people.
  - Compliance with applicable regulations.
  - Regional cooperation on trans-boundary rivers.

#### **World Commission on Dams (WCD)**

- The WCD is a global multi-stakeholder body established by the **World Bank** and **International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN)** in 1998 to investigate the effectiveness and performance of large dams around the world.
- The WCD released its landmark report in November 2000 on the enormous financial, environmental and human costs and the dismal performance of large dams.
  - It found that while the construction of large dams had brought some economic benefits, they had also forcibly displaced an estimated 40-80 million people in the 20th century alone.
    - These people lost their lands and homes to dams and often with no compensation.

#### **The Case of Mullaperiyar Dam**

- **About:**The **Mullaperiyar dam**, a **gravity dam** in Kerala is a **126-year-old** barrage that has dangerously outlived its 50 years of life.
  - The dam is located in the **Western Ghats**, adjacent to the **Periyar wildlife sanctuary**, built during the British colonial period.
    - A gravity dam is one which is designed to withstand water by its own weight and resistance.
    - The weight and width of the base prevent the dam from overturning when subjected to the force of impounded water.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The dam is considered hazardous, not only because of its age but also for its location in an acknowledged seismic zone (zone-III).</li><li>▪ <b>Decommission of the Dam:</b>The government of Kerala carried out hydrological review studies between 2006 and 2011 that concluded that the Mullaperiyar Dam is unsafe for passing the estimated probable maximum flood limit.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Both IIT-Roorkee and IIT-Delhi have deemed the dam to be fit to be decommissioned.<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ However, decommissioning Mullaperiyar is strongly opposed by Tamil Nadu state, which inherited a lease agreement between the former princely state of Travancore (now Kerala) and the British government.</li><li>▪ The lease allows Tamil Nadu to operate the dam and divert 640 million cubic metres of water annually for irrigation and power generation through a tunnel bored into the Western Ghat mountains that form a wall between the two states.</li></ul></li></ul></li></ul>
23.	<p><b>Global Nuclear Order (GNO) is under strain</b></p> <p>The Global Nuclear Order (GNO), an intricate framework created during the tense periods of the Cold War, has notably withstood the test of time, maintaining a delicate balance in international relations and nuclear deterrence. However, this enduring order now finds itself under significant strain.</p> <p><b>Global Nuclear Order (GNO)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ GNO refers to the framework, rules, and agreements governing global use and proliferation of nuclear weapons.</li><li>▪ <b>Example:</b> Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) aims to prevent nuclear spread and promote disarmament.</li></ul> <p><b>Significance of GNO:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Preventing Proliferation:</b> Focuses on restricting the widespread acquisition of nuclear weapons by states.</li><li>▪ <b>Ensuring Stability:</b> Arms control negotiations have aimed to achieve strategic parity and foster stability in the arms race, as well as enhance crisis management since 1945.</li></ul> <p><b>Key Components of GNO:</b></p>

1. **Non-Proliferation:** Efforts to prevent additional states from acquiring nuclear weapons.
2. **Disarmament:** Initiatives aimed at reducing and eliminating global nuclear arsenals.
3. **Nuclear Material Security:** Measures to protect nuclear materials and facilities from threats like theft or sabotage.
4. **Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy:** Promoting nuclear technology for non-military purposes like electricity, medicine, and industry.
5. **International Agreements and Treaties:**
  1. Frameworks establishing norms and regulations for nuclear activities.
  1. Includes NPT, Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), etc.
1. **International Organizations and Agencies:**
  1. Bodies like the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) overseeing and promoting nuclear safety and security.

**Global Nuclear Security Architecture**

Type	Details
<b>Bilateral</b> (US-Russia agreements)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. INF (Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty)</li><li>2. START (Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty)</li><li>3. New START (New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty)</li><li>4. ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty)</li></ol>
<b>Multilateral</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. NPT (Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty)</li><li>2. CTBT (Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty)</li><li>3. FMCT (Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty)</li><li>4. TPNW (Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons)</li></ol>
<b>Commercial</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. NSG (Nuclear Suppliers Group)</li><li>2. MTCR (Missile Technology Control Regime)</li></ol>

- Zone of Peace**
3. AG (Australia Group)
  4. WG (Wassenaar Arrangement)
  1. Pelindaba (African Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty)
  2. Tlatelolco (Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean)
  3. SEANWFZ (Southeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty)

**Important GNO treaties**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Treaty Name</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>1963</b>	Partial Test Ban Treaty (PTBT)	Prohibits testing of nuclear weapons that can cause radioactive fallout outside the State's territory.
<b>1970</b>	Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT)	Only binding treaty for nuclear disarmament of nuclear weapon states.
<b>1996</b>	Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT)	International treaty that bans all nuclear explosions in all environments. (Not yet entered into force)

**Current Status of GNO**

- According to the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI):
  - There are nine nuclear-armed states, including key players like the US, Russia, and China, that are modernizing and expanding their nuclear arsenals.
  - The total global inventory of warheads is approximately 12,512, with around 9,576 warheads in military stockpiles.

- Nuclear capabilities remain predominantly with Russia and the US, holding nearly 90% of all nuclear weapons.

**Issues/Concerns with Current GNO**

- **Shift from Bipolarity to Multipolarity:** The emergence of China as a significant nuclear power, transitioning from the erstwhile bipolar global structure.
- **Changes in U.S.-Russia Treaties:** The US has withdrawn from key treaties like the ABM and INF, with uncertainties lingering around the New START Treaty.
- **New Nuclear Peer Rivals:** The US now faces two nuclear peer rivals in Russia and China, with additional complexities due to the Ukraine conflict.
- **Shifts in Technology:** Advances in nuclear technology and instances of partiality, as seen in the AUKUS submarine deal, are causing concern among the NPT community.
- **Changing Perspective:** Nations like South Korea and Japan are reassessing their nuclear policies, with some considering establishing their own nuclear deterrents.
- **Arms Control:** There are significant challenges in enforcing existing agreements like the NPT and a noticeable lack of progress in disarmament initiatives.
- **Modernization and Technology:** The relentless modernization of nuclear forces, inclusive of new and potentially destabilizing technologies.
- **Emerging Threats and Actors:** The danger posed by non-state entities or isolated nations obtaining nuclear materials or technology is a growing concern.

**India's Position on the Global Nuclear Order:**

- **Nuclear Disarmament:** India champions for complete nuclear disarmament within an established timeline.
- **No First Use Doctrine (NFU):** Formally adopted in January 2003, it states nuclear weapons would be used only in retaliation to a nuclear attack on Indian territory or forces. There are indications from the Indian Defence Minister that this policy might be subject to future changes.
- **Global Disarmament Advocacy:** India promotes global nuclear disarmament while striving to be acknowledged as a responsible nuclear state.

- **Stance on NPT and CTBT:** India remains outside the NPT and CTBT frameworks, perceiving them as biased.
- **Nuclear Arsenal Expansion:** India is expanding and modernizing its nuclear capabilities, which prompts discussions on regional balance, particularly considering the strained relations with Pakistan and strategic competition with China.
- **Regional Nuclear Dynamics:** The nuclear relationship with Pakistan is complex and pivotal. China's expanding nuclear capabilities influence India's nuclear strategy.

**Way Forward**

- **Comprehensive Approach:** To enhance the Global Nuclear Order, a multidimensional strategy encompassing diplomacy, technology, governance, and global cooperation is essential.
- **Encouraging Disarmament:** Push for significant and verifiable cuts in nuclear arsenals.
- **Strengthening Non-Proliferation:** Reinforce efforts to prevent nuclear proliferation.
- **Inclusive Dialogue:** Engage all relevant parties in conversations on nuclear issues.
- **Monitoring Technologies:** Keep a vigilant eye on new technologies that could pose risks.
- **Supporting New Treaties:** Back initiatives like the TPNW and involve nuclear states in talks for a disarmament framework.
- **India's Role:** India should aim for regional stability through dialogue with Pakistan and China, while ensuring secure management of its nuclear resources.

The effectiveness of the global nuclear order relies on the convergence among key powers and the perception of its benefits as a global public good. A collaborative, transparent, and mutually responsible approach is crucial for fostering a stable and equitable nuclear regime.

24. **Disability inclusion in politics**

The Election Commission of India, on December 21, issued an advisory to political parties, encouraging the use of disability-sensitive language. This step is aimed at promoting disability-inclusive communication and accessibility, in response to recent instances of national leaders demeaning persons with



disabilities (PwD) in election speeches, which creates an “attitudinal barrier” contrary to the Rights of PwD Act, 2016.

**Highlights of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (PwD) Act, 2016:**

- The Act is a pivotal legal framework for the protection and empowerment of persons with disabilities in India, replacing the 1995 Act.
- Definition of Disabilities: Recognizes a range of disabilities including physical, intellectual, mental, and sensory impairments.
- Core Principles: Ensures rights like equality, non-discrimination, and full societal participation for PwD.
- Education: Guarantees free education until 18 years and promotes inclusive education.
- Employment: Mandates equal employment opportunities and job reservation in government and private sectors.
- Higher Education Reservation: Specifies seat reservations for PwD in higher educational institutions.
- Special Employment Exchanges: Calls for creating specific employment exchanges for PwD.
- Accessibility: Stresses on barrier-free access in public spaces, transport, and ICT for better accessibility.
- Healthcare: Ensures access to affordable, quality healthcare services.
- Legal Capacity: Upholds PwD's legal recognition and supports their decision-making rights.
- Social Security: Focuses on social security and welfare measures.
- Advisory Boards: Establishes National and State Advisory Boards for overseeing Act implementation.
- Offenses and Penalties: Defines penalties for offenses against PwD and ensures accessible legal proceedings.

**ECI's Disability-Inclusive Communication Guidelines**

1. Prohibition of Ill-Health Terminologies:
  - Guidelines emphasize avoiding derogatory terms for persons with disabilities (PwDs).
  - Aims to prevent stigmatization and marginalization.
  - Example: Criticism of Tamil Nadu leader A Raja's derogatory remarks in 2023.
2. Preventing Dehumanisation and Stereotyping:
  - Urges against dehumanizing portrayals and stereotypes in communication.

- Targeted to change the narrative used in political speeches that demean PwDs.
- 3. Legal Implications:
  - Breaching these guidelines could lead to action under section 92 of the Rights of PwD Act.
  - This section deals with punishment for atrocities against PwDs.
- 4. Need for Uniform Mandate:
  - Guidelines vary in their mandatory language; some use "should/shall" while others use "may".
  - Advocates for a consistent mandate for better enforcement.
- 5. Incorporation into Model Code of Conduct (MCC):
  - Currently, these guidelines are not part of the MCC.
  - Suggests inclusion in the MCC for stronger enforcement, similar to gender guidelines.
- 6. Addressing Phraseology Ambiguity:
  - Clarification needed for specific terms considered derogatory in certain languages.
  - Recommends adopting UN Disability Inclusion Strategy for appropriate terminology.
- 7. Chapter on Political Inclusion in National Policy:
  - Suggests adding a chapter on political inclusion of PwDs in the draft National Policy.
  - Aligns with Article 29 of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
- 8. Creating a Database on Legislators with Disabilities:
  - Highlights the lack of data on legislators with disabilities.
  - Recommends ECI to collect disability data in election nomination forms and affidavits.
  - Proposes the 2024 general elections as an opportunity to address this gap for political inclusion of PwDs.

The Election Commission of India's (ECI) advisory for disability-sensitive communication represents a significant move towards inclusive politics. However, to maximize their effectiveness, key improvements are essential:

1. Uniform and Mandatory Language: Implementing a consistent, obligatory language across all guidelines will ensure stricter adherence and greater impact.

	<p>2. Inclusion in Model Code of Conduct (MCC): Incorporating these guidelines into the MCC will provide them with the necessary legal weight, making compliance more enforceable.</p> <p>3. Holistic Approach in National Policies: Integrating a comprehensive strategy for political inclusion in national policies, in alignment with international standards like the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, is crucial.</p> <p>By undertaking these enhancements, India can progress towards a truly inclusive political environment that not only respects but actively empowers persons with disabilities, setting a precedent for others to follow.</p>
25.	<p><b>Revival of the Tiger: CTR success story</b></p> <p>India has a long history of protecting its forests and animals, and the Corbett Tiger Reserve (CTR), in Uttarakhand, just marked a major turning point in this effort. Comprehensive initiatives and tactics have been put in place at CTR, which has not only seen an amazing rise in the number of tigers but has also gained international recognition as a leader in wildlife management.</p> <p><b>Key successes of CTR:</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>Tiger Conservation Plan Implementation</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Implementation of a comprehensive strategy at CTR.</li><li>Focus on tiger well-being and broader biodiversity.</li></ul></li><li><b>Demarcation of Zones</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Creation of core (for breeding and sustenance) and buffer zones (transition areas) in CTR.</li><li>Essential for wildlife sanctuary and reducing human-wildlife conflict.</li></ul></li><li><b>Growth in Tiger Population</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Increase from 231 to 260 tigers in recent years.</li><li>Reflects the effectiveness of the conservation strategy.</li></ul></li><li><b>Biodiversity Preservation</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>CTR's role in maintaining a richly-forested, biodiverse landscape.</li><li>Attracts a wide range of visitors, including tourists and researchers.</li></ul></li><li><b>Ecotourism Development</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>CTR as a center for ecotourism, boosting the local economy.</li><li>Encourages a deeper appreciation for natural habitats.</li></ul></li><li><b>Grassland and Water Resource Management</b></li></ol>

- Management of diverse grasslands and water resources.
- Ensures a sustainable environment for prey and predator species.

**7. Role of Forest Staff**

- Recognition of forest staff's contribution to conservation.
- Focus on their safety and well-being.

**8. Conservation of Wildlife Corridors**

- Emphasis on protecting wildlife corridors for species migration.
- Essential for maintaining genetic diversity in tiger and elephant populations.

**Human-Wildlife Conflict at CTR**

▪ **Issue of Human-Wildlife Conflict at CTR**

- Surge in human-elephant and tiger-human conflicts.
- Factors: habitat encroachment, limited animal corridors, predator behavior conditioning.

▪ **Rising Incidents and Challenges**

- Domestic animals from villages become prey for tigers.
- Predatory behavior towards humans, leading to attacks on villagers.

▪ **The Complexity of 'Wicked Problems'**

- Human-wildlife conflict as a 'wicked problem' due to its unique, complex nature.
- Emphasis on context-specific solutions and continuous adaptation.

▪ **Forest Department Initiatives**

- Proactive measures against human-wildlife conflicts.
- Elimination of poaching, intensive patrolling, and digital surveillance (electronic-eye project).

▪ **Community Engagement Strategies**

- Engaging local stakeholders in conflict resolution.
- "Living with Tigers" program to educate villagers and children on wildlife behavior and safety.

▪ **Economic Incentives for Conservation**

- Projects providing economic incentives, like the beehive-fencing project.
- Creation of Corbee Honey by local EDCs, promoting cooperation and coexistence.

▪ **Conclusion: Efforts Towards Co-Existence**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ CTR's integrated approach in addressing human-wildlife conflict.</li><li>▪ Collective efforts of the forest department, local communities, and conservationists.</li></ul> <p>Corbett Tiger Reserve is a testament to successful wildlife conservation, representing a comprehensive and integrated approach. Its strategies, ranging from detailed habitat management to inclusive community engagement, demonstrate the feasibility of sustainable coexistence between humans and wildlife. This success story is a vital chapter in India's broader conservation narrative, highlighting the importance of collaborative efforts. The future of CTR, and indeed wildlife conservation in India, relies on the synergistic contributions of the forest department, local communities, and dedicated conservationists. This partnership approach is essential for continuing the legacy of CTR as a model for effective and harmonious wildlife management.</p>
26.	<p><b>Mulya Pravah 2.0</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The University Grants Commission (UGC) has introduced Mulya Pravah 2.0 to improve the ethical standards in higher education institutions.</li><li>▪ This updated guideline, building on its 2019 version, aims to foster human values and professional ethics in education, addressing unethical practices in institutions.</li><li>▪ It emphasizes creating value-based institutions aligned with fundamental duties and constitutional values, promoting integrity and ethical conduct.</li></ul> <p><b>Key Features of Mulya Pravah 2.0:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Addressing Unethical Practices:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Mulya Pravah 2.0 targets unethical practices in higher education, identified through a human resource managers' survey.</li><li>▪ Issues include favoritism, sexual harassment, gender discrimination, inconsistent discipline, confidentiality breaches, and corrupt vendor arrangements.</li><li>▪ The guideline is a significant step in promoting ethical behavior in higher education, though these issues are not unique to this sector.</li></ul></li><li>▪ <b>Focus on Transparency:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The guideline emphasizes complete transparency in the administration of higher education institutions.</li></ul></li></ul>

- Decision-making should prioritize institutional and public interest, free from personal biases.
- It calls for eliminating discriminatory privileges and stresses punishing corrupt practices.
- The creation of a positive culture and work environment that aligns with institutional interests is encouraged.
- **Upholding Values:**
  - Institutions are mandated to adhere to values like integrity, trusteeship, harmony, accountability, inclusiveness, commitment, respectfulness, belongingness, sustainability, constitutional values, and global citizenship.
  - University officers are responsible for ensuring these values are followed thoroughly.
  - This is crucial given the diminishing presence of these values in current times.
- **Institutional Best Interest:**
  - Mulya Pravah 2.0 advises stakeholders to prioritize the best interests of their institutions.
  - It promotes a supportive culture for teaching, learning, and research, and the development of institutional potential.
  - Officers and staff are advised against misusing financial and other resources.
  - The guideline prohibits accepting gifts, favors, services, or other items that could compromise impartial duty performance.

### **Challenges in Implementing Mulya Pravah 2.0**

1. **Sincerity of Higher Education Regulators:**
  - Effective enforcement of Mulya Pravah 2.0 hinges on the genuine commitment of regulators like the UGC.
  - There's a need for a strong stance against corruption and ethical breaches, with zero tolerance policies.
2. **Institutional Resistance:**
  - Higher education institutions may resist new ethical guidelines due to entrenched norms and practices.
  - Overcoming this requires proactive leadership and willingness to adapt from university administrators and stakeholders.
3. **Lack of Monitoring Mechanisms:**

- The absence of robust mechanisms to monitor adherence can lead to non-compliance and continuation of unethical practices.
- Establishing comprehensive monitoring frameworks is crucial for effective implementation.

**4. Internal Stakeholder Resistance:**

- Faculty, staff, and student bodies might view these guidelines as an infringement on their autonomy.
- Addressing this challenge requires effective communication and consensus-building.

**5. Balancing Transparency and Confidentiality:**

- The guidelines must navigate the fine line between maintaining confidentiality and ensuring transparency.
- This balance is essential to avoid conflicts and uphold the right to information.

**6. Ambiguities in Guidelines:**

- Certain aspects of Mulya Pravah 2.0 lack clear definitions, leading to potential misinterpretations and misuse.
- Clarifying these ambiguities is important for uniform understanding and application.

**7. Legal and Regulatory Compliance:**

- Aligning the implementation of Mulya Pravah 2.0 with existing legal and regulatory frameworks is essential.
- Non-compliance or legal oversights could undermine the effectiveness of the guidelines.

**8. Cultural and Regional Differences:**

- The diverse cultural and regional backgrounds of institutions can affect how these guidelines are received and implemented.
- Customizing the approach to suit different contexts is necessary for broader acceptance.

**9. Inadequate Training and Awareness:**

- The success of Mulya Pravah 2.0 depends on thorough understanding and participation from all involved parties.
- Lack of sufficient training and awareness initiatives can lead to unclear interpretations and reduced impact.

**Suggestions for Implementing Mulya Pravah 2.0**

**1. Enhancing Confidentiality and Transparency:**

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Institutions should be encouraged to publicly disclose agendas, proceedings, and minutes of meetings of key decision-making bodies.</li><li>▪ Publishing annual reports and audited accounts can deter malpractices and boost public confidence in institutional operations.</li></ul> <p><b>2. Role of Teachers and Teachers' Associations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Mulya Pravah 2.0 emphasizes teachers as role models, highlighting the need for exemplary conduct, dress, speech, and behavior.</li><li>▪ The guideline, however, does not specifically address the role and concerns of teachers' associations, an area that requires attention.</li></ul> <p><b>3. Defining "Dignified Manner" for Unions:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The guideline expects staff and student unions to support administration and raise issues respectfully.</li><li>▪ The lack of a clear definition of "dignified manner" could lead to misinterpretation, potentially suppressing legitimate collective voices.</li></ul> <p>Mulya Pravah 2.0 is a significant step by the UGC towards ethical reform in higher education. Effective implementation requires: genuine commitment and enforcement of its provisions, balancing the need for transparency with confidentiality, and involving all stakeholders in a collaborative approach to promote ethics, accountability, and transparency. Clarifying ambiguities, especially regarding the role of unions and the definition of "dignified manner", is crucial. Continuous monitoring and adaptation of the guidelines based on feedback and evolving educational landscapes. In conclusion, while Mulya Pravah 2.0 is a progressive initiative, its success hinges on clear definitions, inclusive participation, and a balanced approach to confidentiality and transparency.</p>
27.	<p><b>LMMs in Healthcare</b></p> <p>Recently, the <b>World Health Organization (WHO)</b> has released guidance on the ethical use and governance of <b>Large Multi-Modal Models (LMM)</b> in healthcare, acknowledging the transformative impact of <b>Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI)</b> technologies like ChatGPT, Bard, and Bert.</p> <p>Large Multi-Modal Models (LMM)</p>



- LMMs are models that use **multiple senses to mimic human-like perception**. This allows **AI (Artificial Intelligence)** to respond to a **wider range of Human communication**, making interactions more natural and intuitive.
- LMMs integrate multiple data types, such as images, text, language, audio, and other heterogeneity. This allows the **models to understand images, videos, and audio, and converse with users**.
- **Some examples of multimodal LLMs include** GPT-4V, MedPalm M, Dall-E, Stable Diffusion, and Midjourney.

WHO's Guidelines Regarding the Use of LMMs in Healthcare

- The new WHO guidance outlines **five broad applications of LLMs in healthcare**:
  - **Diagnosis and clinical care**, such as responding to patients' written queries;
  - **Patient-guided use**, such as for **investigating symptoms and treatment**;
  - **Clerical and administrative tasks**, such as documenting and summarizing patient visits within electronic health records;
  - **Medical and nursing education**, including providing trainees with simulated patient encounters, and;
  - **Scientific research and drug development**, including to identify new compounds.

**Indian Council of Medical Research** issued **ethical guidelines for AI** in biomedical research and healthcare in June 2023.

Concerns- WHO Raised about LMMs in Healthcare

- **Rapid Adoption and Need for Caution:**
  - LMMs have experienced **unprecedented adoption, surpassing the pace** of any previous consumer technology.
    - LMM is known for their ability to mimic human communication and **perform tasks without explicit programming**.
  - However, this rapid uptake underscores the critical importance of carefully weighing **their benefits against potential risks**.
- **Risks and Challenges:**
  - Despite their promising applications, LMMs pose risks, including the **generation of false, inaccurate, or biased statements** that could misguide health decisions.

- The data used to train these models can **suffer from quality or bias issues**, potentially perpetuating disparities based on **race, ethnicity, sex, gender identity or age**.
- **Accessibility and Affordability of LMMs:**
  - There are broader concerns as well, **such as the accessibility and affordability of LMMs, and the risk of Automation Bias**(tendency to rely too much on automated systems) in healthcare, leading **professionals and patients to overlook errors**.
- **Cybersecurity:**
  - **Cybersecurity** is another critical issue, given the sensitivity of patient information and the **reliance on the trustworthiness** of these algorithms.

Key Recommendations of WHO Regarding LMMs

- **Called for a collaborative approach** involving governments, technology companies, healthcare providers, patients and civil society, in all **stages of LMM development and deployment**.
- Stressed on the need for **global cooperative leadership to regulate AI technologies** Governments from all countries must cooperatively lead efforts to effectively regulate the development and use of AI technologies, such as LMMs.
- The new guidance offers a **roadmap for harnessing the power of LMMs in healthcare** while navigating their complexities and ethical considerations.
  - In May 2023, the WHO had highlighted the **importance of applying ethical principles and appropriate governance**, as enumerated in the **WHO guidance on the ethics and governance of AI for health**, when designing, developing and deploying AI for health.
- The **six core principles identified by WHO are:**
  - Protect autonomy
  - Promote human well-being, human safety, and the public interest
  - Ensure transparency, explainability, and intelligibility
  - Foster responsibility and accountability
  - Ensure inclusiveness and equity
  - Promote AI that is responsive and sustainable.

Global AI Governance

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>India:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>NITI Aayog</b>, has issued some guiding documents on AI Issues such as the National Strategy for Artificial Intelligence and the <b>Responsible AI for All report</b>.</li><li>▪ Emphasises social and economic inclusion, innovation, and trustworthiness.</li></ul></li><li>▪ <b>United Kingdom:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Outlined a light-touch approach, asking regulators in different sectors to apply existing regulations to AI.</li><li>▪ Published a white paper <b>outlining five principles</b> companies should follow: <b>safety, security and robustness; transparency and explainability; fairness; accountability and governance; and contestability and redress.</b></li></ul></li><li>▪ <b>US:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The US <b>released a Blueprint for an AI Bill of Rights (AIBoR)</b>, outlining the harms of AI to economic and civil rights and <b>lays down five principles for mitigating these harms.</b></li><li>▪ The Blueprint, instead of a horizontal approach like the EU, <b>endorses a sectorally specific approach to AI governance</b>, with policy interventions for individual sectors <b>such as health, labour, and education</b>, leaving it to sectoral federal agencies to come out with their plans.</li></ul></li><li>▪ <b>China:</b><ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ In 2022, China came out with some of the <b>world's first nationally binding regulations targeting specific types of algorithms and AI.</b></li><li>▪ It enacted a law <b>to regulate recommendation algorithms with a focus on how they disseminate information.</b></li></ul></li></ul>
28.	<p><b>South Africa v. Israel: International Court Of Justice Orders</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The ongoing legal dispute between South Africa (SA) and Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) revolves around allegations of genocide and violations of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.</li><li>▪ Amid these recent developments it is important to delve into the contrasting perspectives presented by the two nations and the</li></ul>

complexities surrounding the application of international law to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

#### South Africa's Allegations Against Israel

- Assertion of Israel's Genocidal Intent
  - South Africa's allegations against Israel at the ICJ are centred on the assertion that Israel has committed genocidal acts against the Palestinian people, particularly in the Gaza Strip.
  - South Africa contends that Israel's actions are driven by a genocidal intent, seeking the destruction of a substantial part of the Palestinian national, racial, and ethnic group.
  - SA has placed specific emphasis on events in the Gaza Strip, where South Africa alleges that Israel intentionally directs attacks against the civilian population.
- Violations of the Genocide Convention
  - South Africa explicitly invokes the Genocide Convention of 1948, accusing Israel of repeatedly violating its provisions.
  - The allegations encompass not only direct military actions but also condemn Israel for adopting and condoning genocidal acts, creating a comprehensive indictment of Israel's conduct.
- Intentional Civilian Targeting and Destroying Crucial Infrastructure
  - South Africa accuses Israel of intentionally targeting civilians, highlighting instances where civilian populations have been subjected to harm during military operations.
  - The allegations extend beyond casualties to include the deliberate destruction of infrastructure vital to the cultural, educational, and healthcare aspects of Palestinian society.

#### Israel's Defence Against South Africa's Allegations

- Israel Invoked the Historical Context and Moral Obligation
  - Israel opens its statement by invoking the collective memory of the Holocaust, highlighting the systematic murder of six million Jews during World War II.
  - The creation of the state of Israel was partly a response to the horrors of the Holocaust and a commitment to ensuring that such atrocities would never be repeated.
  - Israel contends that the phrase 'Never Again' signifies the nation's highest moral obligation to prevent genocide and protect its citizens from existential threats.

- Israel's Emphasis on Commitment to the Genocide Convention
  - Israel emphasises its early ratification of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, without reservation.
  - It underscores its commitment to the Convention's principles, both domestically and internationally.
  - The defence argues that Israel's proactive incorporation of the Convention's provisions into its domestic legislation reinforces its dedication to preventing and punishing acts of genocide.
- Israel Highlights the Complex Nature of Armed Conflict in Gaza
  - Israel acknowledges the tragic and heartbreaking civilian suffering in the conflict, describing the harsh realities of the hostilities.
  - It points to the challenges faced by civilians, attributing them to Hamas's reprehensible strategy of maximising harm to both Israelis and Palestinians.
  - The defence contends that the Genocide Convention was not designed to address the civilian impact of hostilities but rather to address acts of the most exceptional severity.
- Israel Has Asserted the Right to Self-Defence
  - The defence emphasises the right to self-defence in the face of terror attacks, arguing that self-defensive actions are rarely available even when faced with attacks disrespecting life and the law.
  - Israel highlights specific incidents, such as the targeting of Israeli civilians, the maiming of thousands, and the abduction of hostages, to illustrate the challenges it faces in protecting its citizens.
- Israel Has Countered Weak Data Collection and Analysis by SA
  - Israel challenges South Africa's allegations by pointing out weaknesses in data collection and analysis.
  - It questions the accuracy of casualty figures and the distinction between civilians and militants in conflict zones.
  - The defence argues that the court is not provided with crucial information about the number of casualties caused by Hamas actions, making it difficult to assess the true nature of the conflict.
- Israel Has Accused SA of Distorting Genocide Terminology

- South Africa is accused by Israel of attempting to distort the term genocide, with the claim that such allegations distort the unique force and special meaning of the word.
- Israel argues that the use of the term genocide should be reserved for situations that genuinely meet the criteria laid out in the Genocide Convention.

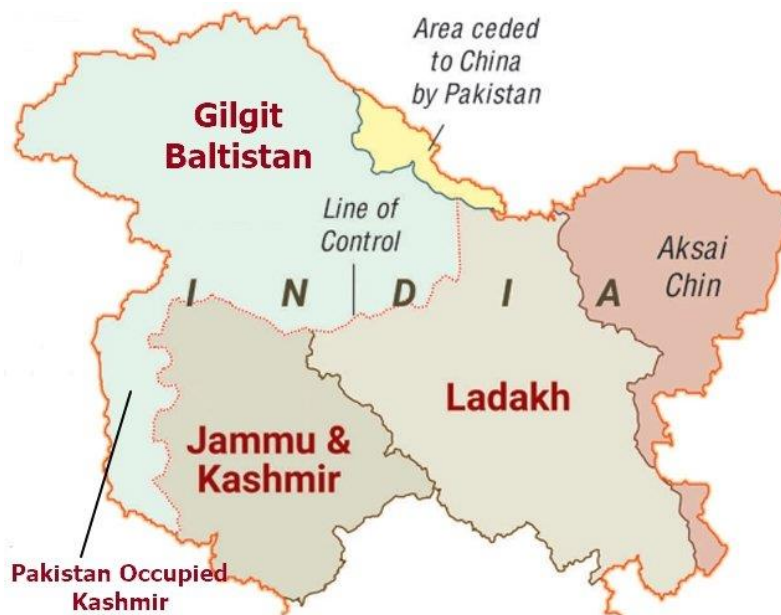
#### Complexities of Legal Proceedings at ICJ

- A Lengthy Process
  - Several months may be required to decide preliminary jurisdictional issues, including whether a dispute under the Genocide Convention exists between South Africa and Israel.
  - The lengthy process involves various stages, such as gathering evidence, presenting legal arguments, and addressing procedural matters.
  - For instance, the Bosnia case took 14 years to reach a resolution and Gambia v Myanmar that concerns genocide is still being heard.
- The Complex Process of Determining Criminal Genocidal Intent
  - The legal battle extends beyond jurisdictional matters to the core issue of whether Israel had criminal genocidal intent.
  - This determination, as seen in the Bosnia case, is a complex process that involves a high standard of proof.
  - The ICJ is tasked with scrutinising evidence and legal arguments to establish whether the actions of Israel meet the criteria outlined in the Genocide Convention.
- No Rule Establishing the Proof of Genocidal Intent
  - ICJ's verdict in 2007 pertained to the Srebrenica July 1995 genocide was about the killing of more than 8,000 Bosniak Muslim men and boys in and around the town during the Bosnian War.
  - The massacre was conducted largely by the Bosnian Serb Army of Republika Srpska (VRS) under the command of Ratko Mladic.
  - He was later indicted by the International Criminal Court (ICC), thus establishing a high synergy between ICC and ICJ.
  - Yet, there is no rule establishing proof of genocidal intent, except that a very high standard is required as the court considers each case.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Weak Provisional Measures<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Both SA and Israel are rightly seeking provisional measures until the case is decided.</li><li>▪ Unless the ICJ innovates jurisprudence on the matter, the repository of international law dictates a ceasefire and the systemic flow of humanitarian relief.</li><li>▪ However, the experience in this regard is not a good guide. Russia challenged the ICJ when ceasefire directions in the Ukraine war were ordered.</li><li>▪ As regards enforcement, a single veto by any one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council may result in non-compliance with the ICJ directives.</li></ul></li></ul> <p>The legal battle between SA and Israel at the ICJ underscores the complexities of applying international law to conflicts with deep historical and geopolitical roots. The case further highlights the contrasting narratives, challenges in data analysis, and the extended legal processes that characterise such high-stakes international disputes. The outcome remains uncertain, with potential implications for the interpretation and enforcement of international law in conflicts of this nature.</p>
29.	<p><b>What is Ladakh's demand on Gilgit-Baltistan?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Ladakh's two key sociopolitical conglomerates, the Leh Apex Body (LAB), representing several Buddhist religious and political parties, and Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA), representing Muslim religious groups and local parties, submitted a memorandum to the Ministry of Home Affairs, demands include extending the territorial control of Ladakh up to Gilgit Baltistan in Pakistan Occupied Kashmir.</li></ul> <p><b>Concerns in Leh and Kargil</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ <b>Kargil</b> – Of Ladakh's two districts, the August 2019 changes were immediately opposed by the people of Kargil.</li><li>▪ The people of Kargil see themselves as a minority in Buddhist majority Ladakh.</li><li>▪ So, the leaders of the majority Shia population in Kargil demanded that the district should remain part of J&amp;K.</li><li>▪ They also demanded that special status be restored.</li><li>▪ This was to safeguard the rights of Kargil people over their land and employment opportunities.</li></ul>

**Leh – Opposition from Leh came later**

- Leh believed that it was being marginalised in the larger state of J&K.
- So, a UT for Ladakh had been a long-standing demand in Buddhist majority Leh.
- But what Leh leaders did not bargain for was the complete loss of legislative powers.
- Earlier, Leh and Kargil each sent **four representatives to the J&K legislature**.
- After the changes, they were down to one legislator – their sole MP, and with all powers vested in the UT bureaucracy.
- Unlike the UT of J&K, Ladakh was a UT without an assembly.
- So, the **Ladakh districts fear that alienation of land, loss of identity, culture, language, and change in demography would follow their political disempowerment.**



**Gilgit-Baltistan**

- Gilgit-Baltistan (GB) was formerly known as the **Northern Areas**.
- It is the northernmost territory **administered by Pakistan**, providing the country's only territorial frontier, and thus a land route, with China, where it meets the **Xinjiang Autonomous Region**.
- Located in the northern Pakistan. It borders China in the North, Afghanistan in the west, Tajikistan in the north west and Kashmir in the south east.



- It shares a geographical boundary with Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, and India considers it as part of the undivided Jammu and Kashmir, while Pakistan sees it as a separate from PoK.
- It has a regional Assembly and an elected Chief Minister.
- China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) also passes through this region.
- Gilgit-Baltistan is home to five of the “eight-thousanders” and to more than fifty peaks above 7,000 metres (23,000 ft).
- Three of the world’s longest glaciers outside the polar regions are found in Gilgit-Baltistan.
- To G-B’s west is **Afghanistan**, to its south is Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, and to the east, the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir.
- It is **Indian territory**, part of the former princely state of Jammu and Kashmir that acceded to India in full after Independence, and which has been under illegal Pakistani occupation.
- Gilgit Baltistan has been under the control of Pakistan since April 1949, when the leadership of the so-called Azad Jammu and Kashmir (AJK) was forced to sign away this territory to Pakistan.
- However, the region does not have any place in the constitutional framework of Pakistan and has been kept under the tight control of the central government.
- Gilgit-Baltistan shares a border with Azad Kashmir, together with which it is referred to by the United Nations as “Pakistan administered Kashmir”.

#### **History of the region**

- Gilgit was part of the princely state of Jammu & Kashmir, but was ruled directly by the British, who had taken it on lease from Hari Singh, the Hindu ruler of the Muslim-majority state. When Hari Singh acceded to India on October 26, **1947**, the Gilgit Scouts rose in rebellion, led by their British commander Major William Alexander Brown.
- In November 1, **1947**, a political outfit called the Revolutionary Council of Gilgit-Baltistan had proclaimed the independent state of Gilgit-Baltistan., it declared it was acceding to Pakistan, which accepted the accession only to the extent of full administrative control, choosing to govern it directly under the Frontier Crimes Regulation, a law devised by the British to keep control of the restive tribal areas of the northwest.

- The Gilgit Scouts also moved to take over Baltistan, which was then part of Ladakh, and captured Skardu, Kargil and Dras. In battles thereafter, Indian forces retook Kargil and Dras in August **1948**
- Following the India-Pakistan ceasefire of January 1, **1949**, Pakistan in April that year entered into an agreement with the “provisional government” of “Azad Jammu & Kashmir” parts that had been occupied by Pakistani troops and irregulars to take over its defence and foreign affairs. Under this agreement, the “Azad Jammu & Kashmir” government also ceded administration of Gilgit-Baltistan to Pakistan.
- In **1974**, Pakistan adopted its first full-fledged civilian Constitution, which lists four provinces —Punjab, Sindh, Balochistan and Khyber Pakthunkhwa. Pakistan-Occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Gilgit-Baltistan were not incorporated as provinces.
- In **1975**, PoK got its own Constitution, making it an ostensibly self-governed autonomous territory.
- PoK too remained under the control of Pakistani federal administration and the security establishment, through the Kashmir Council.
- **Provincial status**, on November 1, 2020, observed in Gilgit-Baltistan as “Independence Day”, Imran Khan announced that his government would give the region “provisional provincial status”.

**Centre’s stand**

- In the wake of street protests held by people in Ladakh, the Centre in 2022 formed a committee **under Minister of State G. Kishan Reddy** to engage with the members of the LAB and KDA.
- The Centre had assured the people it would find “an appropriate solution to the issues related to language, culture and conservation of land in Ladakh.” However, it has failed to arrive at a solution.
- After a fresh bout protests in 2023, another high powered committee, with Minister of State **Nityanand Rai at its head**, was empowered to engage with the stakeholders of Ladakh.
- In 2024, these bodies submitted a written memorandum to pave the way for more structured talks between New Delhi and Ladakh over the list of demands.

- Sustained economic progress on a national scale is intricately linked to scientific advances translated into deployable technologies.
- The Indian government is currently revamping its science establishment, exemplified by initiatives like the National Research Foundation (NRF) and the restructuring of the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO).
- However, a critical analysis of the current administrative capacity is necessary to optimise the efficiency and resilience of Indian science.

**Obstacles to India's Scientific Progress**

- Low Research and Development Expenditure
  - India's commitment to research and development (R&D) is reflected in its modest investment constituting approximately 0.7% of the GDP.
  - This expenditure is significantly low in comparison to global leaders like the United States (3.5%) and China (2.4%).
- Budgetary Constraints
  - The limited financial commitment to R&D arises from broader budgetary constraints, competing priorities, and a historical focus on immediate socio-economic needs.
  - As a result, India is facing the challenge of nurturing a robust scientific ecosystem on a constrained budget.
- Inability of Current Scientific Administration in Budget Allocation
  - The current scientific administration has struggled to identify and invest in high-impact projects.
  - In 2022, the Indian Space Research Organisation ranked eighth in the number of space launches, while foreign startups excelled in important technologies like reusable rockets.
  - Similarly, India fell behind in nuclear energy, especially in adopting small modular reactors, and its plans for using thorium have not materialised.
  - In crucial areas like genomics, robotics, and artificial intelligence, India faces alarming challenges in science and technology.
  - The management and focus of scientific efforts are inconsistent and not well-suited for the essential role that science needs to play in the future.
- Lack of Strategic Planning and Execution

- The challenge goes beyond the quantum of expenditure; it extends to the strategic planning and execution of scientific projects.
- The failure to adapt swiftly to emerging technologies and allocate resources judiciously has resulted in India lagging in crucial fields.
- Lack of Consistent Long-Term Funding
  - A significant problem is the lack of consistent long-term funding for vital projects, especially when faced with occasional setbacks.
  - This ability to provide steady funding despite occasional failures is crucial for a strong and effective scientific management system.

**Role of Senior Scientists in India's Science Administration**

- Dispersion of Focus Due to Diverse Responsibilities
  - Senior scientists in India often are engaged in various responsibilities, ranging from academic pursuits to administrative duties.
  - This diversity includes attempts to maintain international academic standing, micromanaging institutional finances, participation in various committees across different institutions, and seeking administrative positions such as directors, vice-chancellors, and government secretaries.
  - This dispersion of focus can lead to inefficiencies and a lack of dedicated attention to critical administrative tasks.
- Scientists May Not Have Skills to Be an Effective Administrator
  - The common belief that successful scientists can effortlessly become competent administrators ignores the crucial difference between the skills needed for scientific work and those necessary for effective administration.
  - Managing complex institutions, distributing resources, and making organisational decisions involve a specific set of skills that may not match the qualities typically linked to accomplished scientists.
- The Lack of Comprehensive Training
  - The lack of thorough training makes it harder for scientists to take on administrative roles.
  - Tasks like choosing the right metrics, handling conflicts of interest, and setting priorities often demand skills that are not naturally cultivated through scientific training.

- Administration is the art of translating policy into outcomes — scientists are simply not trained to prioritise between time, cost, or precision, and certainly not in what proportions.
- The Issue of Conflicts of Interest and Quality Control
  - The intertwined roles of scientists as academics and administrators can foster conflicts of interest within institutions.
  - Academic rivalries, bureaucratic red tape, and compromised quality control can emerge, resulting in detrimental consequences such as high plagiarism rates, unethical publication practices, and compromised scientific outcomes.
- The Absence of Nation-Wide Transfer System
  - In a more harmful manner, the progress of scientific careers and important projects has been severely damaged by factors such as competition and egotism.
  - The absence of a nationwide transfer system for both scientists and science administrators only amplifies the control certain institutions have and contributes to internal divisions.
  - Allowing those within the system to also regulate it can lead to clear drawbacks.

### **Historical Roots**

- Concentration of High-End Equipment
  - The economic constraints faced by India in the aftermath of Independence led to a pragmatic decision to concentrate high-end scientific equipment in a handful of institutions, notably the IITs.
  - This concentration created a system of gatekeepers who controlled access to critical resources, giving rise to a hierarchical structure where a select few institutions held disproportionate influence and power.
- The Concept of Gatekeepers and Institutional Captures
  - Over time, these gatekeepers solidified their positions, accumulating power, government patronage, and institutional control.
  - This gatekeeping system created an environment where young scientists had to navigate a complex web of influence, paying nazranas or tributes to those who controlled access to essential resources.
- Impact on Scientific Careers

- The gatekeeping system not only influenced access to resources but also dictated career trajectories.
- The nexus between institutional power and individual careers became a defining feature, with appointments, awards, and foreign accolades often contingent on maintaining favourable relations with the gatekeepers.
- Scientists who found themselves in conflict with this system faced significant hurdles, leading to the destruction of promising careers and stifling genuine scientific outcomes.
- **Normalisation of Unethical Practices**
  - The gatekeeping system has normalised unethical practices within Indian science.
  - Instances of high plagiarism rates, paid publications in disreputable journals, and under-the-table dealings to secure government funding have become ingrained in the culture.
  - This erosion of ethical standards has not only compromised the quality of scientific research but has also perpetuated a system where personal connections hold more sway than merit.

#### **Comparison with the U.S. Model**

- In the US, Scientists selected for administrative roles are identified early in their careers and undergo specific training for managerial tasks.
- The emphasis is on maintaining a clear division between scientific pursuits and administrative responsibilities.
- In contrast, India's science administration has traditionally involved senior scientists assuming administrative roles without a clear separation between the two functions.
- This integration has led to challenges, as the skill sets required for effective scientific research often differ from those essential for efficient administration.

#### **Conclusion**

- As India strives for economic and strategic advancement, reforming its science administration emerges as a critical imperative.
- Addressing challenges such as low research expenditure, the outsized role of senior scientists, historical gatekeeping practices, etc., can pave the way for a more efficient and resilient science establishment.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ The separation of scientists and administrators, coupled with comprehensive training and a strategic overhaul, is crucial to realising India's scientific potential and achieving its ambitious goals.</li></ul>
31.	<p><b>Drone Revolution in Rural India</b></p> <p>Drone Revolution- Drone Revolution refers to the increased use of unmanned aerial vehicles to address various challenges facing the country like low agricultural productivity and lapses of internal security.</p> <p><b>International Examples</b> of drone technology revolutionising agricultural practices and boost rural economies-</p> <p>a. Africa- Drones are being used to support small-scale farmers in Mozambique and agribusiness in Morocco.</p> <p>b. Japan- Use of insect-sized drones capable of pollinating flowers by mimicking the role of bees.</p> <p>c. Europe- Drones are being increasingly used in agricultural activities ranging from crop monitoring to precision farming.</p>



## Drone Revolution In Rural India

PM Narendra Modi while inaugurating India's biggest drone expo in May 2022, highlighted the importance of drones in rural India and said, "I want to see a drone in every farm and a phone in every hand." India is on the brink of a Drone revolution that stands to change the face of the rural India.

### Drone Revolution and Examples

- Drone Revolution- Increased use of unmanned aerial vehicles to address various challenges facing the country like low agricultural productivity and lapses of internal security.
- International Examples-
  - a. Africa- Drones are being used to support small-scale farmers in Mozambique and agribusiness in Morocco.
  - b. Japan- Use of insect-sized drones capable of pollinating flowers by mimicking the role of bees.
  - c. Europe- Drones are being increasingly used in agricultural activities ranging from crop monitoring to precision farming.

### Significance

- Increase in Agricultural Productivity- Kisan Drones have been helping in crop and soil yield assessment, application of fertilisers and pesticides and employing the techniques of precision farming.
- Digitisation of Land Records- The SVAMITVA employs drone technology to survey village land areas to provide the villagers a "record of land rights" for its use as an asset and fighting off property disputes.
- Rural Job Creation- Initiatives like the NAMO Drone Didi scheme aim to train women in rural areas to become drone pilots.
- Fighting off water scarcity- Use of ultra-low volume (ULV) spraying technology in agricultural drones leads to significant water savings
- Propelling India's economic growth- The drone industry in India is expected to experience significant growth, reaching a turnover of Rs. 12,000-15,000 crore by 2026

### Challenges

- Connectivity Issues- Rural India faces the challenge of rural-urban internet divide.
- Weather Dependence- Rural areas often encounter rainy and windy conditions, which considerably reduce the operational efficiency of drones
- Lack of Drone operation Skills- The low knowledge and skill required for daily usage of drone technology of an average Indian farmer
- High cost of Specialised Drones- The higher cost of specialised drones for agricultural use in rural areas is a major challenge
- Low Adoption rates in rural areas- The adoption of drones in rural areas is very low as compared to the developed nations like the United States, where a staggering 84 per cent of farmers utilise drones on a daily or weekly basis.

### Govt Initiatives

- Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme- There has been a substantial growth in the annual sales turnover of the drone manufacturing industry, from Rs. 60 crore in 2020-21 to over Rs. 900 crore in FY 2023-24.
- Drone Shakti Scheme for Startups- This scheme targets startups within the drone industry, offering financial assistance for research and development
- The Drone Rules, 2021- Comprehensive regulatory framework for drone operations within the country
- SMAM- Financial assistance (subsidies to the tune of 50-80%) for the purchase of drones under the Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization

### Advantages

### of Drone Revolution In Rural India

1. Increase in Agricultural Productivity-Use of Kisan Drones- a rural drone revolution- has led to an increase in agricultural productivity by helping in crop and soil yield assessment, application of fertilisers and pesticides and employing the techniques of precision farming.
2. Digitisation of Land Records-The SVAMITVA scheme of the government aims to employ drone technology to survey village land areas to provide the villagers a "record of land rights" for its use as an asset and fighting off property disputes.
3. Rural Job Creation-Initiatives like the NAMO Drone Didi scheme aim to train women in rural areas to become drone pilots. This positions them at the core of economic activity and contributes to rural prosperity.
4. Fighting off water scarcity-Use of ultra-low volume (ULV) spraying technology in agricultural drones leads to significant water savings compared to traditional spraying methods.



5. Propelling India's economic growth-As per projections from the Ministry of Civil Aviation, the drone industry in India is expected to experience significant growth, reaching a turnover of Rs. 12,000-15,000 crore by 2026. Also, the startups related to drones have been witnessing a tremendous growth which aid to India's vision of becoming \$5 trillion economy.

**Challenges with the Drones in Rural India**

1. Connectivity Issues-Rural India faces the challenge of rural-urban internet divide. Limited online coverage poses a significant challenge to the drone revolution in India.
2. Weather Dependence-The weather dependence of drones for their enhanced operational efficiency also poses a significant challenge. As the rural areas often encounter rainy and windy conditions, the operational efficiency of drones is considerably reduced.
3. Lack of Drone operation Skills-The low knowledge and skill required for daily usage of drone technology is another prominent hurdle for an average Indian farmer.
4. High cost of Specialised Drones-The higher cost of specialised drones for agricultural use in rural areas is another major challenge for the increased use of Drones in rural India.
5. Low Adoption rates in rural areas-The adoption of drones in rural areas is very low as compared to the developed nations like the United States, where a staggering 84 per cent of farmers utilise drones on a daily or weekly basis.

**Government Schemes for ushering in the Drone Revolution in Rural India**

Production-Linked Incentive (PLI) Scheme	The PLI scheme for drones and drone components offers incentives to manufacturers in this domain. There has been a substantial growth in the annual sales turnover of the drone manufacturing industry, from Rs. 60 crore in 2020-21 to over Rs. 900 crore in FY 2023-24.
Scheme for Women Self-Help Groups (SHGs)	This scheme focuses on providing drones to women self-help groups (SHGs) engaged in agriculture. There has been an allocated outlay of

	<p>Rs. 1,261 crore for the period from 2024-25 to 2025-26.</p>
Drone Shakti Scheme for Startups	<p>This scheme targets startups within the drone industry, offering financial assistance for research and development, product development, and marketing.</p>
The Drone Rules, 2021	<p>These rules establish a comprehensive regulatory framework for drone operations within the country. Digital Sky Platform serves as an online registration platform for drones and drone operators.</p>
Drones in Agricultural Research	<p>International Crops Research Institute (ICRISAT) was granted the permission by the Indian Government to utilise drones in agri-research.</p>
Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM)	<p>The Indian Government is also providing financial assistance (subsidies to the tune of 50-80%) for the purchase of drones under the Sub-Mission on Agricultural Mechanization (SMAM)</p>
<p><b><u>Road ahead</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Training and Skill Development-Focus must be on training the farmers for using the drone technology by themselves in their fields.</li><li>▪ Internet Connectivity-The Internet connectivity in rural areas must be improved by the early implementation of Schemes like Bharat Net and 5G connectivity.</li><li>▪ Lower the cost of Specialised Drones-An adequate policy must be formulated to lower the cost of specialised drones for agricultural usage. This will increase their adoption rates.</li><li>▪ Design Weather Sturdy Drones-Weather sturdy drones for rural areas unaffected by strong winds and inclement weather conditions must be designed at the earliest.</li></ul> <p>Given the strong government focus, regulatory backing, liberal incentives, and appropriate training programmes, Drones have the potential to revolutionise Indian agriculture, playing a pivotal role in uplifting the rural economy.</p>	

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